What happened in Portland?
This issue deals with several topics but the main question for us to answer is “What happened at General Conference?”

Let me begin with the obvious: it was better than Tampa. As a general secretary, I get to see the UMC at its best, and at its worst. For me, these two weeks were exhausting, challenging, frustrating, moving, inspiring, and in some parts hopeful and in some parts less hopeful. I am pleased to report that the misguided, poorly written “Plan UMC-Revised” legislation was defeated. This massive plan was considered in several legislative committees and was defeated in a combination of actions; part of the plan was declared unconstitutional (again), part was referred to an entity that will not act on it, and the rest was soundly voted down. I hope the next plan to reorganize church structures will include working with the agencies involved.

For years we have talked about being a global church; this conference actually felt like a global gathering. Many members from outside the U.S. were in leadership positions within the legislative committees. Also, a large number of well-informed younger delegates held leadership positions.

There was great music and inspiring worship every day. And there were reports that reflect successes in campaigns to end malaria, increase the percentage of vital congregations, provide scholarships, create e-readers so that all will have text books, and support of seminaries in central conferences. The commission’s video report was well received.

The assembly established a 2017-2020 budget lower than initially expected, but higher than the final recommendation prior to the beginning of the conference. The increase is directed to theological education in the central conferences, an area of great need and growth.

Two issues were dealt with which may change future sessions of General Conference. First, it is clear that we cannot legislate how we deal with human sexuality. So, we requested a new commission to be created by the Council of Bishops, representing the whole church. If needed, we will deal with this issue in a special session before the 2020 conference in Minneapolis. Secondly, we wasted a great deal of time on parliamentary maneuvering. The unfortunate result is petitions with merit which had been considered carefully in legislative committees were not considered in plenary because we ran out of time. So, we have requested that an independent professional parliamentarian be used at future sessions.

Our exhibit booth reached lay and clergy from around the world. Our ministries to men and to youth through scouting were displayed and staffed well. We continue to do great work to bring men and youth to an on-going relationship with Christ.

Friends, do not lose heart. I believe we saw clearer than ever we are better together than split apart. The UMC has a future with hope.

Gil Hanke
The four-year cycle

The general church operates on a four-year cycle, but most United Methodists are scarcely aware of the quadrennial changes.

During General Conference sessions, United Methodists may have read about actions that took place in Portland, but most of the activities and decisions seemed far removed and slightly irrelevant to your UM Men organization and your local church.

In July, some bishops retire, some will be elected and others will be reassigned to new episcopal areas. The average United Methodist may read or hear something about a new bishop, but, again, that news is likely to be viewed as irrelevant.

Decisions about newly elected conference and national officers of UM Men organizations may be of greater interest, but the most significant changes still occur in local churches.

While 2016 is a pivotal year, it’s appropriate for this magazine to spend most of the pages on ministries in local churches. There are truly amazing ministries being conducted with, by, and for men in UM congregations around the world.

I had the joy of receiving all the entries in the national contest for the best local churches, districts and annual conferences, and they were truly remarkable. I’m glad I wasn’t a member of the judges’ panel because it would have been difficult to choose among the many life-changing ministries.

Enjoy the reports on General Conference and news about the election of new national and jurisdictional officers of UM Men, but you may want to pay closer attention to the local church winners in the national contest. Here is a wealth of information about ways in which your local organization can expand its ministries to the church and community.

With 55 EMS members, Queen’s Chapel UMC in Beltsville, Md., breezed away with the top award in the second annual national contest to select a UM church with the most effective ministry to and by men. Men of that church participate in Sunday morning men’s Bible study and sponsor Easter sunrise and Thanksgiving Day breakfasts. Last year, they provided 542 families with food packages valued at $50 each. Five years ago, the men purchased a 15-passenger van for the church and they continue to pay the cost of maintenance and insurance.

Now that’s a ministry worth celebrating.

We will sponsor the national contest again next year, and now is the time to expand your ministries so next year the summer issue of this magazine will carry articles about the several ministries to men in your church.

Rich Peck

General Conference opens with worship

PORTLAND, Ore.—A drum beat by indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest welcomed 864 delegates to the May 10-20 legislative assembly at the Oregon Convention Center.

A diverse group of people then welcomed delegates from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Philippines, and the U.S. and delegates joined in a cacophony of “alleluias” in many languages.

The assembly opened with an address by San Francisco Area Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr., president of the Council of Bishops. “Like the first disciples, some of us may have come to this meeting of Jesus’ people we call General Conference with some mixture of hope and uncertainty,” said Brown. “There are many issues on our agenda. So many things for you to consider as the plans for the church’s future are adopted.”

Brown noted that the “work will not be easy because we care so deeply. We are passionate about what we believe to be true.” However, he encouraged delegates to “restrain our passions enough to truly listen to one another.” He challenged the assembly to remember Paul’s word to the Romans: “So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up” (14:19).

What happened in Portland?

In the opening worship service Bishop Warner Brown encourages delegates to restrain their passions enough to truly listen to one another. UMNS photo by Mike DeBose

Swanson: It’s all right for you to disagree with me; it’s not all right to hate me

In a May 18 sermon, Bishop James Swanson told delegates, “It’s all right for you to disagree with me, but it’s not all right for you to hate me.” We should not “use the weapons of Satan against the people of God.”

“I have disagreement, said the president of the General Commission on UM Men, but ‘we shouldn’t be in disagreement about God. Are you dependent on your political maneuvering or on God?’”

The bishop addressed an unlikely text in which Jesus describes an unclean spirit who leaves a house and later returns with seven other spirits (Matthew 12:43-45).

“Jesus makes us aware that evil is personal,” said Swanson. “If evil can operate in me, it will pollute everything I touch.”

He noted that just as the evil spirit returned after being cast aside, sanctifying grace must follow Justifying faith, or evil will again “set up shop” in our homes, and it “will come back in a pack.”

“The work will not be easy because we care so deeply. We are passionate about what we believe to be true.” However, he encouraged delegates to “restrain our passions enough to truly listen to one another.” He challenged the assembly to remember Paul’s word to the Romans: “So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up” (14:19).
Palmer: We are prisoners of hope

In the May 11 Episcopal Address, West Ohio Bishop Gregory V. Palmer told delegates, “We are not here for some proverbial pity party or to lick our institutional wounds. We are here because we are prisoners of hope. We have seen God at work in our lives.”

The bishop invited delegates to celebrate the places where God is at work:
- “Imagine No Malaria” raised $65.5 million to eradicate malaria in Africa.
- The UM Committee on Relief has responded to disasters around the world.
- The church is bringing safe drinking water to such places as Sierra Leone and Flint, Mich.
- Disciple Bible Study is taught in local congregations and in jails.
- A place to hang out, shake hands and receive handouts.

Acrimony is destructive

“Our capacity to turn on each other is destroying the soul of this church. We must do better, the mission deserves better; God deserves better from every one of us.”

“I refuse to live into discouragement and despair because the work of becoming the beloved community is hard.”

Palmer reminded the 864 delegates that the true measure of the church is the way we treat one another.” He said, “The right decision can be undermined by the means we use to get there. Our credibility is at stake if we get all the words right, but our behavior does not resemble the words.”

Both and . . .

“The church sits at the intersection of creed and deed – social and personal holiness,” said Palmer. “We don’t get to cherry pick what we like: evangelism or social action.”

“We want to go on mission trips as long as there is a little tourism involved,” he said. However, when we return, we don’t engage in public policy that created the conditions that required mission work. “We are slow to challenge the structures of evil both in the church and the world.”

He urged delegates, staff and visitors to follow the “Therefore go” theme of the conference. “Jesus said, ‘I will be with you if you go.’”

Strength for Service displays the ability of agencies to work together

During a report to General Conference delegates, Moses Kumar, top staff executive of the General Council on Finance and Administration, celebrated the distribution of Strength for Service books, a project supported by general agencies, outside corporations (Home Depot and World Wide Technology) and local churches. The effort, begun by the General Commission on UM Men, brought books of daily devotional books to first responders and military troops.

Actions related to GCUMM

The Independent Commissions Legislative Committee opposed, 35 to 10, a proposal that would change the membership and the name of GCUMM. This proposal was a replay of “Plan UMC-Revised,” which was found to be unconstitutional and unsalvageable four years ago. That committee also agreed, 42 to 2, to delete the names of specific organizations and substitute language saying, GCUMM may “promote and counsel with youth-serving organizations selected at the discretion of the commission/scouting ministries . . .” They noted that affiliations with organizations can change between sessions of the General Conference and names of more than 20 organizations with which GCUMM relates to are on the website. The Local Church Legislative Committee also agreed, 59 to 2, to eliminate the names of particular youth-serving organizations with which a local church may affiliate.

There was a last minute attempt to change the GCUMM board structure. The petition was presented as a plan to increase the number of members from outside the US on all agency boards, but was really another “Plan UMC-Revised” attempt to revamp all the boards to reduce the number of persons selected by expertise in favor of persons selected in a prescribed formula from jurisdictions. That proposal was ruled out of order.

Mississippi Area Bishop James Swanson will return to the 2017-2020 commission, and Arkansas Area Bishop Gary Mueller replaces Bishop Tom Bickerton, who will serve on the General Board of Global Ministries. A yet-to-be-elected bishop of the Congo, will replace Bishop John Wesley Yohanna, who will serve on UM Communications.

Tarmo Lilloja from Estonia will return to the commission, and he will be joined by Carlos Manio, a new board member from the Philippines.
Troubled by the acrimony accompanying some 100 proposals related to human sexuality, delegates asked the bishops to help them find a way forward.

During May 17 and 18 meetings, the Council of Bishops proposed delegates defer all actions on the controversial issues until an inclusive commission, appointed by the council, has time to recommend revisions to the Book of Discipline.

After a lengthy debate, delegates agreed, 428 to 405, to delay all votes and support the bishops’ proposal.

The bishops suggested they might call a special session of General Conference in 2018 or 2019 to deal with proposals from the commission. They also agreed to “explore options to help the church live in grace with one another — including ways to avoid further complaints, trials and harm while we uphold the Discipline.”

Abrahams: We spend our money as if we know nothing about the gospel

In a May 17 worship service, Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams, top executive of the World Methodist Council, noted that Jesus was deeply concerned about economic activities. “It saturates the scriptures,” he said. “Every 16th verse in the New Testament speaks about money.”

But, quoting John Haughery, he said, “We read the gospels as if we had no money, and we spend our money as if we know nothing about the gospel.”

“Jesus demands costly discipleship and spirituality that feels the pain of the world,” Abrahams said. “All Christian theology is a public theology shaped on the anvil of justice for those on the margins.”

Delegates postpone action on sexuality issues

Hannah Foust, a 14-year old who helped villagers in Burkina Faso gain access to clean water, reminded delegates that the disciples assumed there was no way they could feed 5,000 people.

“They forgot who they were with,” said Hannah.

Hannah did yard work, housework, babysat, and shared her story to raise funds in order to build a well for people in that West African nation. Since then, she has funded three more wells and says she will continue to work until “I’m called to do something else.”

Because of her efforts, others were led to build 13 additional wells that now provide 3,000 people with clean drinking water.

Hannah said that she found it difficult to believe a girl from Indiana could have such a powerful influence. But, she says, “It’s not about me, but rather about how God is using me.”

She asked delegates, “Can you imagine the miracles we can achieve if we work together?”

“God makes something HUGE happen with little things; you can help young people use their gifts to change the world.

“We have to work together so that, one day, there are no more empty plates, or cups, or hearts to fill.”

The 2017-2020 budget

- $310.7 million for the World Service Fund that supports most of the denomination’s 13 general agencies (including GCUMM).
- $104.9 million for the Ministerial Education Fund that supports UM seminaries and financial aid for seminary students.
- $92 million for the Episcopal Fund, which supports active bishops, their support staff, retired bishops, surviving spouses and minor children of deceased bishops.
- $41.9 million for the Black College Fund that supports 11 UM-related historically black colleges and universities.
- $36.9 million for the General Administration Fund, which supports General Conference, Judicial Council, the UM Comission on Archives and History, and the General Council on Finance and Administration.
- Nearly $9.4 million for Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe.
- $8.2 million for the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund, which supports the church’s ecumenical work.
In other actions:

Delegates began the process of amending the constitution in order for General Conference to set provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its individual members accountable for their work. They established a timeline of 180 days for a college (regional group) of bishops to resolve a complaint in the denomination’s supervisory process. The Council of Bishops can then assume a complaint during the 10-day assembly.

Delegates authorized the creation of a 15-member Hymnal Revision Committee. The 2020 General Conference will need to approve the Hymnal Advisory Committee’s recommendations, with release of the new hymnal coming as early as 2021.

Once you’re a bishop, you stay a bishop — at least in the U.S. A petition to amend the constitution and impose term limits for U.S. bishops failed, 482 to 332, to get the required two-thirds vote to pass. Some bishops outside the U.S. are already subject to term limits.

Deacons may now directly ask their bishop for permission to administer the sacraments. Previously, the pastor-in-charge or a district superintendent had to make the request on the deacon’s behalf.

Two new special Sundays without offering were created: Women’s Ministry Sunday may be observed annually on a date determined by the local conference; Volunteers in Ministry Awareness Sunday shall be observed annually on a date determined by the local congregation. Delegates changed “One Great Hour of Sharing” to “UMCOR Sunday.” The day is observed on the fourth Sunday of Lent.

The 2012 General Conference authorized, and 2016 conference continues, efforts to define what is essential to UM theology and polity and what kinds of matters can be left to geographical units. The essentials are to be contained in a “General Book of Discipline” they include the constitution, “Our Theological Task,” the “Social Principles,” and sections on organization and administration. A final draft of the general book will be submitted to the 2020 General Conference.

The body celebrated that the UMC has raised $68 million to end malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa where a child dies from malaria every two minutes.

Thirty-two missionaries were commissioned during the 10-day assembly.

Delegates voted, 425-268, to require the Board of Church and Society and UM Women to withdraw their memberships in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. They also deleted support for the coalition from the Book of Resolutions.

The assembly lamented the 1864 Sand Creek massacre led by Col. John Milton Chivington, a Methodist Episcopal Church pastor. His troop killed 200 men, women and children at a Cheyenne and Arapaho encampment. Delegates asked UM agencies to raise awareness about the harm caused by sports teams that use mascots or symbols that disrespect Native Americans.

Delegates approved a general church budget of $604 million for 2017-2020, a slight increase over the $603.1 million approved at the 2012 General Conference. It’s also an increase over the proposed budget of $599 million.

Time ran out before plenary sessions could act on many petitions. That will not happen again. Delegates agreed, 406 to 361, all petitions shall be acted upon at future conferences.

Wow — What a ministry!

Maryland church receives top award in national contest

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

With 55 EMS members and support for scores of community projects, Queen’s Chapel UMC in Beltsville, Md., breezed away with the top award in the second annual national contest to select a UM church with the most effective ministry to and with men.

Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., president of the General Commission on UM Men, and Dan Ramsey, president of the National Association of Conference Presidents of UM Men, announced the winner during the March 3-6 meeting of conference presidents of UM Men and conference prayer advocates.

Queen’s Chapel has more EMS (Every Man Shares in Evangelism, Mission and Spiritual Life) members than all the churches in 32 annual conferences. The church is a major contributor to the record 316 current EMS members in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

In 2015, the 62-year-old UMM organization raised a total of $26,760 from a fish fry, a crab feast, citrus fruit sales, and the sale of shirts, hats, jackets and fan gear.

Delegates authorized the creation of a second annual national contest to select a UM church with the most effective ministry to and with men.

Each September, the men celebrate a UM Men weekend with an all-you-can-eat crab feast. In 2015, they served 27 bushels of crabs, smoked sausage, French fries, corn on the cob, and watermelons.

Bishop James Swanson (left) presents the top award to Hampton Conway, treasurer of Queen’s Chapel UM Men and vice president of Baltimore-Washington Conference UM Men.

The funds supported a score of mission projects and ministries.

The men participate in Sunday morning men’s Bible study and sponsor Easter sunrise and Thanksgiving Day breakfasts.

Last November and December, the men worked with the Society of St. Andrew to make two deliveries of 1,000 pounds of potatoes to three churches and one soup kitchen. In the same months...
they provided 100 turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for families in need.

Each Valentine’s Day, the men remember widows of UM Men with a dozen long-stemmed roses delivered by two UM men.

They donated a 60-inch television set to the church’s Soul Echoes Café, and helped defray the costs for youth to attend a conference retreat.

Five years ago, the men purchased a 15-passenger van for the church and they continue to pay the cost of maintenance, insurance, and a Maryland toll pass.

In 2015, the men participated in a SHARE program that provided 542 families with packages of food valued at $50 at a cost to UMM of $22. The food packages included chicken thighs, ground beef, fish fillets, pork chops, eggs, fresh fruit, vegetables, pasta and beans.

At 10 a.m. every Tuesday, UM Men receive prayer requests forwarded to them by the Upper Room Living Prayer Center. Prayer requests are sent to the Nashville prayer center and to the Queen’s Chapel UM Men Bible class.

Each Thanksgiving, Queen’s Chapel and St. Mark’s UMC in Laurel, Md., host a dinner for people living in motels and a wooded encampment. Every second Sunday, UMM also help serve monthly meals on a parking lot near the encampment. The men also support the Society of St. Andrew. In 2015, they gave $200 to hunger-relief efforts.

In 2015, some 200 Mandarin men visit hospitals, nursing homes, and detention centers. They also cook, teach, coach basketball and soccer teams, and lead a 100-member Cub Scout pack and a 25-member Scout troop. The men field two softball teams in spring and fall leagues, and sponsor an annual family night at a Jacksonville Suns baseball game. They also provide a family bowling night with 80 participants, a “Steak ‘N’ Spud” night, and a “Boil & Oyster Roast,” where they present an annual “Man of the Year” award.

In 2015, Wylie men contributed 351 man hours to construct eight handicap ramps in Wylie, and provided leadership with youth and adults to construct 24 handicap ramps.
Wylie men complete a handicap ramp. Ramps during a mission trip to San Antonio. With funds from a Valentine's banquet and a golf tournament, they contributed $1,200 to help young people participate in mission trips, $400 for a scholarship for Boy's State, $500 to the Wylie Christian Care Center, and $1,200 to a regional ministry that provides housing and meals for homeless families. They also gave $200 for a local Bible ministry, $1,200 to provide meals for the hungry, $200 to the Society of St. Andrew, $1,200 for assistance requests, and they provided funds to enable two people to attend a "Walk to Emmaus" weekend. They also assist elderly church members, including removing large tree limbs overhanging a home. Some of the men participate in a ministry at the Hutchins State correctional facility.

First UMC

Nampa, Idaho—

UM Men prepare a luncheon at an annual bazaar. With the funds from the luncheon, they prepare and serve more than 90 meals per month to the Nampa Community Shelter. They provide the shelter with furniture and other items donated by church members. They also collected funds to provide a service dog for a veteran dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. One member has served for seven years as a mentor for at-risk children. Another member serves on the Nampa Housing Board, and another serves on the Salvation Army/Community Shelter Advisory Board. The organization meets monthly for breakfast or lunch and they are studying Discovering Mark.

BEST DISTRICT

Shreveport, Louisiana—

Men of the Shreveport District raise funds with cook-offs and other events. Last year, they sent 200 pounds of yams to churches and food pantries in North Louisiana. Bossier churches provide meals on the first three weekends of every month at St. Paul Episcopal Hope House. District men provide meals on the third weekend, and George McCalman, a member of Plain Dealing UMC, delivers soup and sandwiches on the fourth and fifth weekends. Men of First UMC Natchitoches provided $6,100 to package 20,000 Stop Hunger Now meals for emergency situations around the world. Men of Ellerbe Road UMC deliver 400 Meals on Wheels to shut-ins each Monday; last year the church also provided 2,800 spaghetti meals in a monthly "Cook's Night Off" with proceeds of $2,500 donated to the NW Louisiana Veterans Home. Shreveport men furnished four new dirt bikes for Wesley Foundation at NW State University.

BEST CONFERENCE

It's a tie.

South Carolina Conference

South Carolina had two tragic events in 2015. The first was the shooting of nine people at Mother Emanuel AME Church as they were engaged in Bible study. South Carolina Conference created a fund to help Mother Emanuel families. The second event was a flood that devastated the state. UM Men raised money, filled flood buckets, and helped flood recovery efforts through UM Volunteers in Mission. The conference contributed $4,500 to the Upper Room Prayer Ministry, $300 to Africa University, $300 to Red Bird men, $2,500 to "No More Malaria," and $100 to "The Summit on the Black Church." Last April, the men hosted training for the "Bishop's 100 Men" who are willing to disciple men and their families for Christ. UM Men have built strong working relations with the bishop, his cabinet, and conference staff. Each year the attendance at a "Spiritual Weekend" has increased from 160 in 2013 to 1,100 in 2016. The men participate in "Revelation," a conference event that draws 2,000 high school and college youth. To help churches expand their ministries to men, the conference hosted five "teaching church events" in 2014 and five events in 2015. The first was the shooting of nine people at Mother Emanuel AME Church as they were engaged in Bible study. South Carolina Conference created a fund to help Mother Emanuel families. The second event was a flood that devastated the state. UM Men raised money, filled flood buckets, and helped flood recovery efforts through UM Volunteers in Mission. The conference contributed $4,500 to the Upper Room Prayer Ministry, $300 to Africa University, $300 to Red Bird men, $2,500 to "No More Malaria," and $100 to "The Summit on the Black Church." Last April, the men hosted training for the "Bishop's 100 Men" who are willing to disciple men and their families for Christ. UM Men have built strong working relations with the bishop, his cabinet, and conference staff. Each year the attendance at a "Spiritual Weekend" has increased from 160 in 2013 to 1,100 in 2016. The men participate in "Revelation," a conference event that draws 2,000 high school and college youth. To help churches expand their ministries to men, the conference hosted five "teaching church events" in 2014 and five events in 2015. The conference also supported a public-health ministry in Nicaragua and a missionary in Palestine. They also repaired church buildings, maintained the grounds, sponsored a Father’s Day worship service, provided school back-packs, and distributed Strength for Service books.

A 2015 gathering at St. Mark UMC in Taylors, S.C., provided an opportunity for cross-racial dialogue. This was one of five teaching-church events held during the year.

Coy Birdwell repairs bikes for kids and supplies new loaner bikes for Wesley Foundation at NW State University at Natchitoches.

Western North Carolina Conference

The conference provided $6,000 for scholarships for second-career clergy and gave more than $1,000 to the Upper Room Prayer Line. They also provide funds for Carolina Cross Connection, T. Duckworth Ministries, the Society of St. Andrew, Strenght for Service, Africa University, prison ministries, and a conference ministry that ministers to 400 people through 23 group homes. The conference provides e-mail news to 1,050 men across the conference. They boast the second highest number of charters in the U.S. The men packaged 10,000 Stop Hunger Now meals for emergency situations around the world. They changed their annual weekend UM Men rally to a one-day event. The men support scouting and restarted the conference disaster-response ministry after a five-year hiatus. Early response teams are being deployed throughout the conference. The men support the conference building team ministry and the Western North Carolina Children’s Home, and they assist in maintaining UMC camps along with workdays at local churches.

KIDS INTERPRET THE BIBLE

As far as we know the following statements were written by children. They have not been retouched or corrected.

In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God got tired of creating the world, so he took the Sabbath off.

Adam and Eve were created from an apple tree.

Noah’s wife was called Joan of Ark.

Noah built an ark, which the animals come on to in pairs.

Lot’s wife was a pillar of salt by day, but a ball of fire by night.

The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with the unsympathetic Genitals.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.—

Following a massive fire and the hospitalization of several firefighters, the Strength for Service Corporation sent 360 copies of Strength for Service to God and Community to all the firefighters in the capital city.

The books were provided by St. Louis-based World Wide Technology.

Twenty-five firefighters were injured, and four were hospitalized with pulmonary issues and cyanide poisoning, following March 31 fires at two triple-deck homes.

“The rest of the injuries range from burns to injuries sustained when people fell to simply physical exhaustion, not because of heat, but because they are working nonstop at a very, very high level,” said Paul Doughty, president of Providence Firefighters Union.

Captain on life support

Captain Joe Fontaine was the most critically injured. After arriving at the Roger Williams Emergency Room for a leg injury caused by a charged water line, his oxygen levels dropped from cyanide poisoning. He stopped breathing.

When his vital signs crashed, the 32-year fire-fighting veteran was put into a medically induced coma and intubated. He was then rushed on life support to the Rhode Island Hospital.

Captain Joe Fontaine holds one of his three grandchildren prior to his hospitalization.

Air packs of Providence fire fighters run on empty, but they continue to battle the blaze that endangers nearby buildings.

Trauma Center.

Fontaine’s wife and three adult sons anxiously awaited in the trauma center praying for his critical condition to improve.

“Joe and I got on the job together, so we’ve been together for a long time and he’s tough as nails,” said Chief Scott Mello.

“For him to get in this condition—it’s really tough to see.”

Fighting with empty air packs

“Hydrogen cyanide affects your central nervous system and you get disoriented,” said Rhode Island Fire Marshal John Chartier. “You get confused. That’s how we lose firefighters in buildings.”

Several firefighters kept working the Eaton Street fire even after they knew their air packs were empty.

“When their air packs ran out, at times they were forced to maintain their position to make sure that the fire didn’t spread because it was that dire of a situation,” said Doughty. “It could have turned into a conflagration very, very easily. So, they did operate after their air packs had run out of air.”

The Providence City Council applauded the bravery of the firefighters.

“My thoughts are with Captain Joseph

HUMOR

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The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with the unsympathetic Genitals.
Former NFL star speaks to 2,000 in seven events

BELoit, Kan.—March 7 was a full day for UM Men and former Kansas State and NFL wide receiver Kevin Lockett. They visited two elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The long day concluded with a dinner at Beloit UMC and the 67th Annual “Men & Boys Rally” at Beloit High School.

Originally called the “Men’s Rally,” boys were added to the event long ago. And while the event has kept its name, it’s clear from the poster and publicity that women and girls are invited as well.

The event was organized by UM Men leaders Charley File and Kevin Marozas. Lockett, newly appointed chief executive officer of the Olathe-based Kansas Bioscience Authority, talked about the decisions that are constantly made in life and how one wrong decision could ruin plans for life.

The Tulsa, Oklahoma, native talked about a major mistake he made when he joined his high school basketball teammates in a hotel beer party. His coaches busted the party and asked for a show of hands of those who had been drinking. Lockett raised his hand and was suspended from school for two weeks.

In spite of the mistake, he still received an athletic scholarship from Kansas State University.

By God’s grace and His mercy, he gave me an opportunity,” Lockett said.

Once in college, Lockett said, he looked upon the team’s pregame chapel services as a “good luck charm” rather than devotion to God.

“Even though I wasn’t soaking it up like a sponge,” he said, “there were pieces that found a resting place in my life.”

By the time he got into the NFL, first as a second-round draft pick with the Kansas City Chiefs and then the Washington Redskins, Jacksonville Jaguars and New York Jets, “God was after me in a tenacious manner,” Lockett said.

The people he was around in the weight room, during practices and meetings or going out for dinner after games, were “all big believers” who inspired his faith and challenged the depth of his Christianity.

“Just because you have accepted Christ, that’s not the end,” Lockett said.

“That’s the beginning.”

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This article was adapted from a news release by David Burke, communications director for the Great Plains Annual Conference.

FM Home Depot issues rebate check

FRISCO, Texas—The Home Depot Pro Xtra Loyalty Rebate Program partnered with the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) in 2015.

The program allows church members and contractors working on church projects to register their debit or credit cards with Home Depot to enroll in the program. With each purchase, a percentage of the sale is given back to a selected UM ministry in the form of an annual rebate check.

With a special interest in veterans, Home Depot found the Strength for Service (SFS) ministry to be an excellent match for the program. The non-denominational organization provides books of daily devotions to members of the armed services, veterans, and first responders in honor of their service.

On April 7, Mike Daniel, Pro Account representative, and Jeffrey Watson, regional Pro Sales manager of The Home Depot, presented a check for $62,487 to SFS at Home Depot’s regional office in Frisco.

Larry Coppock, acting SFS executive director, and Bob Hurst, a SFS board member, accepted the check along with Bari Beasley, GCFA chief officer of shared service/communications, and Bobby Lee Smith, GCFA manager of corporate sponsorship.

“That amount of money will translate to 12,000 devotional books for military personnel and first responders,” said Coppock. “We are fortunate that the program will continue through 2017 so people who have not registered their credit cards may still do so and painlessly contribute to the ministry during 2016 and 2017.”


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Participants in the check presentation at the Southwest Regional Office of Home Depot are: front row from left: Smith, Beasley, and Hurst. Back row from left: Watson, Coppock, and Daniel.

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The Strength for Service Corporation found a way to honor Captain Fontaine and all the firefighters in Providence.


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Fontaine, who is currently in critical condition from the fire on Eaton Street,” said Councilwoman Jo-Ann Ryan. “I am very concerned for the health and well-being of our dedicated firefighters who were injured while battling the inferno. They fought two dangerous fires under extraordinary conditions. They need to be commended for a job well done.”

“I want to thank all of our fire personnel for risking their lives to protect the people of my ward and their properties,” said Councilman John Igliozzi. “I understand that some firefighters are now hospitalized due to their efforts; I send my prayers to them and to their families, and I wish them the speediest of recoveries.”

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“T
CORDOVA, S.C.—Church celebrates Men’s Day
Men of Wesley Grove UMC celebrated their 43rd annual Men’s Day with the theme “Standing for Jesus.” The church expressed appreciation to the Rev. Ephraim Stephens of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Hampton and the Stephen’s Funeral Home for their help.

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Troop receives Bishop’s Award
Boy Scout Troop 55, chartered to Fountain City UMC, received the Bishop’s Award of Excellence for Scout Sunday observances, worship services at campouts, and participation in PRAY (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth) studies.

Troop members participated in an annual clean-up of the church cemetery, visited a senior citizen home, and placed American flags on a city cemetery graves on Memorial Day. They also participated in a “Scouting for Food” drive and collected food for a Second Harvest food bank.

Photo by Joyce Tucker

ROCK HILL, S.C.—Cornerstone men sponsor sport teams
Six annual fish fries enable men of Cornerstone UMC to support mission projects in Panama, Haiti, Cuba, and Columbia.

UM Men also help elderly members pay medical expenses, and they provide entertainment and food for 400 children attending Halloween “Trunk or Treat” events.

“Our most enjoyable project is the sponsorship of three sport teams of 5-12 year-olds,” says UM Men President Martin Monahan. “Members provide drinks and snacks for the teams, and at the end of each season we invite team members, families and coaching staff for a cookout.”

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Potato drop provides 42,000 pounds of food
UM Men of Mount Zion UMC participated in a potato drop that provided 42,000 pounds of potatoes to several food pantries.

Once a month, the men make 100 peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches for the hungry and each week they pack food bags for three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school.

Mount Zion UM Men raised $2,000 to deliver the potatoes.

EAST QUOGUE, N.Y.—Church honors fire fighters
East Quogue UMC invited members of the city fire department to attend a Jan. 31 service where they were presented with copies of Strength for Service to God and Community.

The Rev. Patricia Chuppe, pastor of East Quogue UMC, and the Rev. Patricia Mott-Intermaggio, chaplain of the fire department, led the worship service.

CLINTON, Ill.—Poster contest boosts pancake breakfast
UM Men of Clinton UMC held a poster contest to help publicize their pancake breakfast.

BERKLEY COUNTY, W.Va.—Four churches provide Christmas meals
UM Men from Paynes Chapel, Inwood UMC, Darkeville UMC, and Bunker Hill UMC contacted families in the area to see if they might appreciate receiving food.

Sixty-three families said they would
be grateful. The churchmen provided food valued at more than $3,500.

TULSA, Okla.—
**Troop produces 400 Eagle Scouts**

Boston Avenue UMC has chartered Boy Scout Troop 20 for 90 years; during that time, it has recognized more than 400 Eagle Scouts.

On Scout Sunday, 2016, the downtown church presented 15 Scouts with God & Church PRAY (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth) awards; many of these mid-high school youth received all four PRAY awards.

Award recipients worked at a local food bank and assisted in distributing Holy Communion elements on Scout Sunday.

Chaplain Williamson (right) gives a copy of Strength for Service to Guardsman Hoover.

CLOVIS, Calif.—
**Scouts give sundaes on Scout Sunday**

Scouts of Memorial UMC served “Scout sundaes” to 80 people on Scout Sunday.

The church presented God and Church Awards to Joey Weber, Jacob Miller, Raelynn Batten, and Saranie Chay. God and Life Awards were presented to Spencer Weber, and Kenneth Perez. “Cross and Flame Awards” were presented to Connie Alfaro, youth program director, and Steve Welborn, scoutmaster of Troop 354.

A “Building Faith in Youth PRAY Award” was presented to Michael Feist, a scouting ministry specialist and counselor for the PRAY courses.

Scouts join Michael Feist in serving sundaes to members of Memorial UMC.

Audra Fogle, director of welcoming ministries, and Ethan Kissman, a member of Troop 20, offer Communion elements during a service at Boston Ave. UMC.

LAS CRUCES, N.M.—
**Author contributes books**

Joe S. Bullock, author of *Walking with Herb*, donated copies of his book to St. Paul’s UMC. The church sold the books and netted $3,800. The book is humorous fictional story of a way-past-his-prime golfer who wins the Master’s Tournament.

Joe Bullock (right) signs a copy of his book for a member of St. Paul’s UMC. He is joined by Herb Wimberly, Joe’s college golf coach and namesake of the main character in the book. The book can be purchased from Amazon. If you would like to use the books for a church fundraiser, contact Joe (jbullock@firstamb.com) for special pricing.

Orrston, Pa.—
**Chaplain distributes SFS books**

Captain Kenneth Williamson, Army chaplain in the National Guard and pastor of Orrston United Brethren church, distributed 48 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Country* to members of the Pennsylvania National Guard.

The books were provided by World Wide Technology.

NEW CUMBERLAND, W.Va.—
**Thirty years of making fudge**

UM Men of Trinity UMC and Point Pleasant UMC have been making fudge for over 30 years.

Each fall, New Cumberland men make some 1,500 pounds of fudge, and sell it for $6 a pound. Over the last 15 years, they have raised $70,000 for various local and international missions.

Bud Simmons, secretary of the UM Men organization, says the combined attendance of both churches only averages 150. “It’s not necessary to have a large group to be witnesses for Christ locally, and around the world,” he said.

The men support social service agencies, the Society of St. Andrew, Strength for Service books, a library, backpacks, the Upper Room Prayer Line, tornado-relief efforts, and expenses to attend men’s retreats.

TUCSON, Ariz.—
**Monthly meals for men at a shelter**

On the first Saturday of each month, men of Catalina UMC prepare 250 pieces of chicken, 50 pounds of potatoes, biscuits, salad, and cookies for 100 residents of Primavera Men’s Shelter in Tucson.
“Each year the men volunteer about 1,500 hours of time,” says Neil West. “Food costs are supplied by the church and society mission budget of our church.”

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.—
Fire chiefs receive devotional books
Bobby Wharton, a member of the Strength for Service Board of Directors, presented 200 copies of Strength for Service to God and Community during the March 14-17 annual meeting of the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters.

Wharton serves as chairman of the board of G&W/Emergency Vehicle Specialist, a leading provider of fire trucks and fire equipment, and one of the sponsors of the event.

“We actually had people stopping us in the halls saying they had read the book overnight and were appreciative,” said Wharton.

The books were provided by World Wide Technology. An article about David L. Steward, founder and chairman of the St. Louis-based corporation, and his gift of 30,000 copies of Strength for Service books was included in the program booklet.

PINEVILLE, La.—
Church members urged to oppose human trafficking
Men of Pineville UMC joined UM Women and the Board of Church and Society to sponsor a state-wide event outlining ways in which Christians can battle human trafficking in Louisiana.

AURORA, Neb.—
Men honor Scout leaders
The Prairie Rivers District of UM Men honored 19 Scout leaders of the Pawnee District of Overland Trails Council.

UM Men presented certificates of appreciation and devotional books for worship services to each scoutmaster. Spouses received monogrammed blankets.

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.—
More than 1,000 men gather for weekend
Some 1,100 men attended a February Men ‘N Ministry Weekend at Christ UMC.

“God is blessing us in this very moment to make a difference, to make our mark,” said South Carolina Bishop Jonathan Holston. “My friends, this is not a weekend of coming and sitting but about spiritual revival, about letting go of boundaries and letting God work within you.”

Author Jeremy Kingsley encouraged the men to lead like Jesus; “be approachable, inclusive and gracious.”

Author Robert Noland lifted up the benefits of small groups “We all need someone who will watch our backs and kick our butt.”

Former professional football player Andres Davis said whenever he was in a place of discomfort, whether from joining a new team or experiencing uncertainty, he felt God move within him in new ways.

Adrian Despres, chaplain of the University of South Carolina football team, said, “There’s a big difference between believing up here (pointing to his head) and believing down here (pointing to his heart).”

The weekend included 12 workshops on various topics.

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—
Church installs hearing loop
Thanks to a generous donation by Dale and Betty Kuehnhoff, a hearing loop was installed in the sanctuary of Northwest Hills UMC. Dale is president of a San Antonio chapter for hearing impaired, and has participated in numerous studies for hearing.

DENHAM SPRINGS, La.—
A cleaner place to play
Twelve men from two UM churches and one Episcopal Church power washed and cleaned a playground designed for children who are physically, mentally or developmentally challenged.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.—
Chaplain gives 250 books to police officers
Jo Ann Keith, chaplain for the Little Rock Police Department and the Pulaski County Sheriff’s Office, gave 250 copies of Strength for Service to God and Community to members of both groups.

Following the suicide of a deputy in the Sheriff’s Office, Keith told a committee of Immanuel Baptist Church about the suicide and the spiritual support that can be found in the devotional book. The church provided funds for the books.

HIXSON, Tenn.—
Children build manger scenes
For the second year in a row, men of Burks UMC helped 35 children build Nativity scenes to place under their Christmas trees. Photos of the children, their helpers and mangers were placed on ornaments that graced a tree in the church narthex; the ornaments were taken home after a Christmas Eve service.

DENHAM SPRINGS, La.—
A cleaner place to play
Twelve men from two UM churches and one Episcopal Church power washed and cleaned a playground designed for children who are physically, mentally or developmentally challenged.
In Memoriam – Ross Brightwell


While president, the former Army officer established a flood of conference-wide activities including a softball tournament, a day at the zoo, a day at the Phillies Baseball Park, a day at an amusement park, and Society of St. Andrew produce-packing events during sessions of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

The former vice president of the Northeastern Jurisdiction of UM Men, always attended meetings of the National Association of Conference Presidents and frequently suggested ways in which presidents could raise funds for men’s ministry.

Brightwell never married. He listed his most thrilling moment as the day he received Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s (IUP) President’s Medal of Distinction for developing the school’s “Boost Music in Our Schools” program.

That honor followed years of service in three large cities with desert filling out the border and stare at the Russians staring back at us,” he said.

When he completed his Army career in 1979, he headed back to IUP to complete his last semester. He was stunned at how the school had changed: co-ed dorms, no curfews and recreational drug use.

But Brightwell’s biggest culture shock was when he got a job working for a private company in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. He said the country is basically three large cities with desert filling out the rest of the landscape.

In 1986, he came back to Pennsylvania and volunteered as travel manager and announcer for the 225-member IUP marching band.

After moving to Philadelphia to care for his mother, Brightwell served as coordinator of meetings of a Steelers fan club. He remained in the city after her death, and every Sunday during the football season, a crowd of 80 fans gathered at a Philadelphia restaurant to cheer on the cross-state franchise.

Back in Uniontown to enlist but never received a letter stating he was no longer drafted. He had already quit school and his tuition had been refunded.

“I’m sitting there scratching my head thinking ‘What do I do now?’ when the recruiting sergeant puts a hand on my shoulder and said, ‘You’re a college boy, aren’t you? You ever consider Officer Candidate School?’”

Brightwell became a second lieutenant in the Army and was stationed in Germany. “We’d sit on the border and stare at the Russians staring back at us,” he said.

He remained in the city after her death, and they load the buses and I’m still standing back at us,” Brightwell said. “The lady said, ‘Go ahead, roll.’ I said, ‘Ma’am, I’m still here.’”

Conference presidents set plans for quadrennium

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Some 100 presidents of annual conference organizations of UM Men and conference prayer advocates met March 3-6 at Andrew Price UMC to celebrate significant ministries, elect officers and set plans for the 2016-2019 quadrennium.

During the four-day meeting, men from across the nation honored local church, district and conference ministries to men, commissioned three men’s ministry specialists, reviewed proposals to go before General Conference, engaged in two mission projects, and learned of plans for the 12th National Gathering of UM Men, July 7-8, 2017, in Brentwood, Tenn. One of the speakers at that event, Shan Foster, a leader of efforts to oppose domestic violence, spoke to the March meeting.

Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the General Commission on UM Men, honored 13 annual conferences for increasing the number of charters during the last year, with top award to the North Georgia Conference for adding 66 new charters in 2015.

L.W. Smith, president of the Strength

Three commissioned as men’s ministry specialists

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—George Groves, Roger Kindschi and Kenneth Tielke were commissioned as men’s ministry specialists at a March 5 meeting at the National Association of Conference Presidents.

These three bring the total of men commissioned as men’s ministry specialists to 41, with 28 candidates in process.

Following extensive training, these specialists will provide resources and programs to help local congregations engage men who are growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. They connect congregational leaders with district,
It may be time to move on, says Illinois pastor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. —

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Wilson, senior pastor at Wheatland Salem UMC in Naperville, Ill., told conference presidents of UM Men that “there will come a time when you need to pick up and move on in your ministry.”

Addressing the men at a time when leaders of UM Men are moving to new positions, Wilson said, “This (moving to a new post) may be the hardest thing you do, because you may follow someone you truly loved as a leader.” However, she said “The legacy left for you is to carry on — take your leadership inheritance and move on to the next level.”

She recalled how Terah, Abram’s father, took Abram, Sarai, and grandson, Lot, on a trip from their homeland in Ur to their intended destination in Canaan. Instead, when they got to Harran, they settled there until Terah died.

“Three generations leave their comfortable homeland,” she said. “Abram may have had more than one sleepless night. He was stripped of his identity as he journeyed to unknown places.”


“Every leader has a back story,” she said and noted that some back stories include failures. “But if we fail, we are learning.”

“Every leader has a God who is with you and will take you places you never dreamed you would go,” she said.

New Officers elected

NASHVILLE, Tenn. —

The National Association of Conference Presidents (NACP) elected new officers to serve in the 2016-2019 quadrennium.

Steve Nailor, president of the Northern Illinois Conference UM Men, was elected NACP president. Lee Donley, former president of the North Central Jurisdiction and NACP secretary was elected first vice president. Wayne Prejean, president of the Louisiana Annual Conference UM Men, was elected second vice president. Cary Loesing, president of the North Georgia Annual Conference UM Men, was elected treasurer, and Ken Tielke, former president of the South Central Jurisdiction UM Men, was elected treasurer.

Jurisdictional officers:

Western: Richard Kim
Southeastern: Hank Dozier
North Central Ken Hadgins
Northeastern: Wayne Caster

Officers of UM Men Foudation

President: Glenn Wintemberg
Vice President: Larry Dozier
Secretary: Bill Mooney
Treasurer: Gard Wayt

Basketball star urges men to oppose domestic violence

NASHVILLE, Tenn. —

Shan Foster, 29, the all-time leading scorer for the Vanderbilt basketball team, has re-trained his shooting eye to help men end domestic violence.

Speaking to a March meeting of the National Association of Conference Presidents, the former shooting guard said the popular saying “boys will be boys” is “profoundly anti-male.”

“That saying assumes boys and men are incapable of treating women with respect,” said the 6’6” all-time leader in 3-point shooting.

He encouraged the conference presidents to stop language and behavior that objectifies women. “Leaders are responsible for what we allow to exist. Are we man enough to do something about it?”

Foster serves as director of MEND (Ending Violence – Mending Communities) of the Nashville YWCA. MEND is dedicated to ending violence against women and girls by engaging and educating men and boys.

“For too long, men have been conspicuously absent from prevention and intervention efforts.” Says MEND.

Men pack rice and beans

Conference presidents and prayer advocates pack 2,400 pounds of rice and beans for 662 students at the Ticusulm Elementary School. The students come from 23 countries and 95 percent of them are on a free- or reduced-cost lunch program.

President honored on last day of service

NASHVILLE, Tenn. —

Conference presidents of UM Men and conference prayer advocates gave a standing ovation to Dan Ramsey on the last day he would preside over the assembly as president of the NACP.
Northern Illinois Conference tops list of donors to Meals for Millions

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Wade Mays, director of the “Meals for Millions” program of the Society of St. Andrew, honored Northern Illinois Conference for 2015 contributions totaling $23,446, tops in the nation.

Last year, all UM Men organizations across the U.S. contributed more than $170,000 to Meals for Millions, an amount that provided 8.2 million servings of fresh produce for hungry Americans.

Mays also honored Oklahoma Annual Conference with a “Bud-the-Spud Award” for increasing total contributions by the highest percentage. The conference contributed $1,302 in 2014 and jumped the total to $4,035 in 2015. The award honors the late Nelson L. “Bud” Curtis, who donned a potato costume to urge men to participate in “potato drops.”

Last year, UM Men organizations contributed 7.5 million pounds of fresh produce through potato projects.

The Big Island, Virginia-based society has 18 hunger relief advocates across the nation, and last year, these leaders led 1,522 volunteers into farmer’s fields to pick up 783,441 pounds of produce that would otherwise have gone to waste.

Mays underscored the importance of the ministry by playing a 60 Minutes video which noted 25 percent of the U.S. population is now living in poverty (a family of four living on less than $22,000 places it at the poverty level).

“We would like to thank the leadership of the General Commission on UM Men and the National Association of Conference Presidents for their unwavering support of our ministry,” said Mays.

The top ten conference contributors to the Meals for Millions

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<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Total Contribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois</td>
<td>$23,446</td>
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<tr>
<td>(The Rockford District)</td>
<td>raised $14,255 of this total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>Indiana</td>
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UM Men contribute more than $26,000

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—In a March 3 report to the UM Men Foundation, Migdiel Pérez, manager of the Upper Room Living Prayer Center, expressed appreciation for 2015 contributions from UM Men totaling $26,756.

Those financial gifts enabled the Nashville-based ministry to respond to 264,940 prayer requests in 2015.

“Thank you for your faithful contributions, both financial and—equally important—the many hours of service provided by UM Men groups across the nation,” said Pérez.

Last year, 141,287 people called The Upper Room Prayer Center to ask for prayers; 2,400 sent letters describing their problems and asking for prayers; 120,703 posted requests on the prayer wall of the website; 300 sent requests by email; and 250 asked for prayers via social media.

Four hundred global prayer partners and more than 500 trained volunteers responded to the 264,940 prayer requests.

“As our ministry continues to grow, one of our biggest challenges is to stay current with current technologies,” said Pérez. “We have become mobile friendly so persons in need of prayer can reach us with any electronic device.”

Prayer Advocates attending the March 3-6 meeting brought checks totaling $13,350.

Pérez honored South Carolina Conference for raising $4,500, the highest total given by a conference to the national prayer ministry.

UM Men give devotional books to firefighters

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Some 15 conference presidents and prayer advocates took 25 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* to an east Nashville fire station.

The men arrived at the station just as one of the two emergency vehicles was returning to the station and the firefighters received another call after a 20-minute conversation with the UM men.

UM Men established the *Strength for Service* ministry and created the non-denominational board that continues to provide devotional books to the military and first responders. L.W. Smith, a South Carolina leader of UM Men, chairs the 20-member board and led the group presenting books to the Nashville fire station. The books were provided by World Wide Technology.

Upper Room Prayer Line receives 264,940 prayer requests in 2015

UM Men contribute more than $26,000

Migdiel Pérez (left) presents the award for the highest total given to the prayer ministry to Dennis Sullen, prayer advocate for South Carolina Conference, and Herman Lightsey, conference president of UM Men.
**Where’s Glenn?**

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

“Where’s Glenn Wintemberg?”

That’s the question some 100 men attending the NACP meeting asked on March 6, the day after Wintemberg was elected president of the UM Men Foundation.

“Glenn is a long-time leader of UM Men. He served as NACP president from 2004 to 2008 and president of Missouri Conference UM Men from 1996-2004. A strong advocate for men’s ministry, he began the Family (Fast a Meal in 1 year) program to raise funds for the Society of St. Andrew and he was one of the guiding lights in providing funds for men’s ministry by enabling men to purchase engraved pavers on the sidewalk in front of the commission office on Music Row in Nashville. He also launched the Missouri Men 5000 program to fund a conference director of men’s ministry.

He has served Mount Zion UMC as chair of Staff Parish-Relations Committee, chair of the Building Team, and a member of the Board of Trustees.

Glenn has returned to St. Louis to be present for the birth of his grandchild,” explained Hanke. Glenn’s daughter, Aubrey Tharp, is scheduled for a Cesarean Section delivery of Glenn’s second grandchild on March 4. That event takes precedence over his presence for the remainder of this meeting.”

**No one seemed to know.**

Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the Nashville-based commission, explained the situation.

“Glenn has returned to St. Louis to be present for the birth of his grandchild,” explained Hanke. Glenn’s daughter, Aubrey Tharp, is scheduled for a Cesarean Section delivery of Glenn’s second grandchild on March 4. That event takes precedence over his presence for the remainder of this meeting.”

**Where’s Glenn Wintemberg?”**

That’s the question some 100 men attending the NACP meeting asked on March 6, the day after Wintemberg was elected president of the UM Men Foundation.

“Glenn is a long-time leader of UM Men. He served as NACP president from 2004 to 2008 and president of Missouri Conference UM Men from 1996-2004. A strong advocate for men’s ministry, he began the Family (Fast a Meal in 1 year) program to raise funds for the Society of St. Andrew and he was one of the guiding lights in providing funds for men’s ministry by enabling men to purchase engraved pavers on the sidewalk in front of the commission office on Music Row in Nashville. He also launched the Missouri Men 5000 program to fund a conference director of men’s ministry.

He has served Mount Zion UMC as chair of Staff Parish-Relations Committee, chair of the Building Team, and a member of the Board of Trustees.

Git Hanke, top staff executive of the Nashville-based commission, explained the situation.

“Glenn has returned to St. Louis to be present for the birth of his grandchild,” explained Hanke. Glenn’s daughter, Aubrey Tharp, is scheduled for a Cesarean Section delivery of Glenn’s second grandchild on March 4. That event takes precedence over his presence for the remainder of this meeting.”

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birds for their hides and destroy the meat. Knowing of hungry people, Johnson agreed to provide 50 cents a pound to process the meat. He then asked UM groups to provide $35 to process the meat of each 70-pound bird. Other farmers learned of the effort and agreed to provide pigs for $10 each and the same 50-cent-a-pound for processing. The effort resulted in UM Men providing 80,000 pounds of ostrich meat and pork to food banks and children’s homes.

He also initiated a bowl-a-thon to raise funds for the Upper Room Prayer Line. For the last 10 years he has operated a twice-a-month remote prayer line at the church.

In 1997 and 1998, he led efforts to purchase a 15 passenger van for the Edwards County Senior Center.

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David Shropshire
Treasurer serves orphanage in Honduras

MIDLAND, N.C.—Men of Bethel UMC presented David Shropshire with a Life Membership Award for his service in an orphanage in Honduras and other construction efforts in the Central American nation.

“Through David’s efforts, the company he works for supplied dirt, stone, and concrete at no cost or at greatly reduced prices for our church and community basketball court,” said Jeremy Brackett, Bethel director of family ministries. “He is also one of our church volunteers who runs the video equipment on Sunday mornings.”

Shropshire serves as treasurer of UM Men and supports barbecue fundraisers.

Susan Smith
District president of UM Women served in three states

GREENVILLE, S.C.—UM Men and UM Women of Aldersgate UMC and the Greenville District presented Susan Smith with a Susanna Wesley Award of Excellence with a Susanna Wesley plaque to Nancy Harris. She is joined by her husband, Joe.

As president of Greenville District UM Women, she has served as a Meals on Wheels driver for more than 30 years and worked several years with teen drug-prevention programs.

Herman Lightsey, president of South Carolina UM Men, presented the award. He described Smith as a woman with “a distinctive intellect, a nurturing spirit, unwavering devotion and perseverance in the faith.”

Nancy Harris
Wife of former staff executive inducted into John Wesley Society

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.—Nancy Harris, wife of Joe Harris, former general secretary of the General Commission on UM Men, was inducted into the John Wesley Society by David Battles, a member of the Board of Directors of the UMM Foundation.

Joe Harris served as the first top staff executive after the commission was created in 1996 and he served until 2005 when he resigned to become assistant to the bishop of the Oklahoma Annual Conference.

Nancy assisted in the commission office while Joe was top executive and she created the Joe Harris Endowment Fund of the UM Men Foundation.

The Wesley Society Award was presented “in appreciation of your continuous support and devotion to prayer, youth, and mission efforts” of UMM.

A Bishop’s Dinner — the best way to increase scouting ministries

Millions of youngsters spend after-school hours watching television and playing video games.

At the same time thousands of churches are frustrated by the absence of young people.

Those same churches may be unaware of the ways in which scouting can introduce pre-teens and teenagers to their life-changing ministries.

One of the most effective ways to introduce churches to scouting ministries is a Bishop’s Dinner for Scouting.

Pastors and church leaders who may not be thinking of scouting as a ministry may still respond positively to an invitation to attend a free dinner with the bishop.

During the dinner, the bishop, church leaders, and Scout executives will introduce Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturing, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire and PRAY (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth).

The establishment of PRAY studies is a remarkable way to introduce young people to the faith. There are four study/award programs “God and Me” (grades 1-3); “God and Family” (grades 4-6); God and Church (grades 6-8); and “God and Life” (grades 9-12).

It is not unusual for a family to join the sponsoring church after a son or daughter receives a PRAY award.

The dinners also introduce ways in which churches can strengthen their relationship with packs and troops that meet in their buildings. Too frequently, churches regard these groups as nuisances that leave messes and cause conflicts instead of extensions of their ministries to their communities.

St. Louis Bishop’s Dinner

In March, Missouri Area Bishop Robert Schnase hosted a Bishop’s Dinner for Scouting at Salem UMC in Ladue (St. Louis area).

The event was sponsored by the Steward Family Foundation and World Wide Technology. David Steward is founder and chairman of World Wide Technology and a leader in scouting ministries.

Eighty-two people from 27 churches attended. Eight churches expressed an interest in starting new Scout units and 11 agreed to strengthen the ties between their units and the church.

Jim Marchbank, chair of the Religious Relationships Committee for the Greater St. Louis Boy Scout Council, told the assembly the main reason churches don’t start new units is because they believe their church is too small or they don’t have enough boys.
“Those are exactly the same reasons why churches should be starting a unit,” said Marchbank. “Fifty percent of the new Scouts are unchurched and these are potential church members. I think most pastors dream of having unchurched families visit their church once a week.” He encourages all UM churches to provide a link on their websites to local Scout councils or other youth serving agencies.

“Kids can join scouting at any time during the year. And if a boy was never a Cub Scout, he can still join Boy Scouts or Venturing,” said Christine Dieckmann, director of communications for the Greater St. Louis Area BSA Council. “In scouting, kids are introduced to countless hobbies, interests, sciences, and even future career choices. Scouts have the opportunity to develop confidence, self-reliance, character and values that they’ll carry with them for a lifetime.”

Keynote address

Missouri Area Bishop Robert Schnase credits his wife, Esther, with helping their two sons attain the rank of Eagle. “A lot of Scout activities are on weekends, and I often work weekends, so for 14 years of scouting in our family, Esther took on most of the responsibility, serving as a den mother and Scout leader,” he said.

It’s not that he wasn’t involved, though. Schnase taught classes on fishing and birding and ran with kids as they worked on their physical fitness tests.

“You can’t do it for them,” he said. “You can’t push them or pull them, but you can run beside them.”

He also served as an adult leader on camping trips. He recalled one particularly challenging portage on a Boundary Waters camping trip, when he offered encouragement to a Scout who felt he wasn’t going to be able to carry his canoe up the hill. When he got to the top, he saw one of the other leaders having a similar talk with his own son.

“All young people need a relationship of trust with adults other than their parents,” Bishop Schnase said.

That trip also involved seeing the antlers of a moose swimming across the lake in the middle of the night, and hearing the call of loons for the first time.

He spoke about the threads of service that are woven through the scouting program from simple litter clean ups and food drives to complex Eagle Scout projects, many of which serve prominent functions in communities and in churches.

“We should lift up the value of scouting when it’s done with excellence,” Bishop Schnase said. “It’s about a changed life. It’s about development, growth and maturing in faith. It matters in what kind of person someone will become, and what kind of character will develop. Let’s not let our kids be squeezed into the molds of the false values that our culture gives them.”

For more information on how to conduct a Bishop’s Dinner for your annual conference, please email Larry Coppock, national director, scouting ministries, GCUMM (lcoppock@gcum.org).

What does a scouting ministry specialist do?

There are more than 300 scouting ministry specialists in the UMC. Each one of these volunteers helps area churches understand how Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, and Big Brothers Big Sisters can enrich and expand their ministries to youth within and beyond their local congregations.

Steve Bays, a scouting ministry specialist in Kentucky, also helps churches understand how the Christian education program of St. Louis-based Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY) can provide their young people with educational opportunities beyond the Sunday morning classroom. He has served as the Boy Scout Council Religious Emblems Coordinator for the Lincoln Heritage Council, and he is helping the council recruit religious emblems coordinators for units and districts.

Bays also makes sure there is a display of PRAY materials and opportunities at Boy Scout Council meetings and district events. The display includes information on awards for churches, adults, and young people as well as samples of PRAY books.

The PRAY program includes “God and Me” (grades 1-3) “God and Family” (grades 4-6), “God and Church” (grades 6-8) and “God and Life” (grades 9-12). The “God and Church” program is used by some churches as part of their confirmation training. Sometimes young people who are not church members take the “God and Life” course and become church members. When that happens, their families frequently join their sons and daughters as members of the faith communities.

Bays hosts a booth on scouting ministry and PRAY awards adjacent to the UM Men booth at Kentucky Annual Conference sessions.

“I talk with many people who say they do not have scouting because they do not have young families,” observes Bays. “I reply that is a good reason to have scouting to bring young families and children into their congregation.”

“One day the booth was staffed by a scouting district executive,” says Bays. “He was able to talk about scouting to those that had a scouting ministry and those that did not. This was a great opportunity to talk about scouting to a large group in one location.”

Bays encourages other scouting ministry specialists to provide similar display areas at a variety of events.

“The booth is easy to prepare and set up. I had assistance from the scouting ministry office for any literature I needed. I also received a scouting banner, stickers, and scouting literature from our local council office.”

Bays expressed gratitude to UM Men for paying for the booth space, and he says he will participate again next year and invite other scouting ministry specialists to help.

Bays advises other scouting ministry specialists to work closely with their local BSA council office, the General Commission on UM, and their bishop and/or district superintendents. “You will get lots of support and assistance,” says Bays.
Illinois church develops close relationship with Scout troop

Wesley UMC regards Troop 141 as an extension of its ministry to the community.

Only two of the 40 Scouts are members of Wesley UMC, but the church regards the troop as “Wesley Boy Scouts” not as tenants who use church facilities.

News about the troop is included in the monthly church newsletter, and a four-page “Welcome to our Troop 141 family” brochure is in the church’s literature rack.

Keith Kohanzo, a scouting ministry specialist and scouting coordinator, serves on the church council and provides reports on the troop at each meeting.

He also chairs the Work Area on Education, the committee that establishes the budget for Sunday school classes, children and youth ministries, and scouting. The troop receives $100 from that budget, but the church provides an opportunity for additional giving (currently $1,300).

“In addition to the UMC cross and flame logo, we put BSA seals of the same size (made currently $300).”

“The troop room is adjacent to the church’s fellowship hall/gym, with a service star flag for the number of former Scouts who are currently on active duty in the military. The room is available for use by Sunday school classes.

On Scout Sunday, Kohanzo provided a two-page report to the congregation. That report included information about service projects including providing for the Charleston Food Pantry and a homeless shelter in Mattoon, hosting two blood drives, serving meals at the American Cancer Society Relay for Life event, planting trees at neighboring schools, and collecting shoes for Soles4Souls.

“Members of Troop 362 have earned more than 400 merit badges since Fletcher became scoutmaster and they have hiked more than 75 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia.” Fletcher also led three teams of young people on Appalachian Service Projects.

Aaron Kohler, a member of Troop 56 of the Sam Houston Area Council and a junior at Atascocita High School, achieved the rank of Eagle since Fletcher became scoutmaster and they have earned more than 400 merit badges since Fletcher became scoutmaster and they have hiked more than 75 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia.” Fletcher also led three teams of young people on Appalachian Service Projects.

Jennifer Mae Berry Ryan
Leader of 10 mission trips to Haiti

Gracie UMC presented a Good Samaritan Award to Jennifer Mae Berry Ryan, a mission-minded young adult.

The 28-year-old co-founded an Illinois-based ministry for mission work in the village of Augustin, Haiti, and she has led 10 mission trips to that island nation. Her team built a church, and Grace UMC shipped a prefabricated a school building to the Haitian village.

Crispin Lyman
Eagle Scout restores cemetery

His Eagle project, Crispin Lyman, 18, spent six months pulling weeds, repairing fences and cutting down dead chinaberry trees at a local cemetery.

With help from friends and Scouts, he replaced 50 feet of chain link fence and fence posts, sprayed weeds, removed trees, and installed a new sign.

The cemetery sits on a curve and its fence has been struck by vehicles several times. In fact, the week after Lyman received funds from Buda Lions Club it was struck again. Fortunately, the Lions gave Lyman more money than he requested so he was able to make the additional repairs. To prevent another hit, he installed reflectors on the fence.

Order pins for scouting ministry at the resource section of the gcumm.org website.

$10 each.

Call Marc Stowe 615/620-7262 for details.
The General Commission on United Methodist Men challenges every UMMen group to become a Challenge Fellowship by donating at least $200 a year to Meals for Millions – a partnership of UMMen and the Society of St. Andrew to feed millions of hungry Americans.

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

Chris Adkins  
Former president of UMMen serves as charter representative  
PORTAGE, Ind.—The Rev. Mark Dicken, pastor of Portage UMC, presented a Cross and Flame Award to Chris Adkins, former president of UMMen and charter representative for Cub Scout Pack 487.

Adkins led mission teams to the Red Bird Mission in Kentucky, and he repairs homes of the elderly and people with handicapping conditions.

Timothy Saltzer  
Newscaster shaves head  
FALLSTON, Md.—Fallston UMC presented Timothy Saltzer with a Good Samaritan Award for leading efforts to raise funds for St. Baldrick’s Foundation, a Monrovia, Calif.-based organization seeking cures for childhood cancer.

“Each March, he shaves his head to raise money through sponsors and to show solidarity with kids who have cancer,” says the Rev. Karin Walker, pastor. “In the last six years he has raised more than $5,000.”

Walker says the 14-year old is part of a “newscast” crew and is “an all-around spirited and joyful youth.”

Mason Rains  
Scout transforms church entryway  
DALLAS, Texas—Ridgewood Park UMC presented Mason Rains with a Good Samaritan Award following his service as a chief of a Cub Scout den, senior patrol leader, quartermaster and Order of the Arrow representative.

For his Eagle project, Mason led a team of adults and Scouts to landscape the front of the church. He removed existing plants, prepared the soil, and planted a variety of plants to make the entryway attractive for an anniversary celebration.

Mason also participated in food drives, assisted Scouts with their Eagle projects, engaged in conservation work at Boy Scout camps, served as a merit-badge counselor, and helped repair bicycles for children.

Tresa De La Cruz  
Scout leader serves youth around the world  
ANCHORAGE, Alaska—St. John UMC gave Tresa De La Cruz a Cross and Flame Award for 22 years of service as a Sunday school teacher and Girl Scout leader.

She taught young people at First UMC in Lafayette, La., and Holy Covenant UMC in Houston, Texas, from 1993 to 2001.

Her husband, Jerome, was transferred to Dubai in 2001, and for three years she taught a Sunday school class at a Baptist church and led a Daisy Scout Troop in that city located in the United Arab Emirates.

The family’s next stop was Stavanger, Norway. From 2004 to 2007 she led Girl Scout troops affiliated with the International School of Stavanger.

Upon the family’s 2007 return to the U.S., Tresa again led a Girl Scout troop and served as a youth counselor in Midland, Texas.

When the family moved to Anchorage in 2011, she led a Girl Scout troop sponsored by St. John UMC, and established two additional troops.

“Tresa De La Cruz is an outstanding example of a dedicated servant leader for youth,” said John Anderson, scouting coordinator for the Western Jurisdiction.
Please share with all of the men of the church.