Celebrating Clergy Under 40

Mississippi Conference clergy under the age of 40, convened for a day of open dialogue with Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., in Jackson on Tuesday, December 10. Swanson urged them to celebrate the fact that Mississippi continues to lead The United Methodist Church with the most clergy under 35. See story on page 3.

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

LOVE
Matthew 22:37-39

GENEROSITY
Matthew 22:37-39

JUSTICE
Micah 6:8

APPRENTICESHIP
Matthew 28:18-20

Learn how The POWER of We fuels our beliefs.

A collection of stories that model each of The Mississippi Conference Core Values (tabs shown at left; love, generosity, justice and apprenticeship can be found at the links listed below.

LOVE: Visit www.mississippi-umc.org/love

GENEROSITY: Visit www.mississippi-umc.org/generosity

JUSTICE: Visit www.mississippi-umc.org/justice

APPRENTICESHIP: Visit www.mississippi-umc.org/apprenticeship
John 1:6-8 and 1:19-28
New International Version (NIV)

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John the Baptist Denies Being the Messiah

19 Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.”

21 They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”
He said, “I am not.”
“Are you the Prophet?”
He answered, “No.”
22 Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”
23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”
24 Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”
25 John answered, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. 26 He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”
27 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Bishop’s Journal

Bishop On the Move

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

• January 5-8, 2015 (Monday - Thursday)
   The Southeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops will be held in Charleston, South Carolina and Bishop Swanson will be in attendance.
Bishop Creates Open Space for Clergy Under 40
By Tamica Smith-Jeuitt, Senior Communications Specialist

The Rev. Brad Sartor (photo right) sat at a front table during a meeting with his peers—clergy under the age of 40—just a few weeks before his 40th birthday. He was enthusiastic, often jotting down notes with a serious facial expression and even cracking a big smile following comments from around the room, particularly after remarks from Mississippi Area Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., who invited the group to join for open dialogue at Anderson United Methodist Church in Jackson, Mississippi.

“I think it is a wonderful thing that the bishop is doing, listening to a younger generation that is really seeing the changes that is taking place in our society and the church and their lives in a very forward way. The challenges are great that are facing the church, and as leadership and clergy, we need to be grounded and I believe this bishop is helping us do that,” said Sartor who serves in the New Albany District.

Approximately 70 participants, including some district superintendents and conference staff were present for the gathering facilitated by Swanson. His said his purpose was three-fold.

First, to affirm to Mississippi’s youngest spiritual leaders, they are leading the denomination, a fact that Swanson said young clergy should feel good about.

“They are leading The United Methodist Church in having the most number of clergy under 35... I want to discover what are some of the factors that are helping us to lead the General Conference and I felt who best to ask that than them and they have given us at least 30-35 different reasons why and so we are looking at those and processing,” explained Swanson who teased about not quickly sharing those reasons, but he did credit relationships for behind Mississippi’s under 35 success.

Swanson’s second point was to encourage clergy to develop a good relationship with the office of the bishop.

“Over the years as they (clergy under 40) continue to serve, (for some of them as much as 40 more years) have a good working relationship with the bishop and know that we are part of this ministry together,” Swanson added.

“It sounds like the bishop and the cabinet are really interested in listening to the young clergy... I think that is a gift and grace and shows a lot of promise for the future of young clergy,” stated Starkville District’s Rev. Sarah Jo Adams-Wilson (photo right), one of the youngest clergy persons attending at age 26.

Swanson said his third goal was for clergy to feel a sense of comradery and get to know each other.

“They were really excited about hearing each other’s stories and I think what we did here was create a safe place where they could share their stories... a lot this even brought tears.”

The Rev. Kevin Kosh Jr. (photo below, right) who is also age 26 and new to the Mississippi Conference (from the Missouri Conference) is the director of the Alcorn State University Wesley Foundation. He shared his appreciation for Swanson bringing them together.

“It provided ways for us to understands everyone’s experiences and perspectives on what brought them to Mississippi and how the Mississippi Annual Conference can be better and how we can perform ministries in more effective ways just being able to hear everyone’s ideas and experiences helped put into context what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.”

In closing, Swanson informed the clergy to expect messaging in the coming year around Spiritual Leadership Incorporated (SLI), an initiative focusing on loving, learning, and leading. The under 40 clergy plans to meet again even though the ones turning 40 will not be joining them, but will be there in spirit in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
Loving, Learning, Leading

By Rev. Dr. Connie Shelton, Director of Connectional Ministries and Communications

Spiritual Leadership. It’s at the center of church lingo these days. Yet, spiritual leadership is a way of life.

Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., resident bishop of the Mississippi Area, sees the importance of spiritual leadership, not simply as a ministry area for the annual conference, but as a way of life for the cabinet and others leaders that will expand into every faith community. Spiritual Leadership Incorporated (SLI) is leading the appointive cabinet and a Bishop’s Operational Team in monthly gatherings to strengthen each leader in her/his spiritual life and in our collaborative leadership.

The core of this experience includes developing spiritual leaders who model a community that loves, learns and leads together, creating environments that foster transformation, and establishing processes that bear fruit. Each gathering begins with Glory Sightings which allows participants to share where they’ve seen the glory of God.

Praying together, holding one another accountable for how we live into our commitments and practicing humble leadership has been transformative for these two teams. Spiritual leadership is a way of life.

Below are suggested readings from Bishop Swanson.

- Belief Matters by Yrigoyen
- Leadership and Self Deception by Arbinger Institute
- Anatomy of Peace by Arbinger Institute
- The Quest: The Externally Focused Church by Swanson and Russo
- Humble Leadership by Standish
- Simple Church by Ranier and George
- Leading Beyond the Walls by Adam Hamilton
- 5 Practices of Fruitful Congregation by Schnase
- Switch by Heath and Heath
- Deep Change by Robert Queen
- Visually Speaking by Mitchell
- A Failure of Nerve by Friedman
- A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants by Reuben Job

UMCOR Working to Help Rebuild Winston County

By Rev. Mike Dowd, Disaster Response Coordinator for Louisville and Winston County

Photo right: This UMCOR work team from Matthews UMC in Matthews, North Carolina is helping in Winston County.

Quietly, behind the scenes, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has been working hand in hand with Winston Strong to rebuild our community following the April 2014 tornado. UMCOR has been doing this by helping to coordinate teams of volunteers from United Methodist Churches across the southeast and by making funds available.

It was UMCOR that came in four weeks after the tornado hit our community and began training case managers for Winston Strong. Those case managers have been invaluable in our rebuilding efforts. They work closely with their cases and find all available resources to help people begin to put their lives back together. Without the training provided by UMCOR, we would only now begin to have these individuals in place.

UMCOR had already made more than $40,000 available to help with individual needs as the case managers work to find resources for those in need. Winston Strong disaster relief fund has been working with the case managers to help put people back into their homes. However, the disaster relief fund is now low and we do not know how long we can continue to help those in need.

Once again, UMCOR has stepped in to give a helping hand to Winston County. During a recent meeting, UMCOR representative Greg Forrester committed UMCOR to give $100,000 in matching funds for any money raised after November 12, 2014. This may very well be enough money for Winston County to complete our rebuilding needs. But first we must raise the matching funds.

For this reason, we are beginning a fund raising campaign on social media, newspaper, radio and television. We are asking individuals to give as they can. If you give $5.00 it becomes $10.00. Every gift to Winston Strong Disaster Relief Fund automatically doubles.

We have set a target date of January 24, 2015 for achieving our goal of raising our $100,000 in matching funds. Join us as we work together to rebuild our community.

For further information and to donate, go to www.winstonstrong.org. Winston Strong is a 501(c) 3 organization and all donations are tax deductible.
New Sager Brown Dorm to be Named for Dixon, Rabb
United Methodist News Service (UMNS)

Photo right: Poised to break ground, from left to right: Bennie Druilhet, local businessman and former Sager Brown student; Jonathan Heltz, architect; Kathy Kraiza, executive director UMCOR Material Resources ministry; Rev. John Cannon, district superintendent of Acadiana District; Louisiana Conference Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey; UMCOR Deputy General Secretary Rev. J. Denise Honeycutt. Photo courtesy of Linda Unger.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief broke ground recently for a new dormitory on the UMCOR Sager Brown campus that will be named for the Rev. Sam Dixon and the Rev. Clinton Rabb, who perished nearly five years ago in the devastating earthquake in Haiti.
To read the story, go to www.umcor.org/umcor/resources/news-stories/2014/december/1204sacrificiallove.

Special Needs Ministry
By Rev. Leanne Burris, Trinity UMC

Photo right: Little Joel Burris shows off his big smile.

Seven years ago, Joel entered our lives and changed our world forever. That makes him like most babies. But one of the things that makes Joel unique, including his infectious laugh, is his ability to extend compassion when it is needed most, and his green eyes (since all his siblings have blue), is his extra 21st chromosome. The day he was born the doctors explained that Joel has trisomy 21 or more commonly, Down syndrome. I remember staring out of the window in the hospital room on the first full day of his life in our world and wondering so much. I had so many questions and very few answers. And yes, I was afraid. But then the nurse brought Joel in after his morning checkup and he snuggled down into my arms, and the entire world tilted in a very different, but oh so delightful way.

Joel's first “outing” was to our church’s Christmas Eve service where I was the children’s minister. I was still on maternity leave and I was still terrified by this new journey we were on. I snuck onto the back row of an over-filled room to take in the wonders of Christmas Eve along with the 500 other weary souls gathered that night. I had never sat behind them all. I had stood in front, told stories, made announcements, and prodded these lovely sheep along the way. But never had I sat behind and watched what they watched, and observed how they worshiped.

And the tilting continued. I sat that night from the perspective of a nervous new parent of a special needs child, wondering if I could trust these people to love my child, to show him the love of Jesus, to accept him as he is, to make sure there was a place for him at every table (communion, fellowship hall, Sunday school). My fear was palpable! I trembled as I lugged his carrier forward to receive the gift of that open table. Keeping his blankets over him and not making eye contact, I received my portion and hurried back to my seat. How would I ever do this? How would I put him in the nursery; entrust him to the volunteer teachers; sit him on the front row for all to see when I returned to work?

Like all things, I learned to take them one at a time and as they came. No use hurrying, not with Joel. We will get there when we get there.

I was able to leave him in the nursery. I was able to wave goodbye at the Sunday school classroom. And this Sunday he will sit in the balcony with his older siblings. We have made one step at a time. But I have done so with a very different perspective.

Looking back, I was not so proud of my effort to include the children who came to our church with special needs. And so the spring after Joel was born, I went to each parent one by one and said, “Tell me your story again. I wasn’t listening well the first time.”

I met again for the first time the little boy who was prone to violent outbursts and could turn any object into a weapon, but who had amazing ideas and was frustrated by his expressive speech delay. He was 8. His mom suggested that I take a few extra moments before and after the class to listen to his ideas, patient listening had a calming effect. He came up with one of our most successful No More Malaria/Nothing but Nets fundraising ideas.
I met again for the first time the little girl who much preferred to participate from underneath the table. Having overcome fetal alcohol syndrome in the loving arms of her adoptive family, her ADHD was frustrating her, and the attempts to discover which medications would work best rendered her nearly incapable of controlling her behavior. But the confined space under the table felt safe. And she sang beautifully there. So for the Christmas pageant we built a “stable” using a table and she sang from there.

And while I was getting to know these children all over again, the most amazing thing happened. Every small accommodation I made for these children or my child (we worked on nursery procedures a lot that first year!), more and more special needs families began attending. I think they were already there, but they were not coming regularly. One by one I asked, “Tell me how I can make this experience good for you and your child.”

It was around that time that I met my angel, the momma with her own extra-chromosome-carrying bundle of sweetness. She was about five years ahead of me in the journey. Together, and with the help of many other brave and kind mothers and fathers (both with and without special needs children), we began to really revamp our children’s program. Nothing was incredibly expensive to change or difficult to implement. It took time. Time to listen to the parents, and the kiddo! Time to train volunteers until they felt equipped and confident. Time to make mistakes and try again.

And then one of our sweet girls at the church was involved in a drowning accident. She was revived, but suffered severe brain trauma and was left with moderate physical impairment. Fortunately our building was a newer one, and it already had an elevator. But she did not want to go on the elevator to the upstairs classrooms and be different from all the other kids. She wanted to walk up the stairs after prayers and snacks just like everybody else. The problem was that it took her a significant amount of time to mount the stairs. If we sent her with the first group, all the other groups had a long wait (remember it was about 75 kids that had to get upstairs). If we sent her last, she and her group were several minutes late for their class. Now you may be thinking this didn’t sound like a big deal. I know. It didn’t appear to be a problem to me at all. If the other kids have to wait or if she is a few minutes after others arriving, that’s ok. She’ll get there in her time and we can all be patient. But it bothered her. She knew the other kids were waiting on her. She knew she was late for class. So we simply altered our beginning schedule so that her group did snacks and prayer requests in their room instead of in large group downstairs. She didn’t feel isolated, rushed, or left behind. And it wasn’t long before she was climbing the stairs faster than anyone. But she needed our acceptance to get there.

We didn’t have to build anything new. We didn’t have to purchase special equipment. It didn’t require a long workshop or special training. Not that there is anything wrong with those things. And eventually all of those things will prove to be a blessing as we seek to be more inclusive and accommodating. But it first required listening, adapting, and making sure each family knew we were beside them.

Over the next year, your congregation is going to be invited to take steps of inclusivity for differently-abled brothers and sisters. Before anyone begins to feel overwhelmed by the task of rebuilding buildings or installing ramps and elevators or hiring special teachers, let me propose a first step. Ask that mother or father, “What can I do to make sure your family’s experience here is a good one?” Ask the brother in the wheelchair or the sister with profound hearing loss, “Is there anything we are overlooking in order for your experience of worship to be positive?” Then listen. Really listen. Don’t listen as one with all the answers. Rather, listen as one straining to hear the sounds of the earth tilting ever so slightly. Then take one step at a time. And don’t worry; your new differently-abled friend will be with you every step of the way!

Giving Tuesday Raises $2.5 Million for Mission Work
United Methodist News Service (UMNS)

On #GivingTuesday, United Methodists donated more than $2.5 million online through The Advance to support denominational mission and ministries around the world. The Board of Global Ministries matched the first $1 million in gifts. Read the full report here: www.umcmission.org/learn-about-us/news-and-stories/2014/december/1203umcgivingtuesday.

Bishops Face Penalties for Auditing Issues
United Methodist News Service (UMNS)

The board of The United Methodist Church’s finance agency is taking separate actions against two African bishops over financial and accounting issues. To read the report from Heather Hahn, go to www.umc.org/news-and-media/bishops-face- penalties-for-auditing-issues.

Bishops Get 3 Percent Raise in 2015
United Methodist News Service (UMNS)

Most United Methodist bishops will see a 3 percent salary boost next year, a higher raise than they’ve seen in five years. The board of the denomination’s finance agency decided on the pay increase based on a bishop compensation study and trends in the secular workforce. Visit www.umc.org/news-and-media/bishops-to-get-a-3-percent-raise-in-2015 for the full story.
Faith Communities

A Family Affair at Decell UMC

A recent revival at Decell UMC was a family affair. Evangelists for the week included (photo right, pictured from left to right) the Rev. Frank Gipson, the Rev. Mattie Gipson, Greenwood District superintendent, the Rev. Clinton Gipson of Decell UMC; Margaret Gipson, lay servant trainer and the Rev. Marvin Gipson, of Oxford Burns. For several weeks, the Revs. Frank and Clinton Gipson, have been hosting a Wednesday noon prayer luncheon for members of Decell and the church community. Attendance has grown from 10 to over 40 people gathering to pray for the church, the community, Greenwood, the state, the nation and its leaders.

Three Cousins Sing for Love

Photo right: Pictured from left to right are Ashley Lovorn, Abby Lovorn, and Bailey Cary.

Love UMC in the Senatobia District was blessed with entertainment from three cousins during their ladies coffee event on Sunday, December 7. Those who attended the morning gathering heard from Ashley Lovorn, Abby Lovorn and Bailey Cary. The ladies, who are members of the church, also sing in the high school choir in Hernando. Chuck Bursi is the pastor of Love UMC.

Administry

Hedgepeth Scholarship Endowment Created in Honor of Parents

Photo right: A memorial scholarship honoring the Rev. H.J Hedgepeth and his wife Orell will support a Mississippi college student.

The Mississippi United Methodist Foundation is pleased to announce the creation of the Rev. H. J. Hedgepeth and Mrs. Orell Hedgepeth Memorial Scholarship Endowment established by the Rev. Mitchell Hedgepeth and his wife Catherine. The memorial scholarship is given in support of United Methodist students from Mississippi, preparing for a career in music or ministerial services, attending Mississippi State University, the University of Mississippi, the University of Southern Mississippi, or Jackson State University.

Rev. Mitchell Hedgepeth and Catherine (photo below, right) decided to create the endowment to honor his parents and to assist students in their education. Mitchell remembers the hardship of attending seminary and serving a church at the same time. Even with the salary from the church and money from the Ministerial Education Fund, it was a challenge to pay all the bills. Mitchell’s parents were unable to assist him because they had three children in college at the same time.

Mitchell recalls how much it helped to receive funds from the Mississippi United Methodist Foundation. This additional scholarship often provided the amount needed to cover the balance owed on tuition.

He writes, “Here is my true blessing. I went to seminary in the fall of 1982 not knowing how I was going to afford a seminary education, but I knew that God had called me to ministry. With the blessings received from the Mississippi United Methodist Foundation Scholarship Funds, I was able to attend Candler School of Theology for three years and leave the school with all bills, "paid-in-full!"

If you wish to contribute to the Rev. H. J. Hedgepeth and Mrs. Orell Hedgepeth Memorial Scholarship Endowment, you may send your check to the Mississippi United Methodist Foundation, P. O. Box 2415, Ridgeland, MS 39158.

If you are interested in establishing a scholarship with the Mississippi United Methodist Foundation, call 601.948.8845.
Company for the Holidays
Rev. Mike Hicks, Executive Director of the Mississippi United Methodist Foundation

Are you planning for company to come during Christmas? Think about all of the things you do to make company feel welcome in your homes. Food is prepared, linens are freshened, and plans are made that center around the company. The same should be happening in our churches.

The focus needs to move from hosts to guests. Look at your facilities through the eyes of an outsider. Are the bathrooms clean and well supplied? If there is a nursery, is it clean and inviting to children in the 21st Century? Do the grounds of the church look inviting? This is the easy part.

The next step is to get members to actually treat visitors like company. This means talking to visitors, inviting them to sit with them, and introducing them to others. Making visitors into company, means getting them the correct hymnal to use, a bulletin and explaining anything out of the ordinary that will be happening in the service.

It is not too late to get ready.

Students

Mississippi UM Students Named 2015 Young People’s Delegation to South Korea

The names of the 10 Mississippi college students selected to the 2015 Young People’s Delegation to South Korea have been announced and now all Mississippi United Methodist churches are invited to be a part of this one-of-a-kind initiative through prayer and financial support.

Here are our delegates:

• Sarah Altman (Mississippi City UMC, Millsaps College)
• Benton Brown (Central UMC, Jackson, Millsaps College)
• Kiara Cervantes (Chunky UMC, University of Southern Mississippi)
• Amy Evans (Monticello UMC, Millsaps College)
• Jenna Johnson (Galloway UMC, Jackson, Millsaps College)
• Daniel Kees (Wesley UMC, Vicksburg, Millsaps College)
• Ellen Olack (Parkway Hills UMC, Madison, University of Mississippi)
• Billy Rainey (St. Andrews UMC, Oxford, University of Mississippi)
• Raney Rogers (Weems UMC, Picayune, University of Southern Mississippi)
• Jacob Shelly (St. Andrews UMC, Amory, Itawamba Community College)

These Mississippi United Methodist students will participate in four retreats, study history, faith, and Methodism in South Korea, and will journey to South Korea in the summer of 2015. They’ll make connections with students in South Korea, and have many opportunities to share their faith in universities, parks and congregations all across South Korea. The delegation will come back from this experience ready to share their insights with local congregations next fall. The South Carolina Annual Conference is the only other conference in the entire denomination involved in this work.

Those contributing financial support will be making a dream come true for 10 outstanding Mississippi United Methodist college students. Every supporting church will be acknowledged at next year’s annual conference session. The students are working very hard to help raise the $41,000 necessary to fund this project.

Every contribution, no matter how big or small, is most appreciated. Please make checks payable to: The Mississippi Annual Conference of The UMC, 320-A Briarwood Drive, Jackson, MS 39206. Write South Korea on the memo line.

If you have any questions, please e-mail Rev. Bruce Case at jbrucecase@gmail.com.

GBHEM Scholarships

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry announced that the fall 2015 scholarship application opens on January 5, 2015. For more details, visit www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships/scholarships.
**Shiloh UMC Drive-through Nativity Scene**  
**December 13-14, 2014**

Shiloh UMC invites you to experience a *Journey to Bethlehem—The Life of Jesus*. This is a drive-through event so you can stay warm and cozy in the convenience of your vehicle. The nativity scene is located at 2394 Shiloh Road in Pelahatchie, Mississippi. People can visit December 13-14 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Shiloh UMC will transform its campus into the streets of Bethlehem so that visitors can experience the sights and sounds as they were thousands of years ago to the time when Jesus was born. To download the event flyer, go to [http://origin.library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1102747532396-2016/Shiloh+Nativity+Flyer.pdf](http://origin.library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1102747532396-2016/Shiloh+Nativity+Flyer.pdf).

**Solidarity Sunday**  
**December 14, 2014**

The Mississippi Black Methodist for Church Renewal (BMCR) joins the AME, AMEZ, CME, FGB, GOGIC and several other denominations in asking members to wear black on **Sunday, December 14, 2014**, in solidarity with the message that “Black Life Matters.” Pastors are also being asked to lead their congregation in a special altar prayer for the Healing of our Land (2 Chronicles 7:14-16).

**Minor Memorial Annual Candle Lighting**  
**December 14, 2014**

This is a special service that is held annually the second Sunday in December all around the world. The Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends who light candles to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause.

The Rev. Andy Ray, who has been involved with Compassionate Friends for many years will share a word of hope. If you have lost a child or grandchild of any age, you are invited to bring a framed picture (8x10 or smaller) and/or a small remembrance to place on a memory table. There will be a time to share your child’s name and a memory if you would like.

The gathering takes place on **December 14, 5:00 p.m.** at Minor Memorial UMC, located at 6120 Goodman Road in Walls, Mississippi. All are welcome, even if you have not lost a child, to come support those who have. Light refreshments will be offered after the service.

For more information, visit [www.minormemorial.org](http://www.minormemorial.org) or call 662.781.1333.

**James Martin to Perform in Concert at Millsaps College**  
**December 16, 2015**

*Photo right:* James Martin performed during the 2014 session of the Mississippi Annual Conference.

The concert is scheduled on **December 16 at 7:00 p.m.** in the Recital Hall of the Gertrude C. Ford Academic Complex at Millsaps College. Students from the Millsaps Conservatory of Music will perform a prelude to the concert.

The concert is a benefit for the Millsaps Conservatory of Music and the Daystar Performance Ensemble. Admission is free, and donations will be accepted.

Martin, director of music and creative arts ministries at Wells Memorial United Methodist Church, has been hailed by The New York Times for his “fine artistry, seriousness, and a big, beautiful, easy-rolling voice.”

**Ten Years after Katrina: UMCOR and UMVIM 2015 SEJ Disaster Academy**  
**February 23-25, 2015**

The year 2015 marks one decade since the tragedy and extraordinary generosity surrounding Hurricane Katrina’s devastation. Over $18 million and thousands of volunteers buoyed Mississippi into recovery.

The Mississippi Annual Conference is hosting the Southeastern Jurisdiction Disaster Academy alongside the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) **February 23-25, 2015**, at Seashore Assembly in Biloxi.

If you’d like to learn more about how you can be a part of disaster response ministry, the disaster academy is for you, visit [www.mississippi-umc.org/eventdetail/449200](http://www.mississippi-umc.org/eventdetail/449200).
Tupelo District Workshop
January 10, 2015

The Tupelo District is sponsoring a workshop on worship Saturday, January 10, 2015, at the Bruce UMC, located at 131 E. Calhoun Street in Bruce, Mississippi. The session will begin at 9:30 a.m. and finish by 3:30 p.m. A 0.5 CEU will be offered through the Center for Ministry.

Dr. Don E. Saliers, William R. Cannon, distinguished professor of theology and worship, Emeritus at Candler School of Theology, will present three sessions based on his book, “Worship Come to its Senses” which is available through Amazon.com.

Clergy and lay worship leaders are welcomed. Registration is $30.00 per person; due at the door (includes lunch). Please register to attend by calling the Tupelo District office at 662.842.8477.

Camp Wesley Pines Hosts Multiple 2015 Retreats

Camp Wesley Pines Sr. High Spiritual Life Retreat - January 23-25
Rev. Andy Stoddard, pastor of Asbury UMC in Petal will lead students in “A Little Crazy”: what it means to be a follower of Christ in today's world. The MSU Wesley Foundation band, Jell, will lead worship. For information, call the camp office at 601.892.2341 or email wpoffice@wildblue.net.

Camp Wesley Pines Confirmation Retreat - January 30-February 1
Aimed at students in grades 5-8, this confirmation retreat is offered to strengthen and reinforce confirmation classes held in the local church. Worship will be led by Rev. Patrick Hutto, director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Southern Mississippi. The Rev. Pamela Cameron, Rev. Robbie Murden and Rev. Hutto will lead workshops on the history, sacraments, and missions of the church. Rev. Cameron is associate pastor of First UMC, Yazoo City and Rev. Murden serves as pastor of Marvin UMC in Florence.

Music will be provided by the Wesley Praise Band of the Wesley Foundation at USM. For information, call the camp office at 601.892.2341 or email wpoffice@wildblue.net.

Camp Wesley Pines Jr. High Spiritual Life Retreat - February 6-8
Directed by Clinton UMCs associate pastor, Reed McCaleb, this year’s JHSL retreat will focus on the theme “Love God, Love People.” Mississippi State University's Wesley Foundation band, Jell, will be onsite for worship. For information, call the camp office at 601.892.2341 or email wpoffice@wildblue.net.

The Gathering 2015
February 27 - March 1, 2015

United Methodist youth from all over Mississippi are encouraged to attend The Gathering 2015 from February 27 through March 1. This year’s theme is ‘Change’ and will feature amazing communicators Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., episcopal leader of the Mississippi Area and Rev. William Rambo, associate pastor at The Orchard United Methodist Church in Tupelo. The event will be held at Christ United Methodist Church in Jackson located at 6000 Old Canton Road. Amena Brown will bring a powerful experience with her spoken word art. A dance crew that has performed all around the country at youth camps and NBA half-time shows, Remote Kontrol, will be there! This will be an amazing weekend! You don’t want to miss it.

Non-refundable registration costs:
• $55 Early Bird Registration (paid online or postmarked by January 21, 2015)
• $60 Regular Registration (paid online or postmarked by February 16, 2015)
• $65 Late Registration (paid online or postmarked after February 16, 2015)

Contact Mike Howington, Mississippi Conference youth and families coordinator at 601.354.0515 for additional information and details about available scholarships.

Go to www.mississippi-umc.org/eventdetail/209147 for more information. Register now for this spirit-filled weekend for youth.
Methodist Tested Recipes

Texas Herbed Tomatoes

6 ripe tomatoes, peeled and sliced (I do not peel)  ¼ cup finely-chopped parsley
1 teaspoon salt                             ¼ cup snipped chives
¼ teaspoon pepper                         ¼ cup salad oil
½ teaspoon thyme or marjoram

Place tomatoes in bowl. Sprinkle with seasonings and herbs. Combine oil and vinegar; pour over tomatoes. Cover; chill 3 hours, spooning dressing over a few times (will keep in refrigerator for at least a week).

— Shug Campbell, from “Loaves and Fishes,” a collection of favorites from St. Paul UMC in Ocean Springs, Mississippi

Have a recipe that is too good to keep to yourself? Share it with our Circuit Rider readers. Email your favorite recipes to news@mississippi-umc.org.

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.

• Assistant General Secretary: Division of Ordained Ministry - Nashville, TN
• Director of Student Faith and Leadership Formation: Division of Higher Education - Nashville, TN
• Director of Children's Ministries - Hoover, AL
• Full-time Director of Youth Ministries - Monroe, LA
• Contemporary Worship Leader - Brandon, MS
• Part-time Children’s Ministry Coordinator - Ocean Springs, MS
• Director of Student and Family Ministries - Oxford, MS

Stay Connected

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www.flickr.com/photos/119483421@N02/

Stay Connected with ConneCCTText

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

To sign up for ConneCCTText:
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.