Your Connection to The Mississippi Annual Conference

The Circuit Rider

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Spiritual Decluttering

What might you set aside in the new year? United Methodist News Service writer, Joe Iovino explains how parting with some things may help declutter your spiritual life. Photo illustration by Mike DuBose, UMNS. See page 3 to read the article.

Our Values

The Mississippi Conference Four Core Values are love, generosity, justice and apprenticeship.

For more information, visit www.mississippi-umc.org/thepowerofwe.
Luke 3:15-17
New International Version (NIV)

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with[a] water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

New International Version (NIV)

The Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus

21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

Bishop’s On the Move

Mark your calendar to attend events where Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. will be visiting in the upcoming days.

• Jan. 3-7, 2016 (Sunday - Thursday)
  Bishop Swanson will be attending the Southeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops meeting in Lakeland, Florida.

• Jan. 19-22, 2016 (Tuesday - Friday)
  Bishop Swanson will be the worship speaker during the Southeastern Jurisdiction Cabinet Consultation at Epworth By the Sea, St. Simons Island, Georgia.

Human Relations Day
is January 17, 2016

Together, we extend a helping hand to those in crisis so they can overcome formidable obstacles.

To read more, visit
www.mississippi-umc.org/eventdetail/human-relations-day-is-january-17-2016-3240519

Connecting

Mississippi Conference Faithful to Long-term Recovery

Mississippi Conference disaster response leaders will be providing case management training as a result of severe weather and tornadoes that swept through Mississippi, Dec. 23-28, 2015. The training is for Marshall, Benton and Tippah counties. More details regarding scheduling will be announced later.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) will be assisting the conference. In its holistic response to disasters, UMCOR, offers disaster preparedness training, provides essential supplies and care -- both physical and psychological -- in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. UMCOR also supports long-term rebuilding efforts and assists communities as they adapt.

While faithful to long-term recovery, many Mississippi United Methodists re-
sponded to their neighbors in the immediate hours after the storms and helped with tarping homes and debris removal.

To follow Mississippi Conference disaster response messaging, visit www.mississippi-umc.org/messagefrommississippiunitedmethodistdisasterrelief.

Mississippians affected by the storms are urged to register for federal assistance. To visit the Mississippi Emergency Management website for more information, visit www.msema.org/mississippi-storm-survivors-urged-to-register-for-federal-assistance/.

Society of St. Andrew Director Dies

Society of St. Andrew regional director, Jackie Wooten Usey, recently lost a very courageous and hard fought battle with cancer. Funeral services for her were held on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2016. Usey worked long and tirelessly with Mississippi Conference churches and districts to feed the hungry across the state. The Society of St. Andrew operates a volunteer-driven gleaning network that includes volunteers who save fresh produce every year and use it to feed hungry people.

Spiritual Decluttering: A Fresh Start for A New Year

A UMC.org Feature by Joe Iovino

One of the wonderful things about each new year is that it brings with it a sense of a new beginning, 365 days of promise and possibility.

As a United Methodist church member, parting with some things for a season, may help declutter your spiritual life. Doing so helps make room for a new movement of the Holy Spirit in the months to come. What might you set aside in the next year?

Your pew

Pastors often know where each member of their congregation sits each Sunday. Some of us worship from the very same pew every week. More of us tend to gravitate toward the same general area, like somewhere in the last two rows on the right.

To read the full story, visit www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-decluttering-a-fresh-start-for-a-new-year.

No Gift from Christmas Weather

United Methodist News Service (UMNS)

Catastrophic tornadoes and flooding that occurred in multiple states over the Christmas holidays directly affected some United Methodists, and many others joined relief efforts. A tornado destroyed a United Methodist church in Lutts, Tennessee, and members of a handful of United Methodist churches in Texas lost homes. Sam Hodges and Heather Hahn reports. To read the story, visit www.umc.org/news-and-media/no-gift-from-christmas-weather.

Discipleship Ministries President Announces Leadership Change

From Discipleship Ministries

The board of Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church and Dr. Tim Bias jointly announced today that Dr. Bias is no longer employed as the General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries, effective Dec. 31, 2015.

Bishop Elaine Stanovsky, president of the board, praised Dr. Bias for his innovative leadership and ministry accomplishments during his time as General Secretary.

“Tim’s efforts to equip United Methodists for deeper discipleship and his heart for ministry have brought many closer to God, and we are grateful for his work,” she said.
The board has named Mary Jane Pierce Norton, recently retired Associate General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries, as Interim General Secretary pending a search for Dr. Bias’ replacement.

To read the full press release, go to www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/discipleship-ministries-president-announces-leadership-change.

Students

The Gathering 2016 Update

There has been a change in the 2016 line up of musicians for The Gathering 2016. The new musicians will be Zealand Worship. Led by Phil Joel -- best known for his long-standing role as a bass player and vocalist for the multi-platinum-selling band, Newsboys -- the band has been faithfully traversing a road that has been as unscripted and unexpected as it has been ordained.

The Beale Street Flippers will also be joining the Balancing Act event. The Beale Street Flippers will astonish the crowd with feats of acrobatic prowess that are honestly, unbelievable. The Gathering 2016 will be at Christ United Methodist Church in Jackson, Miss., Feb. 26-28, 2016.

Don’t forget to register for this high energy weekend conference for students. More details can be found at http://www.mississippi-umc.org/thegathering.

Ole Miss Wesley Foundation Ready for 2016

By Allyson Willis, Mississippi Conference Campus Ministry Consultant

Photo right: Leigh Anne Tuohy spoke to Ole Miss Wesley students September 2015.

Photo below left: Ole Miss Wesley students packed a chapel to hear from Leigh Anne Tuohy, inspiration for the movie ‘The Blind Side.’

After ending the fall semester with quite a bit of growth in 2015, the University of Mississippi Wesley Foundation, (Ole Miss) is looking forward to 2016.

Director Rev. Eddie Willis stated, “Student leadership and planning has taken off. All of our Bible studies have taken on a life of their own with students planning and implementing extra activities that help participants grow deeper in their relationships with God.”

In 2015, the group started the year off with a series of “Welcome Week” events. The University of Mississippi Wesley’s fifth annual “Burgers and Blues” drew hundreds of students from the campus with a cookout on the Wesley lawn and a blues band from Clarksdale, Miss.

The groups first worship gathering was led by guest speaker, Leigh Anne Tuohy. She spoke about the journey that led to The Blind Side movie about her family. Tuohy challenged students on the subject of her new book, Turn Around.

She stated, “If you and I don’t stop and turn around and notice the downtrodden and unnoticeable, we will be missing out on the God’s greatest gift in our lives.”

The University of Mississippi Wesley Foundation has Bible studies throughout the week, with worship services on Thursday nights in the Paris-Yates Chapel. One of the most active studies has been the “freshman study,” with students even gathering to cook meals for the participants.

Do you have a connection to the University of Mississippi Wesley Foundation? Join the Wesley’s monthly online giving at their website: www.olemisswesley.org. Specific needs include, prayers, help with Wesley meals, and general donations.
Deadline to Pay 2015 Mission Shares and Clergy Pension in Full
Jan. 8, 2016
Mark your calendars! Friday, Jan. 8, 2016 is the last day for local churches to submit 2015 mission shares and be considered a 100 percent church at the 2016 Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference. Jan. 8, 2016 is also the last day to pay clergy pension benefit invoices in full. For questions about mission shares, contact Laura Rollins, mission share administrator at 769-243-7024. For inquiries concerning clergy pension benefits contact Sheila Owens, benefits administrator at 769-243-7022.

Online course “Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts”
Jan. 11-24, 2016
Participants can learn more about their spiritual gifts -- and how to help their congregations learn more about theirs -- in this two-week workshop. Those who take the course will interact via online discussions, videos and real-time group sessions. Partakers are also expected to read the Discipleship Resources book “Each One a Minister” by William J. Carter and the book “Spirit Gifts” by Patricia Brown. $70. Register now at beadisciple.com.

Human Relations Day Special Offering
Jan. 17, 2016
Human Relations Day is one of six churchwide Special Sundays with offerings of The United Methodist Church. Human Relations Day calls United Methodists to recognize the right of all God’s children in realizing their potential as human beings in relationship with one another. The special offering benefits neighborhood ministries through Community Developers, community advocacy through United Methodist Voluntary Services and work with at-risk teens through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program. For more information and resources, visit www.mississippi-umc.org/eventdetail/human-relations-day-is-january-17-2016-3240519.

Sabbath Rest
Jan. 22-23, 2016
The winter retreat, Sabbath Rest, at the Jubilee Center in D’Iberville, Mississippi is Jan. 22-23. This retreat is for pastors, staff and those who need rest. Those needing CEUs will receive one CEU for full participation. The deadline to register for this event is January 10. For more information, call 228-392-4288 or email jubileecenter@cableone.net. To read the brochure for this event, go to http://files.ctctcdn.com/c6cffd0c001/9caa1ef7-68c5-4794-bc1a-6f70afbfafd3.pdf.

SENDING: A Missions Conference
Jan. 30-31, 2016
Amory First UMC will host SENDNG: A Missions Conference Jan. 30-31, 2016. Andy Adkison, pastor of preaching and vision at Immanuel Church in Birmingham, Ala. will lead the conference sharing the effective missional strategy of Immanuel Church. The registration cost is $15 and will cover lunch on Saturday, refreshments both days, and other resources. For more information and to register, visit http://fumcamory.org/sending-conference.

Clergy Leadership Conference
Feb. 1-3, 2016
Registration is now open for the Clergy Leadership Conference “Reading for Dear Life: The Gospel of John” with Dr. Jaime Clark-Solés from Perkins School of Theology and Dr. Gerald Liu from Drew Theological School. This conference is for Mississippi United Methodist clergy, interested lay persons, and pastors of other denominations. For more information visit http://tinyurl.com/nhkzsmp. For full participation receive 1.5 CEU credit.

Advocacy Webinar for Clergy and Congregations
Feb. 18, 25, and March 3, 2016
When Mercy and Justice Meet: Advocacy for Clergy and Congregations
A Webinar led by Katey Zeh \ 1 p.m.-2:30 p.m. EST
What does it mean for people of faith to address the root causes of injustice? This three-session course will guide clergy and laity who are interested in advocacy through each step of building a dynamic grassroots campaign. The cost is $20 per session and a .5 CEU credits available for $17.50. For more details, visit drew.edu/advocacy.

Statewide Wesley
Feb. 19-21, 2016
The 24 Wesley Foundations across Mississippi will join for the annual retreat -- Statewide Wesley, Feb. 19-21, 2016 at Timber Creek Camp in Morton, Mississippi. Statewide Wesley provides a great atmosphere for college students to get to know each other better in a relaxed setting and enjoy time away from their regular routine to focus on God. Trey Skaggs, youth minister at Columbus First UMC in Mississippi, will be the speaker. The Rose Factor from Nashville, Tennessee will be leading worship. The cost is $82 per student, but
that could be cheaper for those student participants of Wesley Foundation’s that are helping with cost. For more information, contact Allyson Willis at 662-231-9929 or awilliscampusministry@gmail.com.

**Hotel Rates for The Gathering 2016: Balancing Act**  
**Feb. 26-28, 2016**

The vision behind The Gathering is to create a high energy weekend conference for students to gather from all over the Mississippi to celebrate our Lord and Savior. Our commitment is to create a weekend event that is as first-class quality as you could find anywhere else in the country, with the best worship teams and communicators. To register and view video from previous events, go to [www.mississippi-umc.org/thegathering](http://www.mississippi-umc.org/thegathering). For hotel rates, go to [www.mississippi-umc.org/files/fileshare/2016+the+gathering+hotel+list.pdf](http://www.mississippi-umc.org/files/fileshare/2016+the+gathering+hotel+list.pdf).

**2016 SEJ Disaster Academy**  
**Feb. 28-March 2**

Mark your calendars to attend the 2016 Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church Disaster Academy in Franklin, Tenn. Feb. 28 - March 2.

**Announcements**

**UMVIM, SEJ Intern Position**

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Southeastern Jurisdiction is accepting applications for its summer internship program. Applicants must be at least age 18 to apply. The deadline to submit applications is Friday, Feb. 26, 2016. For more information and to apply, download: [http://files.ctctcdn.com/c6cfd0c001/8bc9b336-4ac0-4431-ad20-4d83c43501c3.pdf](http://files.ctctcdn.com/c6cfd0c001/8bc9b336-4ac0-4431-ad20-4d83c43501c3.pdf).

**General Board of Church and Society Internship Program**

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) is accepting applications for its winter/spring internship program. Applicants must be 18 years of age. For more information download: [http://files.ctctcdn.com/c6cfd0c001/861882a1-01ba-4127-8f92-03f943060f9c.pdf](http://files.ctctcdn.com/c6cfd0c001/861882a1-01ba-4127-8f92-03f943060f9c.pdf).

**Calling All Clergywomen of the Mississippi Annual Conference**  
**Save the Date: April 4, 2016**

Bishop James Swanson Sr. invites you to join him on April 4, 2016, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. This informal time of conversation with the Bishop will be held in the Metro Jackson area. More details will be announced later. Spread the word!

**UMC Events**

Visit [www.umc.org/news-and-media/looking-ahead-upcoming-events](http://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.

**2016 Annual Conference Session Dates Set**

Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. announces the 2016 Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference will be **June 9-11, 2016**. Pre-conference workshops will be held on **Wednesday, June 8, 2016**.

**Methodist Tested Recipes**

**Fudge Pecan Pie**

- 1/3 cup butter
- 1/3 cup cocoa
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs, beaten
- ¾ cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup pecan halves
- 1 9-inch pie crust, unbaked

Melt butter. Add cocoa, stirring until mixture is smooth over low-flame or heat. Remove from heat and cool slightly. Stir in sugar, salt, eggs and corn syrup. Blend thoroughly. Stir in chopped nuts. Pour into unbaked pie shell and place pecan halves on top. Bake 40 minutes at 375 degrees.

*— By Jennifer Brantley in Reflections Recipes and Remembrances published by Carthage UMC*
Stay Connected

www.facebook.com/pages/The-Mississippi-United-Methodist-Conference/436491529732524
https://twitter.com/Mississippi_UMC  www.youtube.com/channel/UCSRtxv_Kix8lbYuHKRMLJg
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.