

Your Connection to The Mississippi Annual Conference

The Circuit Rider

Published Wednesday | Jan. 4, 2017

The **POWER** of We

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Share Your News in The Circuit Rider

Contact The Circuit Rider at news@mississippi-umc.org.

Mission:

The mission of the Mississippi Annual Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We're Still Here



Members and friends of Sweetwater United Methodist Church gathered for prayer as soon as it was safe to do so behind a powerful storm that lifted Sweetwater from its foundation on Jan. 2, 2017. The church is in Wesson, Mississippi. **Read the full story in the section Connecting on page 2.**



2016 Special Edition of The Circuit Rider is now available to view online! Go to: <http://bit.ly/28OxETH>

Purpose:

The Mississippi Annual Conference—empowered by love, generosity, justice and apprenticeship—forms spiritual leaders, faith communities and connections so more disciples of Jesus Christ transform the world.

Our Values

The Mississippi Conference Four Core Values are love, generosity, justice and apprenticeship. For more information, visit www.mississippi-umc.org/thepowerofwe.



LOVE



GENEROSITY



JUSTICE



APPRENTICESHIP



Mississippi Conference
of The United Methodist Church

Living Out
The **POWER** of We

320-C Briarwood Drive
Jackson, Mississippi 39206
601.354.0515 | Fax 601.948.5982
www.mississippi-umc.org

word POWER

Matthew 3:13-17

New International Version (NIV)

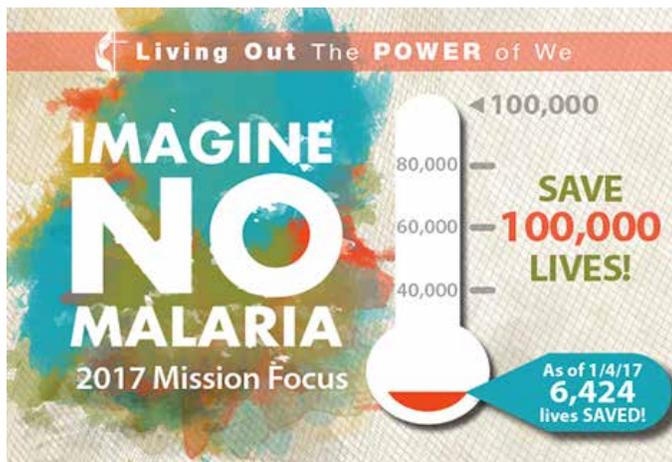
The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. **14** But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

INM Update!



For more information:

www.mississippi-umc.org/INMeventideas

Mission & Motion: *The Gathering 2017 and INM*



Watch the Video:

<https://vimeo.com/195327015>

Connecting

Strong Winds Move Church Building, Not the Church

By Tamica Smith Jeuit, Communications Specialist, Mississippi Conference

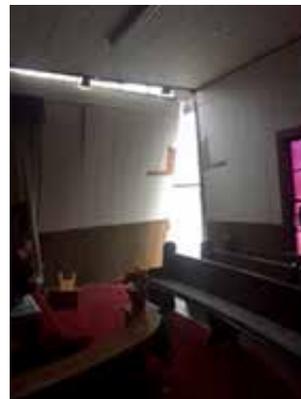
Photos right and below: *The wind force separated the sanctuary walls at Sweetwater UMC. Church members living near Sweetwater discovered the damage. All pictures courtesy Sweetwater UMC.*

The sanctuary at Sweetwater United Methodist Church in Wesson, Mississippi, is a total loss after strong winds shifted the structure about two feet from its foundation on Jan. 2, 2017. According to the pastor, Rev.

Mark Allen, the church is more than 130 years old, and its long-standing beams could not resist the high winds.

For those concerned about the church, Allen offers the same words of comfort that he shared with his members.

"The people are God's church. That's a building, and we will get the building rebuilt. We are still here. We will be stronger than ever pulling together as a church family," said Allen.



The membership is at Sweetwater is approximately 40. While work to construct a new sanctuary is underway, the congregation will meet at regular service times in the fellowship hall that suffered minimal damage.

"We welcome anybody who wants to come and worship with us. It may be tight in the fellowship hall, but we will find a way to make room even if we have to overflow into the parking lot," Allen cheerfully stated.

Dozens of well wishes and offers for help continue to pour into Sweetwater. Allen, who has served at the church for the last five years, is grateful for the support.

From the Swansons: God Always Provides "New Birth"

Photo right: Bishop and Mrs. James Swanson, Sr. submitted this photo of their granddaughter, Laila Brown.

I'm sure that 2016 was a year in which you-like our family-experienced great disappointments, frustrations, some losses, and even shed many tears of sadness. And yet God was faithful and not only brought us through those hard times but blessed us with many "Glory Sightings," as well.

I invite you to journey through 2017 with the Swanson family fully aware that we will face difficulties but trusting that God will continue to be faithful and trustworthy. My granddaughter Laila is my reminder that God always provides "New Birth" as an opportunity to rewrite the script of our lives. May 2017 be a new birth, a new start or a greater opportunity for you to serve God.

I leave this word with you:

"GOD 's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness! I'm sticking with GOD (I say it over and over). He's all I've got left" (Lamentations3:22-24MSG).

Have a blessed New Year from James and Delphine Swanson, Sr., our children, their spouses and our grandchildren.



Video Message Encourages MS Conference INM Effort

Mississippi United Methodists received a video greeting all the way from Kinshasha, Democratic Republic of Congo. The message from Pierre Omadjela and his wife, Louise Ekoto Onadelo, thanked the Mississippi Conference for participating in The United Methodist Church, Imagine No Malaria program.

Omadjela is with United Methodist Communications in Kinshasha. His wife is a student at Africa University. Imagine No Malaria is the Mississippi Conference Mission Focus. The conference goal is to purchase enough mosquito nets to save 100,000 lives from the deadly malaria disease. To view the video, go to <http://bit.ly/2iJl5xB>. For more about the Mission Focus, go to <http://www.mississippi-umc.org/inm>.



Faith Communities

Bell Ringing Event at Enterprise UMC

Photo right: A picture captured the smoldering Enterprise UMC and the church bell that was saved thanks to a good Samaritan on Jan. 12, 2016. Photo Courtesy Enterprise UMC.

People who have been a part of Enterprise United Methodist Church are being invited to participate in a bell-ringing event on Jan. 12, 2017. The date marks one year to the day Enterprise UMC burned. The fire destroyed the church's beautiful 80-year-old sanctuary along with classrooms and fellowship hall. As the church burned, a man from the community thought quickly and pulled down a steel tower with the historic bell away from the burning building. He saved the bell, and the lot has stood empty since. After Christmas 2016, the church resurrected the bell.

The bell-ringing will serve as a sign of hope and progress as the church prepares to break ground this spring on a new facility. People can ring the bell from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. Enterprise UMC is in the Mississippi Conference Meridian District.

Visit Facebook [<https://www.facebook.com/events/1762196063997656/>] for more information about the event.



Report on Merging Congregations Becoming One

Photo right: Kenneth Wortham leads the prayer at First Oxford United Methodist Church in Oxford, Miss. on Sunday, December 11, 2016. Courtesy The Oxford Eagle.

The story of two merging United Methodist congregations printed in a recent issue of the North Mississippi publication, The Oxford Eagle. In the article titled "How two Oxford churches with dwindling congregations joined forces to serve the community," the Rev. Chris Diggs explained that the willingness to work together created one strong congregation. Read the story, courtesy of The Oxford Eagle, written by Charles Hitch, here: <http://bit.ly/2hVQYFY>.



Administry

Beginning a New Year

By Rev. Mike Hicks, Executive Director, The Mississippi United Methodist Foundation

A review of last year's financial performance in light of the past three to five years is the best place for a finance committee to begin the year. The numbers may reflect a trend up, down or about the same in income and expenditures. If income is failing to keep up with the growth of expenses, what plans do you have to increase giving? If giving is well ahead of spending, it may be time to expand ministry and mission. If income and expenditures are flat, does this reflect where God is calling you to be?

Looking at numbers and failing to respond to them with wisdom and creativity avoids leadership. The numbers demand our attention and response. Neither a head in the sand nor a pie in the sky approach is helpful. Owning up to trends over time is essential. Expecting the future to be different without changing behavior is naïve and possibly destructive. An unwillingness to talk about the place of money in the church and in our lives is not going to make money problems go away.

Now is the time to look and to act.



Freeze Up Precautions -- Protecting Our Churches

During a severe cold spell, sprinkler or water pipes can freeze, burst and produce devastating losses. Water damage from this type of incident, known as a freeze-up, can affect products in storage, paperwork, records, furniture, machinery, computers, and all types of electronic equipment. If the water leakage goes undetected for an extended period (over a weekend, for example), extensive flooding can result. Total costs often reach hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Read guidelines [<http://bit.ly/2iN6L9M>] that can help you plan for and implement preventive measures to better protect your church from the threat of freeze-ups.



Save the Date | Announcements

Arts Under the Dome Kicks-off 2017 Season

Jan. 13, 2017

Popular Gulfport concert series Arts Under The Dome opens their 2017 season on Friday, Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. with a much-requested return performance by Brazilian guitarist Diego Figueiredo. This is Arts Under The Dome's 24th season of bringing first-class internationally touring artists to the Gulf Coast. Other concerts in the season on February 11, March 4, April 21, and May 13. Tickets and concert information are available at www.arts.fumc-gulfport.org. For information, call 228-229-6851.

Rest and Relax

Jan. 13-14, 2017

Save the date, Jan. 13 -14, 2017 for the event Relax and Rest - God Has Showered You With Blessings. This is a retreat for pastors and others seeking rest. For more information contact the Jubilee Center, a ministry of Heritage UMC in D'Iberville, Mississippi, jubileecenterdiberville@gmail.com.

Camp Lake Stephens, Overflow

Jan. 14-16, 2017

Traditionally taking place over New Year's, Overflow has become a Camp Lake Stephens constant for now over 30 years! Now for the first time, Overflow will take place during the Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. Youth in grades 7-12 either individually or with their youth groups are invited to attend. Leading our worship sessions for the weekend will be Russ Polsgrove, along with Matt King and Austin Black. Additionally, we are excited to announce the return of Big Al to the Camp Lake Stephens stage. For additional information, please contact Chap Fenwick at chap@camplakestephens.com.

The Letter to the Hebrews

January 20 - 21, 2017

Dr. Ben Witherington III from Asbury Theological Seminary will be at Christ United for a teaching seminar on the meaning and symbolism of The Book of Hebrews (1.0 CEU). The early registration fee is \$50 through January 9, then increases to \$75. Online registration is available at www.christunitedjxn.org, or complete the form [<http://bit.ly/2hW0PXt>] and mail with your check. For more information, contact Catherine Hames at 601-914-7116 or chames@christunitedjxn.org.

Early Response Team Training

Jan. 21, 2017

Spread the word; Early Response Team training is at St. Luke's UMC, Jackson, Saturday, Jan. 21, 2017. The Rev. David Newton and Rev. David Cumbest are the training leaders. To register, go to <http://bit.ly/2hVYtNr>.

Camp Lake Stephens, Confirmation Retreat 2017

Jan. 27-29, 2017

Confirmation retreat is designed to complement the confirmation program offered through your local church for students in grades 6-8. This retreat is a wonderful opportunity for confirmands throughout the Mississippi Conference to be in community and learn together what it means to be a Christian in the United Methodist tradition. For more information, call 662-234-3350.

Clergy Leadership Conference

Feb. 6-8, 2017

Early Bird Registration Ends This Friday, Jan. 6

The 2017 Clergy Leadership Conference will be Feb. 6-8, 2017 at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Brandon, Mississippi. Rev. Dr. N. Graham Standish will lead this year's conference themed, "Leading a Church to Discern and Do God's Will." Those who attend the conference will receive 1.5 CEUs. Early Registration ends Jan. 6, 2017.

For more information, go to <http://www.events.centerforministry.com/assnfe/ev.asp>.

ERT Training at Eastlawn UMC

Feb. 11, 2017

Eastlawn United Methodist Church in Pascagoula, Mississippi will be the meeting place for Early Response Team (ERT) Training on Feb. 11, 2017. The church is at 2502 Ingalls Avenue. To register, go to <http://bit.ly/2ifPFST>.

The Gathering 2017

Feb. 24-26

The vision behind The Gathering is to create a high energy weekend conference for students to gather from all over Mississippi to celebrate the Lord and Savior. Organizers are committed to create a weekend event that is first-class quality with the best worship teams and communicators. Go to www.mississippi-umc.org/thegathering for early bird registration and more.

Lay Servant School Sponsored by Desoto Cluster

Feb. 25, 2017

The Desoto Cluster is hosting lay servant school at Hernando UMC on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2017. A barbecue lunch plate will be provided for \$5. Brochures with registration forms will be available later.

View instructors here: <http://files.constantcontact.com/c6cffd0c001/71a610e8-11b8-425e-a694-a92584fcb01b.pdf>.

50th General Meeting of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR)

March 8-11, 2017

The 50th General meeting anniversary for BMCR is March 8, 2017, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The theme is Celebrating a Legacy of Faith, Hope and Renewal More Rivers to Cross, More Milestones to Reach. For more information about registration and hotel reservations, go to <http://bit.ly/2igmYRS>.

Announcements

Required Clergy Ethics Seminar June 7, 2017

All active Mississippi United Methodist clergy are required to attend a quadrennial clergy ethics seminar. The Mississippi Conference's

next seminar will be held Wednesday, June 7, 2017, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Jackson Convention Complex. Participation for the complete event is mandatory, so please mark it on your calendars. This includes part-time, full-time, local pastors, deacons, elders, retirees who are serving and lay supply persons. Upon completion of this seminar, you will receive .5 CEU.

Hotels for 2017 AC Session

Hotels with special rates for the 2017 Session of the Mississippi Conference are now available online.

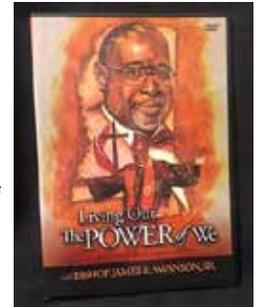
View the list here: <http://www.mississippi-umc.org/2017hotels>. Check back often for updates.

Living Out The POWER of We Bible Study

Photo right: *Living Out The POWER of We Bible Study DVD. The DVD cover was designed and illustrated by Anthony Thaxton.*

In the four-part video Bible study, Living Out The POWER of We, Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. calls for individuals to take a journey of self-reflection with the help of the Holy Spirit, inspiring change personally and within the world. Living Out The POWER of We is the Mississippi Conference theme, a continuation of The POWER of We theme for the last four years.

Go to <http://www.mississippi-umc.org/lotpowresources> for the study for more information and the application. Successful applicants will be notified by Thursday, Dec. 1, 2016.



UMC Events

Visit www.umc.org/news-and-media/looking-ahead-upcoming-events to see more educational opportunities and other upcoming events in the life of The United Methodist Church.

Cares & Concerns

Mrs. Sarah Hillman

Mrs. Sarah Hillman, the wife of Rev. Byrd Hillman, passed away on Dec. 28, 2016. Visitation will be Thursday, Jan. 5, 2017, 4-7 p.m. at Kosciusko First United Methodist Church. Memorial Services will be Friday, Jan. 6, 2017 at 11 a.m. Condolences can be sent to Rev. Byrd Hillman at 25275 HWY 19 N, Kosciusko, MS 39090.

Thank you for your prayers for Byrd and the family during this time of loss.

Methodist Tested Recipes

Herbed Spinach Plus

One-half onion	¼ c. grated Parmesan cheese
1 Tbsp. margarine	¼ c. grated Mozzarella cheese
¼ c. water	One-eighth tsp. garlic powder
2 (10 oz.) pkg. frozen chopped spinach (or use fresh spinach)	¼ tsp. basil
	¼ tsp. oregano

Finely chop onion and saute in margarine. Add water and spinach; cook until barely done. Drain well. Combine Parmesan cheese, Mozzarella cheese, garlic powder, basil, and oregano. Stir spinach and cheese mixture. Place in a buttered casserole dish and bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Serves 6.

— By Karen Smith in "The Fruits of Our Labour," published by the Prayer Warriors Class at Hickory Flat UMC



Employment

As a courtesy to the Mississippi Annual Conference, job announcements from across the United Methodist connection are featured in *The Circuit Rider*. To submit an employment notice, send an email to news@mississippi-umc.org. Postings are not guaranteed to appear more than once in Mississippi Conference publications. To read a description of job opening(s) listed below as well as other listings, go to www.mississippi-umc.org/employmentopportunities.

- Administrative Assistant Brookhaven District Office, (Brookhaven, MS) Mississippi Conference
- Full-time Director of Student Ministries at Brandon First UMC, Brandon, MS
- Piano Player at Southaven First UMC, Southaven, MS

Stay Connected

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/The-Mississippi-United-Methodist-Conference/436491529732524
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/Mississippi_UMC
- You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSRtxv_Kix8IbYuHKRMLIjg
- Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/119483421@N02/

Stay Connected with ConnectText

Mississippi United Methodists with the ability to receive text messaging via phone are encouraged to sign up for ConnectText. The service is another option for people to stay informed about important dates and other conference happenings.

To sign up for ConnectText:

1. Remember, you must have the ability to get text messages on your phone.
2. From your mobile phone, text the letters 'MSUMC' to the number 95577 and press send.
3. Wait a few seconds for a confirmation text and you're connected!

Mississippi Conference's Mobile App—MY MSUMC

MY MSUMC—the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church's official mobile app—is available at no cost on all iPhone, Android, Galaxy and Blackberry phones and their corresponding pads and tablets. MY MSUMC allows easy access to the latest conference events, local UM news and *The Circuit Rider*. The MY MSUMC app presents users with a unique opportunity to interact with the conference by submitting prayer requests, recording audio of personal testimonies and posting comments via facebook and twitter. Plus, the 'Our Districts' feature shows a comprehensive list of district contact information and even directions from the user's current location—all from a mobile smart phone or tablet device.