

Volume 17 • Number 2

Spring 2014

UM MEN

The magazine of United Methodist Men



VITAL CONGREGATIONS

A letter from the General Secretary

We are not hiding the major content of this issue of the magazine.

This issue focuses on your local church.

I hope the content will help move your entire congregation to greater vitality.

In my position, I get many interesting calls from folks in churches just like yours. Some complain about the lack of leadership in their churches, but many are looking for new ideas to grow their men's ministry and to attract new members from the community.

Several calls this month have been from men who have felt a strong calling to revamp, remake, remold the men's ministry of their churches from a sitting-on-the-sidelines ministry to one that leads their church to vitality.

That is very exciting.

I hope this issue brings some new ideas to you and to your congregation.

I hope you will explore the many resources we have within the GCUMM.org website, but, also look at the large number of resources available on UMC.org, and on websites of all the other general agencies and the Connectional Table.

All of the general secretaries are leading their agencies to address seriously local church vitality from their unique perspectives. Our goal for this issue of the magazine is to give you some key information for your local congregation and to direct you to additional resources that are available through the UMC.

If your church leaders have no idea how to move forward, I believe this issue will provide some helpful guidance. You need to provide the leadership to excite your church into action.

One warning: There is a time to study, and a time to act. I believe the ideas in this



issue are well studied; it is time for your church and my church to act.

The late Rev. Bill Hinson told me, "If you could name a problem or a sin, the UMC would study it for at least eight years."

The season for study is over; let this be a season of action.

"Don't you have a saying, 'Four months and then it's time to harvest?' Look, I tell you: open your eyes and notice that the fields are already ripe for harvest." (John 4:35, CEV)

Striving to be His servant,

Gilbert C. Hanke
General Secretary
General Commission on United Methodist Men



contents

Vol. 17, No. 2 Winter 2014

Copyright © 2014
General Commission on United Methodist Men

UMMen magazine is published four times a year, winter, spring, summer and fall by GCUMM:
General Commission on United Methodist Men
1000 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 340-7145
Internet address: <http://www.gcummm.org>

Publisher: Gilbert C. Hanke
Editor: Richard Peck
Contributing Editor: Larry Coppock
Editorial Assistants: Martha Davis
Nan Self

Graphic Design: Parris Printing
Change of Address:
Send the mailing label with your new address to:
UMMen
1000 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 340-7145
Allow six weeks for changes.

Advertising: Contact Richard Peck
1000 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 620-7264
e-mail: rpeck@gcummm.org

Advertisements in *UMMen* do not constitute endorsement by *UMMen*, General Commission on United Methodist Men or The United Methodist Church. Advertisers and their agencies assume liability for all content of advertisements printed or representations made therein.

Subscription: Subscriptions are \$25 a year (4 issues). Bulk subscriptions available.
Send check or money order to:

UMMen
Subscription Fulfillment
P.O. Box 440515
Nashville, TN 37244-0515
(615) 340-7145

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture contained herein is from *The New Revised Standard Version*. Copyright 1989, 1995. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

UM Men

Spring 2014

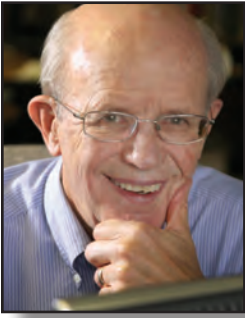
FEATURES

- 5** How to revitalize your church
- 9** Church vitality - how do you define it?
- 11** Vital congregations pay attention to those missing
- 13** A small church with a big heart
- 14** Eight reasons young people are leaving the church
- 15** Learning from Googlers
- 17** Kentucky church presents 250 books to first responders
- 17** Lessons from a colonoscopy
- 18** Reconsider the time you spend in meetings
- 19** In Memoriam
- 20** Across the Nation

28 MENS NEWS

36 SCOUTING NEWS

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



A lesson from David

As a shepherd boy, David was smarter than he was brave.

Yes, I know we've been told about his

bravery to face the 9-foot Goliath, but David was never in any danger.

Goliath wore bronze armor weighing 125 pounds and he carried a spear, a straight sword, and a sword with a curved blade (1 Samuel 17).

David could easily outrun Goliath and the giant's weapons would be useless to him if David did not accept Goliath's invitation to "come here."

David was an agile youth who frequently practiced casting rocks from his shepherd's sling. He claims to have killed wild animals that threatened his sheep. There is no reason to doubt that claim.

David carried five smooth stones with him. He could have gone back for more if he needed them.

In fact, David could have cast stones at Goliath all afternoon and there's nothing the giant could have done about it other than try to protect himself from incoming missiles. David was undoubtedly skilled at hitting moving targets if Goliath had tried to run.

We have much to learn from David.

The Israelites and the Philistines assumed that fighting was always done

hand-to-hand and face-to-face. Heavy armor and impressive arsenals were required.

David ignored the advice of Saul and the offer of equipment. He preferred to battle Goliath in a safer and more effective manner.

A severed head was a pretty good indication his technique was effective.

Most United Methodist Church leaders also assume they are supposed to determine the needs of their members and find ways to address their needs and provide pastoral care.

The Rev. Russ Breshears, pastor of a small church in Little Rock, Ark., ignored the advice of church leaders. Instead of focusing on the needs of the 70 people attending Sunday morning services, he focused on the needs of the community (see page 13).

The provision of medical, vision and dental care for more than 1,000 people is a pretty good indication that Breshear's community-based ministry is effective.

While this outward-focused ministry seems to ignore the principle of providing for those who pay the bills, it turns out to be a more effective means to fulfill the mission of the denomination "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

So too, a United Methodist men's organization that seeks to address the needs of the community may also discover that an outward focus is a more effective way to fulfill the mission of United Methodist Men "to declare the centrality of Christ in every man's life."

Rich Peck

How to revitalize your church



By Gil Hanke

Several years ago I heard Bishop Julius Trimble state; "The church is at its best when the people inside can't wait to get outside and the



Bishop Julius Trimble

people outside, can't wait to get inside." He went on to explain that the people inside were charged up and ready to serve in their communities and around the world, and the people outside, experiencing

that Christian love, were compelled to participate in the life of such a church. When the community knows "something exciting is happening at that church," they can't wait to get inside.

Marks of a vital congregation

So what is a "vital congregation?"

As we began this discussion as a denomination four years ago, we struggled with a definition. Some said they could not define it, but stated that they knew one when they saw one; I don't believe that is the most helpful response.

As I am sure you are aware, the UMC has completed several research studies which address this question. Those studies are summarized and updated on the Vital Congregations link at umc.org website. Drivers that appear to make congregations vital include:

- Inviting and inspiring worship
- Engaged disciples in mission and outreach
- Gifted, empowered and equipped lay leaders
- Effective, equipped and inspired clergy leaders
- Small group ministries
- Strong children's and youth ministries

There are 16 key "ministry strategies" that depict characteristics of the work in small groups, lay leadership, pastoral leadership, and worship.

Through the "Vital Signs" dashboard, churches are entering weekly data about worship attendance, number of members joining by professions of faith, number of small groups, number of persons involved in local, national and international mission or outreach, funds collected for work beyond that local church, and funds collected to support that local church.

Through these measurements, churches are paying increased attention to these areas of ministry. As expected, many churches are increasing their numbers in the measured areas. Most exciting is an increase in the number of people being received into membership by profession of faith.

In all this research and counting, goal setting and measuring we need to be careful to continue our core values. We need to celebrate that we can work together with other faith groups to serve our community, but we also need to remember that our Wesleyan theology is unique.

The “FACTs on Growth 2010” study, completed by the Hartford Institute for Religion and Research, found that churches that feel they are different from other churches in the area are more likely to grow.

We need to respectfully celebrate the unique view of grace and openness that characterizes the UMC.

The Hartford study also found that churches with serious conflicts have a greater decline in attendance than those with no conflict. This finding flies in the face of consultants who tell leadership teams there is something wrong when there are no significant conflicts within a congregation.

This study also found that the more church members are involved in recruiting new members, the greater the church growth in membership. This finding aligns with ministry strategies that describe the spiritual disciplines expected in leaders within the laity.

Inspiration from Florida church

I had the pleasure of hearing the Rev. Jorge Acevedo speak at the Texas Annual Conference, and I have read his book:

Vital—Churches Changing Communities and the World (Abingdon, 2012).

When discussing an untapped treasure in the local church he states, “It’s the treasure of the laity who sit in church year after year and are never

challenged, equipped, and released to do Kingdom work in the church, community and world. In far too many churches, laity ‘sit, soak, and sour’.”



The Rev. Jorge Acevedo

Acevedo is the lead pastor of Grace Church, a multisite UM congregation in southwest Florida. His congregation and leadership team continue to create ministries in four areas: “Reach, Connect, Form, and Send.”

Reach ministries include ministries where the community comes to one of their many locations. There they have over 40 offerings which include

GED classes, after school tutoring, and a community garden. Reach ministries also include going to the community with blankets, health kits, and other needed items for the homeless. They host experiential and affirming special worship for the community.



Connect ministries share four core values: 1) “We relentlessly encourage and assist people as they connect with God



through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” 2) “We present constant opportunities for people to connect relationally within the Grace Church family.” 3) “We consistently offer opportunities for

people to connect with caring ministry to find hope, help and healing in times of need.” 4) “We passionately provide places for people to connect to and serve within the ministries of Grace Church.”

Form ministries also share four core values: 1) “We relentlessly encourage and assist people to grow in faith and be

transformed into the likeness of Christ through personal devotional practices.”

2) “We present constant opportunities for people to be transformed through the Word of

God with relevant biblical instruction and experience.”

3) “We passionately urge the people of Grace Church to form authentic purposeful, biblical accountability relationships with the church.” 4) “We nurture and develop people’s passions and gifts to form them into servants and leaders within Grace Church and around the world—all to the glory of God.”

Send ministries prepare and send

people into the world globally and locally to proclaim Jesus in word and deed in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ. These ministries also teach about God’s heart for the

world. Members are taught how to lead mission teams, and spiritual disciplines. They prepare and expect their members to “give, go, and pray.”

Six pathways to revitalization

I suggest six ways to make your church more vital:

1. Put members to work. Churches become vital when there is an expectation of participation. Some churches, like Windsor Village UMC in Houston, established a tradition



of asking people who are joining the church, “What area of ministry got you so excited that you wanted to join this church?” Their answers put them to work in those areas.

This is not a church you attend as an audience member. This is a church which puts passions into actions.

2. Be doers. The plague of inertia is killing our churches. John Wesley would re-word his “Three General Rules” from “Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God” to “Do no harm, but for God’s sake do something!” Pick a God-size task that can only be completed with His help and with the hands and feet of most of the congregation.

3. Examine your website. If you think only 20-30 year olds check out your church’s website before coming for a visit, you are mistaken. When you list your ministry areas, does that list include women, men, children, and youth? If your website states “There is a place for you at XYZ United Methodist Church” is that true? Is that evident on your website?

4. Open wide the back door of the church. The 1990 book, *Through the Back Door of the Church* by Thomas Mallonee relates story after story of men who resisted coming to worship, but found Christ through a men’s activity. In the December 11, 2013, edition of “Leading Ideas” from the Lewis Center for Church Leaders at Wesley Seminary, Dr. Lovett Weems updates and expands these findings. “Serving may be their entry point, followed by a small group and then worship. They will probably not come based on thorough knowledge of our beliefs and values. That does not mean beliefs are unimportant, but rather



that decisions about choosing a church are based more on relationships and belonging.”

5. Consistent, inclusive, multifaceted communication is essential.

Use the technology that is available. The days of, “Can you come to the church tomorrow night for just a few minutes to meet about XYZ?” are over. You will alienate someone whose workday includes, Skype, Google Hangouts, and conference calls if you ignore the available technology. I get reminders of meetings via email and text, and I can also set reminders on my phone and tablet. The goal is not to pester church members. The goal is to eliminate the responses, “I did not know about the meeting,” or “I wish I had known Bob was in the hospital.”

6. Attendees need multiple opportunities for Christ-centered, weekly, gender specific, accountability groups.

Those can be face-to-face, or electronic. Remember for some people with families the best time for this may be at 9:30 p.m. when the kids are asleep, and the meeting takes place on a laptop or tablet. Face-to-face meetings can be at church, an office or home, a restaurant or a coffee shop. The material may be complex or simple. Remember, Wesley began his groups with one simple question, “How is it with your soul?”

The story of two churches

I attended a “cluster” charge conference meeting for five UM congregations within a 30-mile area. At one point, the district superintendent asked church leaders to state one thing about which their church was excited.

Two small rural churches were the

last to present.

One church leader noted the shrinking number of members and the declining population.

“We are excited because we will continue to be there,” he proudly announced.

The leader of the last reporting church also noted its limited number of members and distant location.


“We know there is no growth in our community; in fact it is getting smaller,” he said. “But there is the elementary school two blocks from the church, and we have decided to adopt it. We are going to pray for the teachers and volunteer to read with the students in their classes. We also want to make sure these children have some healthy food for the weekends. We have decided we will serve that school in any way we can.”

Regardless of size, location, or resources, clearly one of these congregations was on the journey to revitalization.

So, what are your next steps to take your local congregation toward revitalization?

What can be done to excite your congregation to the point that they can’t wait to get outside to serve God in your community?

What messages in those actions invite the community to join your congregation in a journey of faith and service?

May God bless all our efforts to realize that a vital congregation begins with and develops vital relationships with Jesus Christ. 



Gil Hanke is general secretary of the General Commission on United Methodist Men

Church vitality – How do you define it?



To determine whether a congregation was doing well, church leaders used to count just two things — bottoms in

the pews and dollars in the plate.

Now many UM leaders believe people and money do not capture whether a church is truly doing the vital work of making Christian disciples, said the Rev. Amy Valdez Barker, executive secretary of the Connectional Table.

“For me, vital congregations really are helping people grow in their relationship with God and their relationship with neighbor,” she says. “Congregations that are vital are helping people live out their discipleship.”

The denomination has plenty of examples of vital churches in a variety of sizes and cultural contexts.

Two examples

Grace Church — a multi-campus UM congregation in Southwest Florida — routinely welcomes more than 2,500 worshippers each week. The church offers more than 100 small groups, operates its own Grace Community Center and provides one of the largest recovery ministries in the United States.

Evangelical UMC in Billings, Mont., is a 100-member congregation that offers weekly Bible studies and operates the Yellowstone UM Free Store “giveaway” ministry at least twice a month.

Both Grace UMC and Evangelical UMC offer opportunities for spiritual formation and social outreach to their communities. They also share a clear vision of what they can do to help build



A worship service at First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, Calif., includes hymns sung in both Spanish and English. A UMNS photo by Deborah White.

God’s Kingdom.

“Vitality is an attitude in my book,” says the Rev. Jeremy Scott, pastor of Evangelical UMC. “It is an attitude about building the future even if we won’t necessarily be there to see the fruit.”

Early indicators of vitality

The denomination-wide emphasis on vital congregations began in 2010 when the Call to Action Steering Team, a cross section of 16 UM leaders, commissioned a study by the consulting firm Towers Watson.

The study used six “indicators of vitality” identified by the steering team to measure UM congregations in the United States.

- average worship attendance as a percentage of members
- total membership
- number of children, youth and young adults
- number of professions of faith
- annual giving per attendee
- financial giving beyond the local church



The Rev. Amy Valdez Barker.
A UMNS photo by Mike Dubose

Towers Watson reviewed General Council on Finance and Administration data for 32,228 UM congregations (95 percent of U.S. churches).

The firm then divided the churches into three groups: “high vital,” “medium vital” and “low vital.” They categorized 15,546 U.S. churches as medium vital (49 percent) and 4,961 (15 percent) as high vital.

New measures of vitality

“While [indicators used by Towers Watson] tell us some things, in my opinion, they aren’t the whole picture of the health and vitality of a congregation,” said Kim Shockley, team leader of the more recent “Toward Vitality Research Project.”

Sponsored by four UM general agencies, the project measured the impact congregations are having on their communities—how many people are being fed, clothed and cared for, and how many people are engaged in study and fellowship groups.


“Growth in attendance and participation is important,” Shockley said. “But we have to look at things beyond Sunday morning worship — small groups, mission opportunities, places where we can intentionally build relationships and help people to find a

connection back to a relationship with God.”

A broader idea of vitality is reflected in the Vital Congregations initiative which, starting in 2011, asks UM congregations and conferences around the globe to set goals in five areas:

- Average worship attendance
- Evangelism measured by professions of faith
- Spiritual formation measured by small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies
- Missions measured by number of people in the congregation engaged in local, national and international outreach
- Stewardship measured by the total amount given by a congregation to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries, including apportionments to the denomination as a whole

Valdez Barker expects church leaders will look at additional indicators of vitality in the future. She notes that the General Commission on Religion and Race is encouraging congregations to look at how they reflect their neighborhoods.

“Where God has planted us, do the people worshipping reflect the community in which we live? Unfortunately, I don’t think that’s true,” Valdez Barker said. “If we really are for transformed lives, then what are we doing to transform the lives of the people in our own backyard?” 



Heather Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for UM News Service.

Vital congregations pay attention to those missing

By Tom Berlin and Lovett Weems

We are all busy in our churches doing good things, but most of this activity is not connecting more people to the love of God.

It might be worthwhile to pay attention to who is missing.

If we are to reach younger people, and more diverse people, some serious paying attention is in order.

Pay attention to those around you

The pastor of a downtown church in a large city recently asked, "Are there times when it feels as if your church resides on a different planet than it once did?"

The street signs are the same. The trees have been there for ages. The sun rises in the morning and the moon at night. But, everything else feels unfamiliar."

More and more churches find themselves in such a situation. All the things they counted on in the past to replenish the church with new generations seem to have broken down. Even within the congregation itself, what used to work no longer has the same power.

At such times, it's tempting to turn inward.

Declining congregations turn their primary attention to the preferences of current members; these churches pay no attention to ways to make their churches more welcoming to those who need their message and ministry.

Vital congregations focus outwardly.

Who is missing?

A good question to ask is, "When we worship on Sunday, who is missing?" Who in our community are not attending our services in proportion to their presence in the neighborhood?

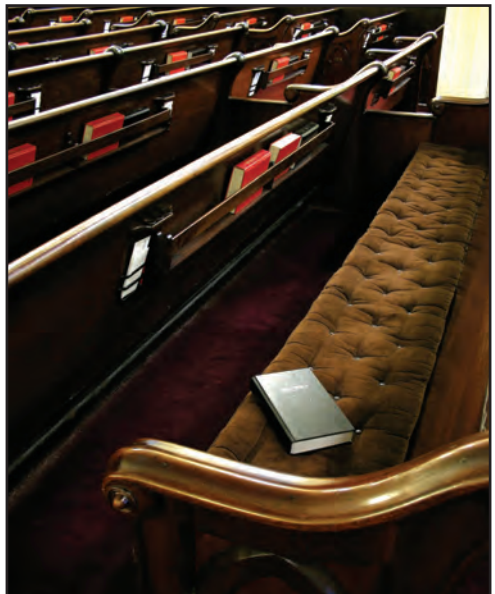
You may want to begin by seeing if you are missing any groups that are most typically missing from congregations. Give special attention to groups whose numbers have been trending downward in recent years.

- Young adults
- Singles
- Racial and ethnic groups different from the church majority
- Youth
- Children
- Men

Keep in mind that low numbers in any group make it less likely that others like them will participate. That is where small changes in their presence can make a big difference.



Growing churches not only pay attention to those who show up but also to those who are not there.




The focus you give to a particular category of people at one time is not because they are more important than others but because all people are important, and these just happen to be the ones at this time that need the attention. It is a bit like the good shepherd's concern for the one missing sheep even though there were many more sheep not missing.

Once you decide on the group to which you should pay special attention, count the number of such people in worship each week.

Careful monitoring of those attending will help you understand who they are and any common traits they have. It should trigger ways to connect with them, involve them, and to learn things important to them.

Even modest steps may result in just a few more people attending in a particular category.

If there are fewer men in your congregation, the General Commission on UM Men has many tools and resources to reach that target group. 



Lovett Weems is distinguished professor of church leadership and director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC.



Tom Berlin is lead pastor of Floris UMC in Herndon, Va.

This article is adapted from their Abingdon book, *Overflow: Increase Worship Attendance & Bear More Fruit*.

Vital United Methodist Congregations live out our Wesleyan DNA by offering disciples ways to grow in their love of God and love of neighbor through the means of grace. The means of grace we are focusing on as a denomination in this time and place are through the Four Areas of Focus.

1. We grow in our love of God by providing new places for people to worship God and renew existing congregations in their worship experiences.
2. We grow in our love of God by equipping principled Christian leaders to demonstrate this love of God in a multitude of ways.

3. We grow in our love of neighbor by caring for and joining in ministry with the poor.
4. We grow in our love of neighbor by joining communities across the world to stamp out killer diseases of poverty!

These are just some of the means of grace that bear the fruit of vital Christian United Methodists in vital ministries across the globe.

*The Rev. Amy Valdez Barker,
executive secretary
The Connectional Table*



A small church with a big heart

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.—

Oak Forest UMC is a small church with a big heart.

Founded in 1943, the church once had 1,200 members, but the neighborhood has declined and today some 70 people drive into the inner city church to worship.

“Our members left the area 30 years ago,” says the Rev. Russ Breshears, pastor for the last eight years.



A patient is treated at the Shepherd's Hope medical clinic.

However, the ministry of the church cannot be measured by church attendance. With support from eight-to-ten larger congregations, foundations and the UM Committee on Relief, the church provides medical, vision and dental care for more than 1,000 people. About 40 percent of people receiving services are undocumented workers.

“God has blessed us with physicians, nurses, lab techs, clerical workers, dentists, dental assistants, optical techs, social workers, counselors and Stephen Ministers,” says Breshears.

Ministries to the community began

in 2006 when the congregation cleaned the junk out of a former parsonage and made it into the Shepherd's Hope Medical Center.



The Rev. Russ Breshears, pastor of Oak Forest UMC, says the urban congregation can be a model for churches in struggling neighborhoods.

Open twice a week, the center is staffed by two volunteer physicians from a pool of 15 local physicians and staff from the University of Arkansas Medical Center. Some doctors routinely serve in the free clinic and others come on a when-needed basis. The clinic provides insulin treatments and detects cancer in early stages.

The church also purchased four additional properties that now serve as locations for:

- Bart's Place, a vision clinic named for blind Bartimaeus that provided 400 pairs of eyeglasses and arranged four cataract surgeries.
- A pharmacy.
- The Matthew 25 Food Pantry which feeds about 25 families each week.
- Barnabas House, a counseling center that offers spiritual guidance and helps people navigate social services.

Breshears, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City, is the only full-time staff member of the



Brandon Booth and Elvia Perez work at the front desk of Oak Forest UMC.


church. An administrative assistant works 20 hours a week.

“When you are the only staff person, you have to serve multiple roles from emptying the trash to working alongside neighbors and preaching the sermon,” said Breshears. “On many days I am not sure if I am a pastor, or a social worker, counselor, teacher, a development officer, or the church secretary. When I need a dose of humility, I clean the toilets.”

Ordained elder in 2006, Breshears



Children plant flowers around the church.

formerly served as a missionary in Peru for six months, and he taught at Lindsey Wilson College in Columbia, Ky. He and his wife, Diana, are parents of Gabriel, 24, and Mary Beth, 22. The couple met at the Union Settlement House in New York City while Breshears was attending Union Seminary. 

Eight reasons young people are leaving the church

1. **Demonizing**—One-fourth of 18- to 29-year-olds say their church demonizes their music, movies, culture, and technology.
2. **Boring**— One-third say their church services are boring
3. **Unclear and irrelevant**—About one-fourth say biblical teachings are unclear and irrelevant.
4. **God is absent**—One-fifth say God seems to be absent from their experiences in churches.
5. **Anti-science**—Up to one-third say the church is out of step with scientific developments.
6. **Sex**—One fifth say the “just-say-no philosophy” is insufficient.

Young Christian singles are as sexually active as their non-churched friends.

7. **Exclusivity**—Three in 10 young adults feel the church is too exclusive in a pluralistic and multi-cultural age. The same number feel forced to choose between their faith and their friends.
8. **Doubt is not welcome**—One third of young adults assume the church is not a safe place to express doubt. One-fourth have serious doubts they’d like to discuss.

Adapted from a survey in *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church—Rethinking Faith* by David Kinnaman.

Learning from Googlers



By Jeremy Steele

Google is one of the most successful and innovative companies in history. Currently, Google has 53,000 employees and is worth around \$330 billion. The company is working on self-driving cars and its own social network and is offering free Internet through blimps over developing countries.

What insights could a company like that offer the average church that has one to three staff members, a budget definitely not in the billions and a focus on reconciling people with God? A whole lot. It turns out that before people relied on Google maps, when the Google team was much smaller and when Google was not close to profitable, the company established some cultural priorities that fueled innovation and success — fuel that would work well in most church engines.

People are the No. 1 asset.

Google understands that people are its No. 1 asset and goes over the top caring

for its people. The company provides food, childcare and a host of other services to make sure the team feels supported and appreciated.

As a church, we need to have the same priority. Anyone who serves in the church is on the team and needs to be cared for and appreciated. This does not have to cost a lot of money. Simple, heartfelt actions can express appreciation. Here are some ideas:

- If a leader is ill, ask everyone who serves with him or her to write a note on colored paper and ask a local florist to donate floral cardholders to make a “note bouquet.”
- During your next leader meeting, recruit a couple of neighborhood kids or youth from your church to wash all the cars in the parking lot that evening.
- Ask Sunday school classes to prepare a casserole for the leaders returning from a youth retreat.
- Select a group to be your “people



team” and find creative ways to say “thanks” and help your leaders when things get tough.

Release quick iterate often.

Google believes the best way to make a great product is to release a good one and improve it. Rather than trying to get every detail of every piece perfect, Google releases a beta version that is far from its ideal, knowing Google can continually improve it. Google employees have discovered that they cannot know how the final version should look until they see how people use it. As soon as they release the unfinished version, they begin evaluating and iterating.

Our churches are the same. We do not need to wait until something is perfect to try it. We can launch beta versions, especially if we get in the habit of iterating quickly and continually.

There is definitely a place for big, yearly evaluations, but just as important is the weekly, “What was good/bad? How can we improve next week?” questioning. How do you start?


- Find a couple of people who are good at spotting ways you can improve and ask them if you can chat for about 10 minutes after your service, group time or study.
- Ask them what went well or poorly and try to get an actionable item for improvement next week.
- Keep the meeting short. If big issues crop up, schedule a follow-up meeting. If you keep the meeting short, you will be more likely to get actual feedback.
- Try to make the follow-up meeting longer (about an hour) every month or two to think about bigger ideas and ways to improve.

Freedom to innovate

Google may be most famous for its 20-percent-time rule. The idea is that anyone on the team gets 20 percent of his or her time at work to use on a personal-choice project as long as Google can own it. Many of the services you use every day like Gmail and Docs resulted from this policy.

This represents Google’s commitment to trying new things and creating new ideas. The best way to grow and maintain relevance in your community is to encourage everyone to try new things and reach out with new ideas. It means asking your leaders to brainstorm new outreach and worship ideas and give them permission to experiment.

The reality is that the best ideas in your church are most likely half-baked in a leader’s head, and if you release that leader to innovate and iterate, you will discover valid options.

One of John Wesley’s most effective discipleship tools (the class meeting) was a result of just this. In 1742 a group of Methodists were trying to devise a method for paying off some building debt in a town called Bristol. One of the leaders (Captain Foy) suggested that everyone be divided into groups of twelve to collect a weekly penny donation to go towards debt reduction. They appointed one leader to go around and collect the weekly donations, and to their surprise this small-group division ended up being a profound ministry innovation. Wesley took the concept, tweaked it, replicated it and soon it became the driving force of discipleship in the Methodist Church. 

This article is provided by UM Communications (www.umc.org)

Kentucky church presents 250 books to first responders

HOPKINSVILLE, Ky.—

Hopkinsville UMC gave copies of *Strength for Service to God and*

Community to 250 first responders in their community.

On a Sunday morning, the church placed American flag envelopes in every bulletin. Congregants were then invited to contribute to a fund to purchase books of daily devotions for these community servants.

“Our church responded!” said the Rev. Paige Williams, pastor.

“A sticker was placed inside each book with our service times and an invitation to our church,” said Williams.



Police Chief Guy Howie and members of the Hopkinsville Police Department receive copies of Strength for Service to God and Community.


“We also wrote ‘a prayer for our community servants’.”

The books were hand delivered to the Fire Department, Police Department and the Sheriff’s office.

“We were able to hand several of the books to our first responders in person, the rest will be given out by the chiefs at other meetings,” said Williams.

“What a great day we had delivering the books,” said Leah Malloy, Hopkinsville

UMC coordinator of missions.

If your congregation would like to give books to police or fire department personnel, visit the www.StrengthforService.org website. 

Lessons from a colonoscopy

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—“Pray, risk, breath”—Those are principles all Christians should follow.

That’s the advice Bishop Bruce Ough, chairman of the Connectional Table, offered members of General Council on Finance and Administration and members of the table during a Nov. 20 worship service in the Upper Room Chapel.


“You can’t deal with headwinds without prayer,” said the bishop.

In talking about risk, he noted that “wing walkers” on bi-planes in aerial circuses must let go of one stanchion before they can grab one 12 inches away. “We need to let go of that which

we know and take hold of what God is taking us to,” said Ough.

Underscoring the importance of breathing, Ough recalled the advice a physician gave him before a colonoscopy without sedation.

“Keep breathing when we go around the corners,” said the physician.

“That’ll preach!”, responded the bishop. 



Bishop Bruce Ough

Reconsider the time you spend in meetings

By Greg Arnold

I spend a considerable amount of time talking with guys and men's ministry leaders to see how the church meets them where they are.

My goal?: To ignite revival within the church through men's ministry.

One of the biggest men's ministry killers I encounter is the meeting.

Yes—meetings.

While we've been doing business the same way for generations within our local churches, the culture around us has shifted. Twenty, 30, or 40 years ago, the meeting was how we built teams and transferred information. Technology and the new speed of communication now help us become quickly informed. Yet, we hang on to the tradition of meeting—even when it's not necessary.

A waste of time

Nancy Koehn, a teacher at the Harvard Business School, tells us, "Our best estimates—and these are pretty educated—show there are 11 million formal meetings every day in the United States. That tallies up to about four billion meetings per year."

"Are they worth the time invested?" she asks.

She finds the following: "Over half of the people surveyed say about half the meetings they attend are unproductive."

That means that nearly 5.5 million meetings every day are without merit, unnecessary, pointless, and time-wasting. She adds, "So there's maybe a little more than two billion meetings a year that most people regard a very poor use of their time—that seems like a real waste."

Despite the loss of productivity, we continue to have meetings.

Why?

Koehn says it's mostly out of routine and habit.

Break the habit

The majority of men's ministries I

encounter are built around the concept of meetings—breakfast meetings, business meetings, planning meetings, committee meetings, meetings, meetings, and meetings. Pause and ponder—What percentage of your men's ministry consists of meetings versus activities or effective disciple-forming events?

A young man our church is trying to reach has learned to dread meetings at work—and for good reason.

Now, our first invitation to him is to join a group that does most of its work—in meetings.

He never shows up.

Certainly, you can make a case for your meetings. I am often taken to task for suggesting that meetings be ditched. It's natural to offer reasons for our long-standing meetings. But when the talking is over "meeting-based" men's ministry programs are in decline.


Meet for a reason

Find a way to encourage ministry within your local church—with fewer meetings. But if you must continue the mind-numbing process of meetings, here is a recommendation from Koehn and the Harvard Business School:

"If meetings begin and end on time, and if you limit them to a short amount of time to get a stated goal completed, the overall meeting will be more productive."

She suggests 15 minutes. I agree with her assessment.

So—if you must continue your meetings, search on line for training tips on how to hold effective meetings.

Commit to a purpose for your meeting that can be followed with action. Make certain your objectives point men toward discipleship. 



Greg Arnold is a deployed staff member of the General Commission on United Methodist Men.

In Memoriam

Edward Russell Clark

McMINNVILLE, Oregon—

Edward Russell Clark, 74, former president of the Western Jurisdiction of United Methodist Men, died peacefully on Feb. 14, 2014, at his home after a formidable battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).



Ed was the fourth of nine children born to Archie and Genevieve (DeGroot) Clark. The family moved to Los Angeles, Calif., in 1948. He began working, before and after school at the family gas station and delivering newspapers, and graduated from Belmont High School in 1958. While being a student athlete, Ed met the love of his life, Mona, and after graduation Ed and Mona were married on November 10, 1958 at the First Methodist Church of Los Angeles.

Ed attended junior college while working full time (or more).

Ed and Mona moved to Canby, Oregon in 1961. By 1963, Ed and Mona became the proud parents of Edna Jean. Delos Russell was born in 1969, followed by Genevieve Marleen in 1973.

The family moved to McMinnville, Oregon in 1978.

No matter the demands of work or how frantic the pace of life, Ed always gave his first time and energy to serving God and the community. From United Methodist Men, to youth group "parent", to 4-H Dad, Cub Scouting and little league, Ed always had time and energy for others, for his family, his church and seemed to gain energy with each additional request for his time!

Ed became a licensed United Methodist local preacher in the early 1960s regularly preaching at a small United Methodist church near Canby, while remaining active in the Canby United Methodist Church


as Lay Leader, United Methodist Men's President, Sunday School Teacher and Trustee.

His service to God and community continued in McMinnville throughout the next 36 years, and will be affectionately remembered as "Mr. Ed" by two generations of church youth group kids who enjoyed Ed's wit and wisdom during many adventures.

In the 1990s Ed was elected president of the Western Jurisdiction of United Methodist Men and a member of the United Methodist Men Foundation board. He was inducted into the John Wesley Society in 2003.

Ed's professional life was primarily as a dairy feed salesman, grain salesman, business entrepreneur, and bus operator. From the time he was 9, until just after his 73rd birthday, when he was diagnosed with ALS, Ed was "on the job". He also served honorably in the Army National Guard from 1961-1969.

Ed will be remembered for his larger than life laughter that filled a room; for his deep spirit and confident trust in God; his devotion to God, family, and community; and for his jokes and infectious humor.

He is survived by his wife, Mona P. (Holzer) Clark; brothers Leo and wife Armeda Clark of Sacramento, Calif., Jack and wife Betty Clark of Montclair, Calif., sisters Janet and husband Paul Hilse of Park, Ariz., and June and husband Phil St Laurent of Isabella, Mo; daughter and son-in-law Edna and Floyd Bullock of Portland, Ore.; daughter and son-in-law Genevieve and John (Fisher) Clark of Okinawa, Japan; grandsons James, Joseph, and Scott Bullock of Portland, Ore., Declan Clark of Sherwood, Ore., and granddaughter Alaina Clark of Sherwood, Ore. Ed is preceded in death by his parents, Archie and Genevieve (DeGroot) Clark, siblings Mark Clark, Harold Clark, David Clark, Bernice (Clark) Giacinti, and his son Delos R. Clark. 



Across the Nation

CECILTON, Md —

Men sponsor CROP walk

UMM of Cecilton Parish sponsored a November walk for CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty). The 3-mile walk raised funds to reduce world hunger and provided funds to purchase back packs for children.

“CROP walks started in Cecilton four years ago when residents noticed there wasn’t anything like this below the canal,” said Dave Segermark, coordinator of the walk.



OXFORD, Mich. —

Band of Brothers ministers to the community

“Our goal is to promote Christ by being leaders of our families, our community, and our church,” says Lee Donley, a leader of Oxford UMC Band of Brothers and president of North Central Jurisdiction UMM.



From left: Band of Brothers President Fred Nelson, Tony Rizzo, Jerry Bogus, Chris Acheson, Pastor Kevin Miles, Lee Donley and Tom Bertich proudly stand on their newly constructed handicap ramp.



Members of Boy Scout Troop 366 join with UMM of Oxford UMC.

Oxford men support “Wreath’s Across America” to honor fallen heroes at Ridgelawn Memorial Cemetery, and they help police and fire departments assemble Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets.

Every spring, the men manage a concession stand at the Oxford Elementary School Fair. That effort provides funds for scholarships to church camps, and materials to build handicap ramps.

In April, the men raised \$2,200 to reduce world hunger through the annual CROP walk.

Through the Society of St. Andrew, the active group provided 42,000 pounds of potatoes to 26 food pantries and churches.

Oxford men also meet Saturday mornings for Bible study, sponsor movie nights, provide coin boxes for Society of St. Andrew, support a Boy Scout troop, and participate in a Souper-Bowl Chili cook-off on Super Bowl Sunday.

NORTH CANTON, Ohio —

Men present books to first responders

Four UM congregations presented 137 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* to members of the North Canton Police and Fire Departments. Books of daily devotions were also given to first responders in Plain Township.

Stephen Ministry of Faith UMC, Grace UMC; Simpson UMC; and Werner Church Road UMC contributed funds for the effort. CMG Business Concepts in Middlebranch also provided funds.



Leland Spencer (center) presents copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* to North Canton Ohio Police Chief Steve Wilder and Sgt. Frank Kemp.

“I would like to see this book get into the hands of every first responder in East Ohio,” said Leland Spencer, president of East Ohio UMM. He noted a church in Youngstown gave copies of the book to public servants in that area.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—
UM Men provide pump for Liberia hospital

Dr. Elma Jocson, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries, told 40 West Michigan Conference churches that the floor of the operating room at Ganta Hospital is frequently covered with fluid because the northeast Liberia hospital has only one suction pump and it cannot handle all the waste from surgeries.



Chuck McMillan, International Aid executive, examines the pump prior to shipment to Liberia. Photo by Lynn DeMoss, secretary of West Michigan Conference Board of Global Ministries; she hosted Dr. Jocson and helped locate the pump.

District UMM, said he would find a way to provide a pump.



Bassett advanced \$820 to purchase the pump from International Aid in Spring Lake, and he asked UMM organizations to help pay the \$375 cost of shipping the 76-pound crate to Macedonia, Ohio.

In January, an East Ohio Conference medical team left Macedonia and took the pump to Liberia.

CLOVIS, Calif. —

Scouts and church members package more than 120,000 meals

Five Boy Scout troops joined 140 members of Memorial UMC to package 121,422 meals for Stop Hunger Now.



Chris Romero, program manager for Stop Hunger Now in northern California, said the Clovis effort ranked among the 10 largest campaigns in the United States in October. In addition to packaging the meals, the church raised \$30,000 to pay for the ingredients and the cost of shipping the meals.

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

DES MOINES, Iowa —

Bishop calls scouting a 'ministry that will last'

"For more than 100 years scouting has helped to prepare future leaders of this country, combining education and physical activities with life-long values and fun," said Iowa Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble. "Scouting is a ministry that will last."

The father of three former Scouts, Trimble made the remark during a Bishop's Dinner for Scouting at the Des Moines Scout Center.

The Rev. Brian Milford, dean of the Iowa Conference Cabinet, told the bishop, "Scouting gave me countless opportunities to learn how to lead a group of people towards a common purpose."

The Rev. Tom Carver, superintendent of the Iowa Northwest District, said, "Through scouting I gained a life-long appreciation for the enjoyment of God's creation. There is still something powerful in the human relationships that can be developed through the ancient practice of sitting around a campfire and telling stories."

Bishop Trimble expressed appreciation for UMM, local churches and communities that "invest the time and space" for scouting ministry.



Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble speaks to some 100 representatives from Iowa churches and scouting ministry organization.

The program included representatives from Boy Scouts of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Camp Fire, 4-H, and Girl Scouts.

Men of Altoona UMC provided the evening meal.

FAIRFIELD, Calif. —

Men and boys go fishing

For the past three years, men of Community UMC and Scout Troop 100 have supported five annual “Kids Days of Fishing” for disadvantaged and special-needs children. The events feature prizes for the largest fish.



Mike Finley, UMM treasurer, founded the Scout troop more than 20 years ago.

The Rev. Tom Buratovich, pastor of the Porterville UMC, led a three-day study of missions, personal growth in the Christian faith, and strategies to increase the outreach of UMM.

Once a month, the men also maintain the church property and make minor building repairs.

EDMOND, Okla.—

Boy Scout troop celebrates centennial

In October, 1913, the Rev. James Pershing, a Methodist minister from Lawton, Okla., chartered a Boy Scout troop in Oklahoma City. The original charter had to be requested from England because the BSA had yet to be chartered by the U.S. Congress.

In 1962, the troop moved to its current home in Edmond. The 25-member Troop 1 now meets at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church.

HUNTERSVILLE, N.C. —

Presidents of prison ministries gather

Presidents of Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries met at the Western North Carolina Conference UMC Foundation Building on Nov. 19 and 20.

The effort to bring Disciple Bible study to state prisons is supported by UMM. The ministry operates in North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana and Illinois. It will be expanded to Indiana and South Carolina in the near future.



Officers of Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries (DBOM) meet in North Carolina. From left: Gene Mims, president, DBOM of Virginia; Jerry Fuss, vice-president DBOM of Virginia; Mike Grace, DBOM of Louisiana; Dr. Mark Hicks, president DBOM National; the Rev. Cari Willis, vice-president DBOM National; Charles Gilliland, president, DBOM of Tennessee; Laura Hicks, DBOM national administrator; Mark Dehority, president, DBOM of Illinois.

IOWA CITY, Iowa —

Church provides 42,000 pounds of potatoes to food banks

Fifteen people from St. Marks UMC loaded 42,000 pounds of potatoes into cars and trucks lined up at the Salvation Army center.

Art Kistler, a member of UMM of St. Marks, says this is the 20th year the men have hosted a Society of St. Andrew potato drop.

The potatoes came from a grower in Wisconsin and were delivered to Iowa City free by Stutsman Transportation Inc.

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. —

Church presents books to first responders

Greg Arnold, a deployed staff member of the General Commission on UM Men preached on a Men's Day at Hempstead UMC. Following the sermon, the Rev. Rafael Garcia, pastor of the Long Island church, consecrated 50 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community*.

Malcolm Hall presented the books to 11 church members serving as first responders and 37 other men and boys.



First responders in Hempstead UMC receive copies of Strength for Service to God and Community: Front row from left: The Rev. Rafael Garcia, pastor; Janice Wellington, nurse; Miriam Richards, nurse; Doreen Redman, teacher; Elinora Brovard, nurse; Pauline Lewis, nurse; Pearl Miles-Lee, public official; and Danielle Dwyer, airplane steward. Back row: Malcolm Hall, coordinator of New York Conference Scouting Ministries and Strength for Service; Wayne Redman, director of Hempstead Boys & Girls Club; Greg Arnold; Royston Bailey, president of New York Conference UMM; Vohhon McCullers, teacher; and Hugh Brown Sr., air rescue pilot.

BLACKSTONE, Va. —

Virginia men host Boy Scouts

For the 26th year, men of Virginia Conference hosted a Boy Scout retreat at the Blackstone Retreat and Conference Center. A total of 460 Scouts and 127 adults attended the Nov. 1-3 event.

At the same time, the Rev. Tom Berlin guided 165 men in ways to become courageous spiritual leaders.

Twelve teams of men and 14 teams of Boy Scouts participated in a cornhole

tournament, which raised \$200 for Heart Havens home for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Dieter Henss and Mark Mongold from Good Shepherd UMC were the men champs. Walt Schmicke and Triston Southern won the Scout tourney.



Boy Scouts participate in a parade of flags during a worship service at the Blackstone Retreat Center.

NEW ORLEANS, La.—

UM Men provide funds for Philippines

Men of Carrollton UMC spent several hours in front of the church building handing out free water to those on their way to the November Po Boy Festival in Uptown New Orleans. Donations were also accepted for UMCOR relief efforts in the Philippines.

"We even had people quickly stop their cars, jump out to grab some water, and leave a donation! Traffic was moving very slowly," said Lisa Lord, wife of the church's pastor, the Rev. Jon Lord.



Men of Carrollton UMC hand out free water bottles while the Rev. Jon Lord stands on the church porch playing his guitar. Photo by Lisa Lord.

On December 1, Joe Kelly, national prayer advocate, presented a new charter to Kemper Todd, president of Carrollton UMM, the newest chartered group in the New Orleans District.

OLLIE, Iowa —

UM Churches provide 40,000 pounds of potatoes

Men of Prairie View UMC, Ollie UMC, Mobile UM Missionaries; and the Mt. Pleasant UMC worked together to provide 40,000 pounds of potatoes to 38 food banks, churches and other southeast Iowa organizations.

This was the eighth time in the last nine years the churches have participated in a Society of St. Andrew potato drop.

"It was probably as cold as it's been in eight years," said Bill Anderson of Richland. "It went really well."

A member of the Prairie View UMC brought the load of potatoes 300 miles from Stevens Point, Wis.

BUTLER, Pa. —

Church receives Shepherd Church Charter Recognition

Men of Nixon UMC have held the charters for Boy Scout Troop 53 and Cub Scout Pack 53 for a whopping 50 years.



"Their contributions are invaluable to our church and community," says the Rev. Bruce Merritt, pastor. "The troop currently has at least five young men working to earn their Eagle Award."

The pack participates in a bicycle rodeo, bowling, laser tag, the pinewood derby, parades, campfires, and flag football.

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

Police chiefs receive devotional books

Larry Coppock, staff executive of the Strength for Service Fund, presented *Strength for Service to God and Community* books to 70 Tennessee chiefs of police, FBI and Secret Service agents.



Larry Coppock (left) presents Strength for Service to God and Community to Police Chief David Moore, president of the Tennessee Chiefs Association.

ROCKY MOUNT, Va.—

UM Men help construct playground

Men of Bethlehem UMC joined members of the Rotary Club and the Lions Club to construct a playground for the Henry Fork Center.

"Volunteers gave over 350 hours to complete the playground," said Lisa Nichols, director of the UM center.

Bart Frankena, a board member of the center and member of the UMM, coordinated the project.

DENVER, Colo.—

Annual gathering present five with life membership

During the fifth annual meeting of Stout Hearted Men, the Metropolitan District of Rocky Mountain Conference presented Life Member Awards to Gary Archer, a lay minister; Richard Cherrington, an Eagle Scout; the Rev. Linda Pelletier, pastor of Phillips UMC and host of the gathering; Vance Prendergast, president of UMM of Phillips UMC; and the Rev. Eric Van Thomas Smith, a former district superintendent and pastor of Park Hill UMC.

SCOTTSBORO, Ala. —

Men give books to first responders

On Christmas Eve, the local chapter of the UMM from Scottsboro First UMC presented gifts to first responders in recognition of their service to the community.

The men provided *Strength for Service to God and Community* books to 150 responders at the Scottsboro Police Department, Jackson County Sheriff's Department, Scottsboro Fire Department, Emergency Medical Providers, Highlands Medical Center and the local Air Evacuation team.



Men of the Scottsboro Fire Department receive copies of Strength for Service to God and Community.

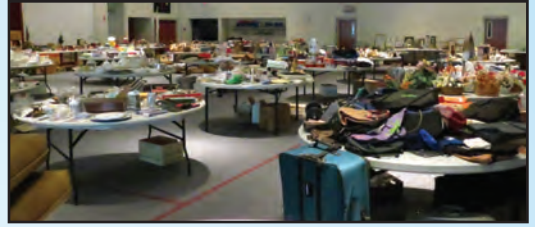
XENIA, Ohio —

UM Men provide funds for missions

Faith Community UMM raised \$3,600 through a garage sale and quickly used the funds to support mission projects in Xenia and around the world.

After supporting global ministries by paying the UMM \$85 charter fee, the men gave \$500 to shelter the homeless, \$100 each to a Boy Scout troop, a Cub Scout pack and a Girl Scout troop.

They also purchased *Strength for Service to God and Country* books for the military (\$143), supported a local youth-ministry program (\$480), and they provided \$200 to the UM Committee on Relief, \$100 to Habitat for Humanity, and \$500 to a local food pantry. They gave \$100 to the Society of St. Andrew Meals for Millions program, \$500 to Athletes



Faith Community UMM sale opens for business.

in Action, \$100 to the Red Cross, and \$100 to Four Paws for Ability. Finally, they gave \$200 for a Guatemala mission trip and \$100 for Faith UMC pre-school scholarships.


In addition to the cash gifts, the men gleaned 461 pounds of tomatoes and corn for a local food pantry, and provided 733 hours of labor for the renovation of the United Theological Seminary houses in Dayton, Ohio. They also provided funds to send one member to the National UMM Gathering in Nashville.

PRAIRIEVILLE, La. —

Louisiana church members learn to lead like Jesus

Jim Boesch, a deployed staff member of the General Commission on UM Men, led some 50 people in a "Lead like Jesus" training experience at New Song UMC.

Mark Lubbock, another deployed staff member based in Louisiana, was the architect of the experience attended by people from across the state.

Two of the participants are planning Lead like Jesus events in their congregations. 



Majority wins

Four rabbis had a series of theological arguments, and three were always in accord against the fourth. One day, the odd rabbi out, after the usual “3 to 1, majority rules” statement that signified that he had lost again, decided to appeal to a higher authority.

“Oh, God!” he cried. “I know in my heart that I am right and they are wrong! Please give me a sign to prove it to them!”

It was a beautiful, sunny day. As soon as the rabbi finished his prayer, a storm cloud moved across the sky above the four. It rumbled once and dissolved. “A sign from God! See, I’m right, I knew it!” But the other three disagreed, pointing out that storm clouds form on hot days.

So the rabbi prayed again: “Oh, God, I



need a bigger sign to show that I am right and they are wrong. So please, God, a bigger sign!”

This time four storm clouds appeared, rushed toward each other to form one big cloud, and a bolt of lightning slammed into a tree on a nearby hill.

“I told you I was right!” cried the rabbi, but his friends insisted that nothing had happened that could not be explained by natural causes.

The rabbi was getting ready to ask for a very big sign, but just as he said, “Oh God...,” the sky turned pitch black, the earth shook, and a deep, booming voice intoned, “He’s right!”

The rabbi put his hands on his hips, turned to the other three, and said, “Well?”

“So,” shrugged one of the other rabbis, “now it’s 3 to 2.” 

humor humor humor humor humor humor humor humor

Yep, these are the golden years

Several days ago as I left a meeting at a hotel; I gave myself a personal TSA pat down. I was looking for my keys. They were not in my pockets.

A quick search of the meeting room revealed nothing.

I must have left them in the car.

Frantically, I headed for the parking lot.

My wife has grumbled at me many times for leaving keys in the ignition.

My theory is the ignition is the best place not to lose them.

Her theory is that the car will be stolen.

As I burst through the door, I came to a terrifying conclusion.

Her theory was right.

My car was not in the parking lot.


I immediately called the police to report

the stolen car. I gave them my license number and confessed I had left my keys in the car.

Then I made the most difficult call of all, “Honey, I left my keys in the car and it’s been stolen.”

There was a period of silence. I thought the call had been dropped, but then she said, “You idiot, I dropped you off!”

Now it was my time to be silent. Embarrassed, I said, “Well, come and get me.”

She retorted, “I will, as soon as I convince this cop I didn’t steal your car.” 



UM Men create the Susanna Wesley Award of Excellence

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

The General Commission on UM Men has created an award for women who emulate Susanna Wesley.

Few women suffered as many hardships as Susanna Wesley, and even fewer women have contributed as much to the faith community.

Marrying 26-year-old Samuel Wesley at age 19, Susanna became the mother of 19 children, nine of whom died in infancy.

Her rectory home was burned down twice and Samuel once left her and the children for over a year because of a minor dispute. On two occasions, Samuel spent time in jail due to his inability to pay his bills. The lack of money was a continual struggle for Susanna.

Yet, Susanna made certain her children were well educated and trained in the classics and the faith. At one point, while her husband was in London, some 250 people attended her afternoon Sunday school class.

Two of her sons, John Wesley and Charles Wesley, became the founders of the Methodist movement, and she is revered as the mother of Methodism.

Women who continue the tradition of providing spiritual nurture to their family and who make contributions to the United Methodist Church and its witness around the world may be presented the Susanna Wesley Award of Excellence.

Local churches and organizations may now present the award to women who have served Jesus Christ in a manner similar to Susanna Wesley. An awardee must possess a distinctive intellect, a nurturing spirit, unwavering devotion and perseverance in the faith.

A candidate must:



- Have given faithful service to the church by serving in a leadership position
- Have helped others in their Christian walk
- Have demonstrated devotion, witness and instruction that lead others into a deeper understanding of the faith and service to Jesus Christ.

Suggestions of who might be recognized:

- A leader of United Methodist Women
- A bishop
- A pastor or a district superintendent.
- A conference leader
- A lay leader
- A Christian educator
- A leader of youth
- A woman who helps others in their Christian walk

Contribution

A gift of \$500 enables a woman to receive the Susanna Wesley Award of Excellence. The gift underwrites costs associated with the award; the balance is used to support the world-wide ministries of the General Commission on UM Men.

In addition to ministries to and with men, the commission supports the Society of St. Andrew, The Upper Room Prayer Line and scouting ministries including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, 4-H, and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

The gift may come from an individual a UM organization or a fund-raising activity in the honoree's name.

Recognition

The recipient of the Susanna Wesley Award of Excellence will receive an embossed plaque and a lapel pin.

Please provide a suitable ceremony for the presentation of the award. A suggested litany is available in the resource section of the gcumm.org website.

Meet a member of the Circuit Rider Society

Curtis Brisbon

If you think it's tough to be the youngest child. Imagine the struggles of Curtis Brisbon who entered life during the 1936 Depression as youngest of 10 children. Few people would have expected the youngster to become one of the national leaders of UM Men.

Brisbon grew up in Rembert, S.C., where he was a member of Spring Hill Methodist Church and a Boy Scout. Following his 1954 graduation from high school, Brisbon served a two-year stint in the U.S. Army. He continued in the reserves while attending Claffin College in Orangeburg, S.C. In 1959, Brisbon returned to active duty where he served as a first sergeant until his 1976 retirement. At that time he was employed by the National Park Service where he worked in property management until 1995.

Brisbon, his wife, Mary, and their three children have always been active members of Methodist and United Methodists congregations. In the Spring Hill Church, Brisbon served as a lay member of the South Carolina Annual Conference, chairman of the finance committee, and Sunday school superintendent.

In 1980, Brisbon moved to Washington, D.C., area where he became an active member of First UMC in Bradbury Heights. He served as the first president of a UM Men group in First Church and he was elected secretary of the District UM Men and later president. He served as president of Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference UM Men from 2001 to 2004.

With boundless energy, Brisbon currently serves as a member of the UM Men Foundation, chair of the Board of Trustees for First UMC, and a member of the Finance Committee. He also volunteers at the V.A. Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Brisbon is the former vice-president of the



Curtis Brisbon

Northeastern Jurisdiction UM Men, former chair of the Bradbury Heights Church Administrative Council, and former lay member of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

The 77-year-old told *UM Men* magazine that one of his greatest challenges is to get men to understand that we are a connectional church. "I continue to be optimistic that through prayer, UM Men will come around again as it was in the 1980s and early 1990s," said Brisbon. "I have seen lives change through prayer groups, Bible study and opportunities for men to discuss issues common to their gender."

Asked why he became a member of the Circuit Rider Society, Brisbon said, "I've always tried to follow the advice of John Wesley: 'Do all the good you can by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, and all the times you can to all the people you can. as long as you can.'"

Members of the Circuit Rider Society annually pledge \$1,500 to support men's ministry. Brisbon has been a member since the society was organized in 2004.

Members of the Circuit Rider Society

Dan Henry, Bolingbrook, Ill.
Larry Coppock, Joelton, Tenn.
Robert Cate, Nashville, Tenn.
Curtis Brisbon, Washington, D.C.
Gil Hanke, Antioch, Tenn.
Bill Mooney, Blue Springs, Mo.
Gary Spivey, Bellevue, Neb.
Paul Diehl, Austin, Texas
John Machonis Jr, Schaumburg, Ill.
Mark Dehority, Moweaqua, Ill.
Sonny and Evelyn Evans, Natitochex, LA

In Memoriam

Roy Lifsey

MACON, Ga.—

Thomas Roy Lifsey, 82, one of the early champions of UM Men, died Jan. 6, 2014, following an extended illness.

Born Oct. 11, 1931, to the late James Fred Lifsey and the late Mildred Self Lifsey, Roy was a U. S. Coast Guard veteran, and a retired Civil Service employee of Warner Robins Air Force Base.

After the Board of Discipleship created a section on UM Men, Roy recruited Jim Snead, director of the South Georgia Conference Council on Ministries to serve as the first staff executive of the new section. There were only 3,000 units when Snead was named head of the men's section in 1974. At his 1995 retirement there were more than 10,000 chartered units.

"Roy and Dale Waymire made United Methodist Men what it is today," said Robert Powell, former president of the UM Men Foundation. "Dale wrote most of the legislation and Roy spoke to a 1996 General Conference subcommittee studying the proposal for the creation of the General Commission on UM Men."

"No one thought delegates would approve the formation of an additional agency, but thanks the efforts of Dale and Roy, the commission was approved," said Powell, who also served as a spokesman for the commission during the 10-day legislative assembly in Denver.

In 1980, Roy was elected chairman of the Section on UM Men in the General Board of Discipleship and was one of the architects of the 1981 National Congress of UM Men attended by 5,400 men. Under the leadership of Roy, Dale and Jim, the men introduced the Every Man Shares (EMS) program and early gifts totaled \$61,000.

Roy was reelected to a second 4-year term as chairman of the men's section in 1984.

In 1989, the foundation created the John Wesley Society to support scouting and men's ministry. Dale and Roy were the first to be inducted following their \$1,000 gifts to the foundation.

"Roy told me that he was the second John Wesley fellow even though he said 'yes' first," said Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the commission. "Roy said Dale was faster with the check."

Today there are 771 members of the John Wesley Society.

Roy served as chair of the publicity committee of the foundation. "One of the many gifts he brought was a strong desire to make anything the foundation sent out as clear as possible," said Hanke. "Roy understood that we were usually sending materials to men who knew nothing about the workings of UM Men or the foundation, and so he helped us choose our words carefully."

While Roy refused to use e-mail, people at his memorial service referred to him as a "visionary." He was famous for his new ideas, from retreats to Bible studies, to scholarships. He was the architect of the "Bishop's Invitational," a men's event for the Alabama-West Florida, South Georgia and Florida Conferences.

Roy also helped establish the G. Ross Freeman Society, an organization of presidents of UM Men in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. He served as first chairman of the organization that honors pastors who are engaged in men's ministry. The foundation also issues James Awards to lay persons who are "doers" of the word and not "hearers only." Roy is survived by his wife, Ima Jean Harper Lifsey; daughter Connie Sue Rouis of Warner Robins, Ga.; son: Brian Thomas Lifsey of Centerville, Ga. and four grandchildren.



Roy Lifsey

Strength for Service begins new chapter

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

After publishing 480,000 updated copies of an historic book of daily devotions for U.S. service men and women, the General Commission on UM Men has organized a non-denominational organization to expand publication efforts.

Strength for Service Inc. will continue to publish *Strength for Service to God and Country* for military troops and will distribute copies for *Strength for Service to God and Community* for police officers, fire fighters and other first responders.

The new non-profit organization will continue to receive requests from military chaplains, but because of declining financial resources, the group is only able to send a portion of the number of books requested.

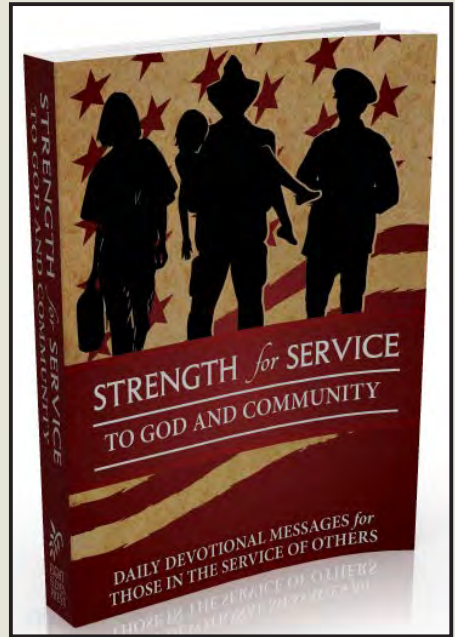
While support for the book for the military has decreased, support for *Strength for Service to God and Community* has increased.

Free copies of the book have been sent to first responders to Newtown, Conn.; West, Texas; Boston, Mass.; Prescott, Ariz.; and Nashville, Tenn.

A Boy Scout edition of the book has also been approved and 1,400 copies were distributed during the 2013 National Boy Scout Jamboree in West Virginia. Copies of the Scout edition are also being placed in Scout shops and 10,000 copies have been ordered for the Latimer High Adventure Camp in Tennessee.

There are several ways in which UM men can aid the effort to distribute Strength for Service books

- Visit Amazon.com and offer a testimonial about one or both books.
- Purchase a copy of the book for first responders from Amazon.



- Invite your church to establish a Sunday to express appreciation to local fire fighters, police officers and other first responders and provide these public servants with copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community*. Use the litany at the gcumm.org website.
- Ask a business or an individual to provide copies of the book to fire and police departments. If they order 1,000 or more copies, they may have their name and logo imprinted on the back cover (\$6 per book).
- Pray for the organization and the effort.
- Visit www.strengthforservice.org for information and to contribute.

UM Men Awards

Herb Fleming

Church honors World War II veteran

MORGANTOWN, W.Va.—Men of Westover UMC honored Herb Fleming, a Navy veteran of World War II, for decades of service to the church as a trustee and a supporter of UMM. On Nov. 10, UMM presented Fleming with a Life Member Award.

Fleming is a long-time volunteer with feeding programs operated by the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, and he helped with fund-raising events for Monongalia County 4-H clubs where he served as a counselor.

He is a 53-year member of Carpenter's Union 604 and a member of Odd Fellows.

The Rev. Mike Orthel

Pastor guides church through difficult days

BURLINGTON, Iowa—Men of First UMC presented the Rev. Mike Orthel with a Life Member Award.

After graduating with a mathematics degree from the University of Northern Iowa in 1965,



The Rev. Mike Orthel

Orthel taught school for a few years before managing four different grocery stores in four Iowa cities.

In 1986, he entered Dubuque Theological Seminary and graduated in 1989. After serving four other Iowa congregations, he was appointed to First UMC in Burlington in

2008.

“Mike came to guide the church through the desert of anger, sorrow, grief, frustration and rebuilding the church after a devastating arson fire in 2007.” said Larry Miller, UMM president. “Mike is involved in numerous

activities in First UMC, including adult Sunday school, choir, a UMM Bible study, and youth activities.”

Larry Bolick

Farmer manages cattle, bees and church property

HICKORY, N.C.—Men of Mt. Bethel UMC presented Larry Bolick with a Life Member Award for 18-years of service as the Sunday school superintendent and treasurer. He has been elected to four 3-year terms as president of the Board of Trustees, and he chairs the Cemetery Committee.

He also serves on the Finance Committee, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Outreach and Special Needs Committee and the Child Development Center Committee.

Bolick finds hundreds of ways to serve the church while still managing a farm with 60 beef cattle and bee hives. Larry and wife, Linda, are proud parents of a son, a daughter, and five grandchildren.



Larry Bolick installs a plexiglass screen between a baby-changing area and a sink in the Child Development Center at Mt. Bethel UMC in Hickory, N.C. He has spent countless hours making sure the center passes local and state codes.

Dr. Bill Taggart

Men induct Stephen Minister into the Society of John Wesley

STILLWATER, Okla.—Men of First UMC raised \$1,000 in order to honor Dr. Bill Taggart as a fellow in the Society of John Wesley.

“Dr. Taggart lives by serving others through his vocation as well as the church,” said Floyd Hawk, secretary of UMM of Stillwater First

UMC. “He served for many years as a Stephen Minister to help individuals going through stressful times.”

Every Thursday, Taggart, 93, helps prepare food for the church’s community meal. The former director of agricultural research at Oklahoma State University also teaches an adult Sunday school class and frequently leads devotions for UMM weekly breakfasts.



Dr. Bill Taggart prepares food for the church’s weekly community meal. He has helped with meal preparation nearly every Thursday since the program began nine years ago.

“Bill is recognized by his peers and fellow church members as a witness of Jesus Christ and serves his fellow man in many ways,” said Hawk.

The Rev. Charles Grant Men honor pastor of congregational care

BONNER SPRINGS, Kan.— Men of Bonner Springs UMC honored the Rev. Charles Grant with a Life Member Award.

Grant, a retired clergy member of the Kansas West Conference, serves as part-time pastor of congregational care, visiting hospitals and homes. He also sings in the choir, helps lead worship and substitutes for the pastor when she is gone.

Grant and his son are co-leaders of the Webelos 1 den of Cub Scout Pack 3149.

He helps UMM pick up roadside trash, assists with a bike rodeo, hosts an annual remote Upper Room Prayer Line, and helps with occasional potato drops.

In addition, he assists “Feed His Lambs,” an ecumenical weekend ministry that provides food for 40 to 50 families, and he serves on the board

of a civic organization that sponsors a food bank and a thrift store.

A 12-year veteran of Kansas Kairos Prison Ministry, Grant participates in two annual 4-day events at the El Dorado Correctional Facility.

While Grant thinks his ministry “is just ordinary expected stuff,” he notes that his father served as president of Kansas West Conference UMM during the 1980s and early 1990s. “I guess supporting UMM runs in the family,” he says.



The Rev. Charles Grant dries dishes following a Veteran’s Day breakfast at which men provide free breakfasts for veterans.

George Richards New York church celebrates 18 years of service

HEMPSTEAD, NY—After being members of Metropolitan Community UMC in Harlem for 30 years, George and his wife, Miriam, relocated to Hempstead UMC.

George received a Life Member Award on the 18th anniversary of the day he joined the Hempstead church.



From Left: Malcolm Hall, Royston Bailey, George Richards, the Rev. Rafael Garcia and Greg Arnold gather at the front of Hempstead UMC following the presentation of a Life Member Award to Richards.

“Soon after his name was announced the congregation showed their appreciation and love, stood and gave a lengthy round of applause,” said Royston Bailey, president of

New York Conference UMM. “George will forever be remembered as a member of the Society of Life Members of UMM and as a person whose life served to build and benefit the Foundation of UMM.”

Rod Foster

Church honors sausage grinder

NORMAN, Okla.—Men of McFarlin UMC presented Rod Foster, former UMM president, with a Life Member Award.

“During his term as president and the following two years, Rod has been the backbone of UMM,” said

Ron Springfield, publicity chairman.

“He spearheaded the reconditioning of the chairs in Fenn Hall (site of contemporary services), and he was a vital member of the work force that built a playground for McFarlin’s Day Care. He also erected a gazebo on

church property, and each year he is a moving force in an annual ‘sausage grind.’” Men grind, season, and package sausage for sale to the public and for use in the UMM Pancake Breakfast.

“Rod is always present for every activity and every project; he is always available if the church needs anything,” said Springfield.

Warren Sherman

Chief cook and dishwasher named life member

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va.—Men of Haygood UMC presented a Life Member Award to Warren Sherman, UMM vice president and a member of the Board of Trustees.

“Warren can routinely be found in the kitchen preparing meals for homeless citizens, washing

endless piles of dishes at special events or trimming bushes and mowing lawns in the heat and humidity of a Virginia afternoon,” said Bill Slingerland, UMM president.

George Duvall

Men honor crime solver and lay leader

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va.—Men of Community UMC presented a Life Member Award to George Duvall.

He began attending Community UMC in 1990 and served on the Administrative Board, the Council of Ministries, and the Finance Committee. He was also a member of the Virginia Annual Conference and served on a district committee that reviews plans for new church buildings and plans to close or merge congregations.

He also chaired the Community Staff-Parish Relations Committee and served the church as the lay leader.

In 2001, The Virginia Conference presented him with a Harry Denman Evangelism Award.

He served on the civilian board of Virginia Beach Crime Solvers when the program began in 1982. He was also president of the Southeastern Crime Stoppers Board until he experienced a stroke in 2008. He is now an emeritus member.

Fred Abbott

Talented musician also serves as cook

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va.—Men of Community UMC presented Fred Abbot, former UMM president with a Life Member Award.

A 26-year-member of the church, Abbott sings in the Chancel Choir and the Men’s Choir, and plays in the church orchestra.

He also volunteers at the food pantry at



Each year, men of McFarlin UMC present a Life Member Award. From left: Rod Foster is the 2013 honoree; Joe Sanders received the award in 2011; Bill Chissoe, in 2010; and Howard Zimmerman, in 2012.



George Duvall

Saint Paul's UMC in Chesapeake, and the Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia in Norfolk. He also prepares food for monthly UMM dinner meetings.

A former cubmaster, he held various scouting leadership positions during the scouting years of his three sons.



Fred Abbott

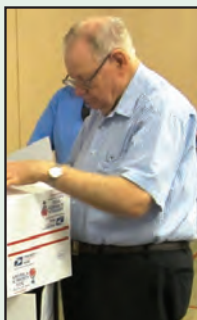
Archie Bratton
Men honor Sunday school teacher and former president

AUSTIN, Texas—Men of Crestview UMC presented a Life Member Award to Archie Bratton, former UMM president and a Sunday school teacher.

Bratton supports the prayer chain ministry and the annual Violet Crown Festival. He also coaches “A Matter of Balance,” a fall-prevention program.

A member of the Board of Trustees, he also serves as a church usher.

“What is most impressive about him is his being present when needed, whether it is moving furniture for the preschool or just lending a hand to help in any situation,” said Jack Moncure, president of Crestview UMM.



Archie Bratton

Henry Hall
Volunteer is 14th to receive Life Membership award

WEST COLUMBIA, S.C.—Mt. Hebron UMM presented a Life Member Award to Henry Hall at the annual “Ladies Night Out” in December.

Hall’s name has now been added to a plaque in a church hall which lists 14 men who have received the honor over the last 28 years.

“Henry is always cheerful, willing and puts his fellow man ahead of himself,” said Scott Houston, president of UMM of Mt. Hebron. “He has been a very active member of the Board of Trustees, personally fixing many things.”



Henry Hall stirs a pot during the 42nd annual barbecue, an event raising \$20,000 for missions.

Hall helped restore the church’s historic Temperance Hall, and he served on the Thursday Morning Crew, a group that does repair work around the church and builds wheelchair ramps. “For years, he was the go-to man for any brick or masonry work around the church,” said Houston.

Although he is approaching 90 years of age, Hall continues to visit the sick in their homes and hospitals. He also helps his wife send altar flowers to shut-ins, and he assists her with The Hen House, a group of women engaged in canning, quilting, and needlework to raise money for mission projects.

Buck Hodges
Former president organizes barbecues and letter-writing effort

CHESAPEAKE, Va.—Men of Oak Grove UMC presented Buck Hodges with a Life Member Award for his service as president of Oak Grove UMM (2004-06 and 2012-13) and president of Elizabeth River District UMM (2008-09).

He started the Agape Dinner to raise funds for Heart Havens and he organized the Step-Out campaign that raised thousands of dollars for UMM ministries. Under his leadership, eight years of fall barbecues raised \$71,000 for missions and local charities. He was also instrumental in bringing the “Letters from Dad” program to the district.

Multi-talented attorney serves as scouting ministry specialist

MERRIMACK, N.H.—R. Brian Snow has practiced law for 35 years in Nashua, N.H. He also served as a part-time district court judge for eight years.

In addition to teaching Scuba diving; serving as a certified football official and an assistant high school football coach; he also teaches several college courses.

The multi-talented attorney now serves as scouting ministry specialist.

Graduating from Boston College Law School in 1978, the attorney has been admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the District of Columbia, and is also a member of the Bar of the United States Supreme Court.

He previously served as chairman of the New Hampshire Juvenile Parole Board; chairman of the Appellate Division of the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security; and director of Crime Prevention and Public Information of the New Hampshire Department of Safety. He was also a prosecutor for a number of police departments and served in a supervisory capacity in the office of the Massachusetts Attorney General.

Snow currently serves as the assistant council commissioner for field service for the Daniel Webster BSA Council in New Hampshire. He also serves as a unit commissioner for Venture Crew 117 of Merrimack.

He recently earned the BSA Doctorate of Commissioner Science and was one of the first in the nation to be awarded the BSA

Commissioner Award for Excellence in Unit Service.

Last summer, Snow, his assistant crew adviser, and four youth members of Venture Crew 117 served on the Visitor's Experience Team at the National BSA Jamboree in West Virginia. During his more than two-week stay at the Summit Bechtel Reserve, he visited the UM exhibit area where he signed up to become a scouting ministry specialist.

While working at the Jamboree, the Scout leader and members of his Venture Crew volunteered 650 hours in the BSA Messengers of Peace program, an initiative that encourages young men and women in 220 countries to work for peace.

Brian and his wife, Patricia, and their two children are long-time members of St. James UMC. Brian taught Sunday school at the Merrimack church, served on the Board of Trustees, and he provides legal counsel.

In 1988, he revived an inactive BSA troop previously chartered by St. James UMC and achieved the UM God and Service Award in 1994. He is currently attempting to reconstitute a dissolved Venture Crew to be sponsored by his home church.



R. Brian Snow

Girl Scouts build leaders

After Lauren Brisky was inducted into the YWCA of Middle Tennessee Academy of Women of Achievement, she was asked, “What advice would you offer a young woman today?”

Her response: “Be a Girl Scout!”

Brisky noted that every female astronaut, 14 of the 20 women in the U.S. Senate, 81 of the 435 members of the women in the House of Representatives, five female governors and 53 percent of all the women business owners in 2013 are former Girl Scouts.

“The objectives for Girl Scouts have not changed since the organization’s beginning more than 100 years ago,” said Brisky, chair of Simmons College Board of Directors in Boston.

“Girls who participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program learn firsthand what it’s like to own a business. Girl Scouts also learn public speaking skills, business skills, and how to build their self-confidence, citizenship and more through the various programs offered, including outdoor adventures, and college tours.” Scouting also introduces girls to science, technology, engineering, and math.

Girl Scouts and faith

Although Girl Scouts of the USA is a secular organization, it still encourages girls to take spiritual journeys through their faith communities.

Girls of all grade levels may annually earn “My Promise, My Faith” pins by tying the tenets of their faith to the Girl Scout Law.

Steps to earn the pin

- Choose one line from the Girl Scout Law and find a story, song or poem from your faith with the same ideas.
- Ask a woman how she uses that line of the law in her life
- Gather three inspirational quotes by women that fit with that line. Put them where you can see them every day.
- Make a drawing, painting, or a poster to remind you of what you’ve learned. You could also make up a story or a skit.



In 2011, the first year in which the pin was offered, a total of 36,000 girls earned the pin.

PRAY awards.

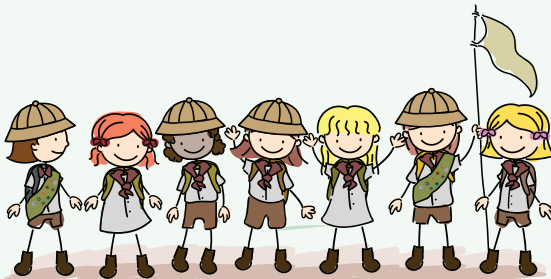
UM Girl Scout may also earn one of four awards awarded in various age groups by St. Louis-based Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY).

These awards help girls grow stronger in their faith, and they provide opportunities for them to learn about the UMC.



PRAY awards are offered for four age groups: Grades 1-3- “God and Me”; Grades 4-5- “God and Family”; Grades 6-8- “God and Church,” and Grades 9-12- “God and Life.”

For information, visit www.praypub.org.



Two-thirds of astronauts were Boy Scouts

Scouting Magazine reports that two-thirds of pilots and scientists selected as astronauts have been Boy Scouts.

Of the 312 astronauts, at least 207 were active in scouting. That list includes 39 Eagle Scouts, 25 Life Scouts, 14 Star Scouts, 26 First Class Scouts, 17 Second Class Scouts, 13 Tenderfoot Scouts, three Explorers, 25 Cub Scouts, 10 Webelos Scouts, one King's Scout, two Wolf Scouts and 32 with unknown ranks. Twenty-seven were Girl Scouts.

Half of the 135 space shuttle missions included at least one Eagle Scout. That number doesn't include Eagle Scouts who took trips to the International Space Station aboard Rus-



sian Soyuz rockets. Eagle Scout Thomas H. Marshburn was one of three crew members on the 145-day Soyuz mission, which returned to Earth on May 14, 2013.

UMC tops list of denominations using PRAY awards

ST. LOUIS, Mo—A total of 23,972 young people earned PRAY (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth) awards in 2013.

The UMC continues to give the highest number of awards with 6,246 awards.

While there was an overall decline of 4 percent in the total number of recipients, there was a 4 percent increase in the number of young people who received Four-Star Awards.

PRAY offers four study/award programs in four age groups: God and Me (grades 1-3); God and Family (grades 4-5); God and Church (grades 6-8); and God and Life (grades 9-12). Young people who complete all four studies receive a Four Star Award.

Eighty-two percent of the awards were given through the Boy Scouts of America and 9 percent through Girl Scouts.

Numbers are important, but stories are even more important. Here are some comments from recipients and parents:

"My son has cerebral palsy. He cannot write or speak. He was very energized and eager to do his [God and Family] lessons. He really liked

the whole pizza concept. My son has a new understanding about Jesus and God." - Salisbury, N.C.

"During a difficult period of our lives, the God and Church program has helped to focus my son's attention on the Bible and other people which helps a family be more cohesive." - Winter Haven, Fla.

"My best memories are the friendships that I have made with pastors and youth counselors, as well as finding God in my life. It showed me how to use my bags of gold Matthew 25:14-30 to the best of my ability." - Niantic, Conn.- Four Star Recipient.

"As parents we worked on the God and Church program with our son and it has increased our knowledge about our church and faith." - Jerome, Idaho

"Tim has been more polite and more respectful towards his elders. He has done a fine job [on God and Church], is enthusiastic and willing to ask questions and work through problems. I'm excited to see he wants to be baptized." - North East, Pa.

Scout training set for June

- Want to reach young people in your community?
- Want to know how scouting can expand the outreach of your church?
- Want to take your family to a high-adventure camp in a heart-stopping location?

Plan to attend the June 22-28 training event at the Philmont Scout Ranch in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico.



Bill Byrd

Bill Byrd, a scouting ministry specialist in Little Rock, Ark., says, “The Philmont training experience is bar-none the best training in my 20-plus years as a Scout leader.”

Byrd, who has served as a Cub Scout leader and a Venture Crew

adviser, says the experience at Philmont provided “a greater understanding of why scouting needs to be a part of every youth program.”

Byrd says he is going to the 2014 Philmont Training Center for the third time. “I will be taking a United Methodist pastor with me,” he adds.

Steve Kerr, a scouting ministry specialist in Barnwell, S.C., says the Philmont workshop “really opened my eyes on the role of our scouting ministry. I now have a clear understanding of how scouting can

make our local church stronger and make a positive impact on our community.

“For many years I considered myself both a scouter and a United



Steve Kerr

Methodist. After this conference, I became whole and now consider myself a United Methodist scouter.”

Kerr says he will return to Philmont this summer for an Order of the Arrow conference during the same week as the Philmont training conference. “I look forward to seeing some familiar UM faces while meeting some new UM scouters,” he says.



Woody Gibson

“This conference was very productive for many reasons but I must say the fellowship was the most important,” said Woody Gibson, scouting coordinator for the



Participants in the 2013 Philmont Training Center enjoy the view from Lover's Leap near the New Mexico Scout Ranch.

Elizabeth River District in the Virginia Conference.

“It was great to get to know other scouters across the country and share what works and what doesn't work. I know I have a

network of UM scouters I can go to for advice.”

For additional information and to register for the conference, contact Marc Stowe (615/620-7262) (mstowe@gcum.org).

Church sponsors BSA units for special-needs youth

LEAWOOD, Kan.--The Church of the Resurrection sponsors a co-ed Venture Crew, a Boy Scout troop and a Cub Scout pack. All three units include youth with a variety of physical and mental challenges, including autism and Down syndrome.



Some are in wheelchairs and some are at an intellectual age much younger than their actual age. The units include youth from age 10 to 26; there is no age limit.

Groups meet monthly to work on advancement and merit badges.

Annually they go on camping trips, attend summer camps, and participate in holiday parties.

Scouting Awards

Paul White ***Venture Crew leader receives Silver Torch Award***

REEDSVILLE, W.Va.—Reedsville UMC

presented Paul White with a Silver Torch Award for chairing the Mountaineer Area Scout Council and serving as an adviser for Venturing Crew 66. He served as a staff member for summer camps and the 2013 National Jamboree.

Certified as an emergency responder,

White helped the Venturing Crew establish

an emergency storage depot for the West Virginia Conference. The building houses items needed for emergencies anywhere in the three-state area. White chairs Reedsville Board of Trustees and the Parsonage Committee. He also serves on the Church Council, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and he is a member of the West Virginia Annual Conference.

For the past 15 years, White has encouraged young people to participate in Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY) studies. In 2011, 18 youth received PRAY awards.



Paul White

Sarah Ritchie ***Girl Scout provides medical information card***

GRAND VALLEY, Ohio—Sarah Ritchie received the Gold Award, the highest award offered by the Girl Scouts. For her Gold Award project, she designed a medical-emergency form people can carry to inform first responders of their medical conditions. She also provided a video to explain how the card should be used.

“I want to reach as many people as possible with the usefulness of this card,” said Sarah. “A Medical Form” is available for download under “Ministry to Men” below the “Resources” tab on the upper bar of the GCUMM.org website.



Sara Ritchie

Richard Cherrington ***Eagle Scout saves mother and son from fire***

WESTMINISTER, Colo.—In late September, Eagle Scout Richard Cherrington and his dad were working in their front yard when Richard saw smoke coming from the back of the house across the street. He ran over to investigate.

A tree in the back yard was on fire and a 50-foot fire plume was close to the back porch.

Richard and his dad entered the home to awaken the mother and son.

By this time, the fire was inside the home, but, thanks to Richard, everyone reached safety, including the family dog.

Richard is being recommended for the “Servant Scout Leader Award.”



Richard Cherrington comforts neighbor as fire fighters control blaze in the home.

Doug Wright **Arizona Council honors Eagle Scout**

TUCSON, Ariz.—The Catalina Council honored Doug Wright as their first “Outstanding Eagle Scout.”



Doug Wright

The award is presented to Eagle Scouts who have “demonstrated outstanding achievement at the local, state or regional level.”

Wright received the award for “leadership and award winning efforts since 1995 as vice-president of endowments/major gifts for the Catalina Council.”

Under his leadership, the council received gifts in excess of \$30 million.

Wright, a member of the General Commission on UM Men, achieved the rank of Eagle in 1962.

John C. Northcutt **Church honors retired Army Major**

OSCEOLA, Ark.—First UMC of Osceola presented John C. Northcutt with a Cross and Flame Award for 20 years of service as scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 221.

During Major Northcutt’s 20-year service with the U.S. Army, he received graduate degrees from the University of Oklahoma and Pepperdine University.

In 1993, he began teaching and leading the Reserve Officers Training Program at Rivercrest High School near Wilson. That is the same year he began attending First UMC in nearby Osceola.

Northcutt has helped 10 Scouts attain the rank of Eagle and he has taken his troop to several state parks, the Little Rock Air Force Base,



Major John C. Northcutt

Merit Badge University and sporting events in Jonesboro, Memphis and Little Rock.

He received the award on Scout Sunday, Feb. 9.

Dennis Nicholson **Veteran Scout leader receives Cross and Flame Award**

DURHAM, N.C.—Pleasant Green UMC presented Dennis Nicholson with a Cross and Flame Award following 10 years of service as a Scout and 40 years as a Scout leader.

He served for seven years as an assistant scoutmaster in Groveport, Ohio, three years as an Explorer adviser in Willow Grove, Pa., and five years as a cubmaster in Durham.

He has also served as a member of the North Carolina Annual Conference and chaired a conference committee to study parsonages, and a state-wide committee on church architecture. He presently serves on the Pleasant Green Board of Trustees.

Nicholson served Big Brothers of Bucks County, Pa., and he served Durham as an 8-year member of the Red Cross Board, 24 years with the Durham Technical Community College; president of the P.T.A. for three city schools, and 14 years with the Chamber of Commerce.

Matthew Lanier **Scout provides walking trail**

DENTON, N.C.—For his Eagle Scout project, Matthew Lanier, a member of Troop 101 chartered by Central UMC, provided a walking trail for members of the church and community.



Leaders of Central UMC celebrate the construction of a walking trail built under the leadership of Matthew Lanier. From Left: Stewart Sexton, Lanier, Mayor Scott Morris, the Rev. Sharon Lee, and Eddie Richey.



Society of St. Andrew

GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

United Methodist Men are leaders in ending hunger ...

In 2013, UMMen led 2,430 volunteers into farmers' fields to pick 1.17 million pounds of fresh, nutritious surplus food for America's hungry. At the same time, through their Meals for Millions contributions, UMMen provided another 8.8 million servings of fresh produce (in direct relief to the hungry) through the *Potato & Produce Project*.

In times of uncertainty, it is great to count on the support of the UMMen. On behalf of all of the hungry people that were fed, we thank you.



Meals for Millions — UMMen and Society of St. Andrew are in partnership to end domestic hunger. Your donations provide millions of servings of nutritious food to the hungry. Join today and make a real difference! For more information contact Wade Mays, National Meals for Millions Director, at 800-333-4597 or Development@EndHunger.org.

EndHunger.org/UMM

**Society of St. Andrew (Advance #801600)
800-333-4597 ~ sosainfo@endhunger.org**

Please share with all of the men of the church.



General Commission on
United Methodist Men
1000 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nashville, TN
Permit 3452