Reading program author visits Kansas City event

Author River Jordan visits Heartland Central District United Methodist Women to talk about and sign copies of her book, Praying for Strangers.

by Tara Barnes

The Heartland Central District United Methodist Women hosted their second annual Reading Program event Sept. 12, 2013, at St. James United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Mo. The event focused on 2013 Reading Program book Praying for Strangers: An Adventure of the Human Spirit by River Jordan. Ms. Jordan spoke at the event. In her book Ms. Jordan talks about a year of praying for a complete stranger every day. With two sons heading off to war, she found all she could do was pray for their safety and for her own strength. This inspired a new year’s resolution to pray for someone she didn’t know every day for the next year. She discovered that her prayers touched the lives of these strangers and that the unexpected connections she made with other people was a profound experience that changed her life. She spoke to those at the event about her experience.

The United Methodist Women Reading Program encourages members to think critically about current issues through an annual selection of member-reviewed books. It offers an excellent opportunity for participants to deepen their spirituality and to broaden their understanding of the mission work of United Methodist Women and The United Methodist Church. Praying for Strangers is featured in the spiritual growth category. The Heartland Central District United Methodist Women chose Praying for Strangers as the book they’d read as a district and explore together at the Reading Program event.

“It is our goal to host this event each year in an effort to support the Reading Program and mission, to strengthen and grow United Methodist Women units, and expand our partnerships with other community organizations,” said Tracy Milsap, event organizer and executive assistant at St. James.

The event was offered in the morning and the evening and featured table talks, group activities and discussions, and prayer challenges. President of the national organization of United Methodist Women, Yvette Richards, member of St. James, also spoke at the event. Ms. Jordan stayed to meet with attendees and sign books at the end of the program.

Tara Barnes is staff editor for United Methodist Women.
Opportunity for education in Haiti

A United Methodist Women grant helps children in Haiti attend school.

There was something about Roodley Marcelin that got my attention the first time I met him at a Peace Pals gathering sponsored by Haitian Artisans for Peace International (HAPI). I was on a mission trip to Haiti in February 2011. Maybe it was the sad look on his young face, a face that looked as if he were carrying the weight of the world on his small shoulders. Maybe it was the way he cocked his head to the right, deep in thought.

“Do you go to school?” I asked him when we got a chance to speak.

“No,” he said. His parents weren’t able to afford the tuition. I made a promise to myself that Roodley would be in school the next school year.

In September 2010, with some help from a few friends, a partnership with HAPI and grant money from United Methodist Women, I had started Haiti Hope House, a 501c(3) nonprofit organization based in Orange, N.J., to raise funds to send Haitian children to school. In Haiti the organization operates in Mizak, approximately 50 miles from Port-au-Prince and about 7.5 miles from Jacmel, the nearest “big town.”

When I returned to Haiti in May 2011 I met with the Marcelin family to discuss which school Roodley would attend, how to register him and what supplies he’d need. They were overjoyed. Roodley’s tuition, uniform, shoes, supplies and more could all be provided by Haiti Hope House. At 11 years old Roodley would attend school for the first time.

He has grown a lot since that May. His school director says that he is a quiet but smart young man. He is now in third grade.

Thanks to the $7,500 grant from United Methodist Women to support the education of primary school children in Haiti, we were able to provide Roodley and many other children a chance to go to school, changing life for them and their families and communities. Haiti Hope House works to give young Haitians hope for the future. To God be the glory!

The Rev. Franck Aguilh is chairperson of Haiti Hope House. Born and raised in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and an elder in full connection in the Greater New Jersey Conference, he retired in 2010 to found and chair Haiti Hope House.

Ubuntu Day of Service at Brooks-Howell

Western North Carolina
United Methodist Women members volunteer at Brooks-Howell retirement home.

More than 40 women from the Western North Carolina Conference participated in an Ubuntu Day of Service in October 2013. Women from the conference volunteered at various United Methodist Women-related institutions across the state, including Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville. Sherry Sink, chair of membership, nurture and outreach for the conference, organized the event. Brooks-Howell is a home for retired deaconesses and missionaries owned and governed by United Methodist Women. United Methodist Women members from Murphy, Burnsville, Waynesville, Morganton and Lincolnton, N.C., cleared the sidewalk on a popular street alongside Brooks-Howell, removing leaves, weeds and cleaned out the retaining wall drains. Other teams washed windows, sorted greeting cards to Kenya, assisted residents with planting pansies, cleaned out closets, and packed boxes.

Janet R. Morgan is a United Methodist Women member at United Methodist Church in N.C.

Left to right: Barbara Campbell, Gwen Harris and Betty Letzig sweep the sidewalk along Spears Street during an Ubuntu Day of Service at Brooks-Howell retirement home, owned and governed by United Methodist Women.
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Hope in this life

The Women and Community Association works to empower women and youth to change their lives and community in San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua.

by Nan McCurdy

Miguel Mairena and I are United Methodist missionaries serving in Nicaragua. We are assigned by the General Board of Global Ministries to Asociación Mujer y Comunidad, or Women and Community Association, supported by United Methodist Women members’ Mission Giving. Our work in Nicaragua is to bring hope in this life to women, youth and children. Most of our work is with this ecumenical group of women in San Francisco Libre, an impoverished, dry rural county of 13,000 people who live in 35 villages across a big lake from the capital city of Managua.

Most inhabitants of the town are Christians in the Evangelical or Catholic traditions. They’ve historically been told to endure their poverty and suffering now for a better life after death. But, of course, people want and deserve a better life now.

The Women and Community Association helps women break the chains of violent relationships, giving them more autonomy over their health and reproduction. It also supports women’s economic initiatives and provides educational opportunities. At least half the association’s work is with young women and men through a scholarship program and through the Red de Jóvenes Contra la Violencia, or Youth Network Against Violence.

Youth Network Against Violence

The Youth Network Against Violence is part of the Youth Leadership Development Program of Women and Community, supported for many years by United Methodist Women. The network is made up of teenagers and young adults who work to educate their peers by promoting gender equality between men and women, human rights, reproductive health and rights and the active participation of youth in society.

Over the past few years the network has trained members in community video-making. Elder Garcia is one of the young people who is now an expert. He grew up in extreme poverty, raised by his sisters, as his mother had to work as a maid in Managua to support her six children. Mr. Garcia says that often they had only one meal a day. Today he is a journalism student with a scholarship from Women and Community. He lives with a sister and her son. His sister also received a scholarship and was able to find a good job.

The Scholarship Program

Humberto Ruiz is 17 and lives with his parents and four brothers and sisters in a small, mud-floored hut in a remote village. He walks 10 miles to high school. During the rainy season the creeks rise and getting to school becomes difficult. Mr. Ruiz says he wouldn’t be studying without the scholarship provided by Women and Community—his family just has too many economic limitations.

Gloria Mayorga, director of Women and Community, says the scholarship students from the most remote villages get up at 3 a.m. in order to come to the monthly workshops on time. They are often the first to arrive. The students discuss such topics as human rights, gender equity and reproductive health, and they develop their communication, speaking and acting skills. The students in turn tutor children in their villages.

Jesus the teacher is in many ways the model for the scholarship program, as he taught in open classrooms across the Galilean countryside.

Prevention of Violence Against Women

Dinora Flores is trying to free herself from a violent relationship. She is 25 years old and has three children. Her mother separated from her father...
after many years of suffering violence at his hand. At the age of 15, Ms. Flores, one of 13 children, was looking for a way out of her family’s cycle of poverty and violence and fell in love with Lucas. Ms. Flores says they had about six good months together—a honeymoon period before her torment began. The shouting, insults and physical violence were especially bad when Lucas drank. When the children were very young she went to Managua but couldn’t find a way to both work and take care of the kids, so she went back.

One day Lucas threatened to kill Ms. Flores with a knife. She escaped and went to her mother’s in another village. Her mother, along with a human rights promoter with Women and Community, convinced her to go to Women and Community’s center in town and meet with a lawyer and psychologist. It took a number of therapy sessions for Ms. Flores to have the strength to place a formal complaint with the police.

Ms. Flores visited the forensic institute in Managua to be seen by a doctor and a psychologist, whose evaluations will be part of her legal case against Lucas. One of Women and Community’s trained legal advocates accompanied Ms. Flores to Managua and also helped convince neighbors to be witnesses at the pending trial. Ms. Flores says that before therapy she never thought about herself, her own life. Finally she realized that if she didn’t get out, Lucas might really kill her and leave her children without a mother. She has come to know that God loves and supports her and wants her to do what is best for her and her children.

Integral Health Education for Pregnant Teenagers

A third of the babies born in San Francisco Libre are to teenagers. The girls are from impoverished families and until now have had little education to understand their bodies and how to care for them. Maura Delgadillo, a nurse-educator who directs the women’s clinic at Women and Community, has been working with pregnant teenagers for three years. Ms. Delgadillo has worked with more than a hundred teenagers from villages all over the rural municipality. The girls love the chance to be with other girls in their same situation. Along with health and rights and prenatal education, the girls’ self-esteem is strengthened. To date, only 5 percent of the girls have gotten pregnant again.

Marlin Berrios and her brother were raised alone by their mother. Ms. Berrios was studying her first year of college on Saturdays in Managua when she got pregnant. She was 17. Her family made her stop studying and sent her to another county so people wouldn’t know she was pregnant. She was unhappy and came back. She says some people were cruel and discriminated against her for getting pregnant out of wedlock.

Ms. Berrios attended a Youth Network Festival and was amazed to see teenagers teaching their peers about gender equity. She asked to join. Now she counsels other youth about birth control and preventing sexually transmitted illnesses. She shared her story with more than 300 youth at the 2011 Youth Network Festival. Ms. Berrios is now an active member of the Youth Network Against Violence. She works hard teaching her peers in workshops about violence, gender equity and reproductive health and rights. Ms. Berrios’ daughter is 2, and Ms. Berrios is studying biology with a Women and Community scholarship. She is already a great peer teacher and soon will be a fabulous high school teacher. She is a sign of hope in this life.

How You Can Help

Luke 8:1-4 describes the faithful women who followed Christ. They used their own resources to support Jesus’ ministries to bring abundant life to the poor and oppressed. In the same way you bring hope to people in Nicaragua through your sharing and your work in solidarity with them. You can continue to support Women and Community and projects like this by giving to United Methodist Women International Ministries at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/give. You change lives with your Mission Giving.

Nan McCurdy is a United Methodist missionary serving in San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua, through the General Board of Global Ministries.

The projects featured in this story are supported by United Methodist Women’s Mission Giving. You have made life better for Dinora Flores, Marlin Berrios, Elder Garcia and others in San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua, through the Women and Community Association. You Make It Happen. Thank you.

Subscribe to response magazine, the official magazine of United Methodist Women, and receive photos and stories of women in mission locally and around the world, all supported by your Mission Giving. response tells the story of United Methodist Women—your story. Share our story by subscribing to response today, and know you are supporting work that is both good and Good.

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Providing comfort in St. Louis

United Methodist Women at Union United Methodist Church make quilts for those who need comfort in St. Louis, Mo.

by Verneal Barlow

The United Methodist Women at Union United Methodist Church in St. Louis, Mo., reached out in mission in 2013 by making lap quilts for the St. Louis Peregrine Society, a nonprofit organization working to improve the lives of cancer patients living in the St. Louis area. The Peregrine sewing group at Union has been donating items for more than 50 years.

The lap quilts made especially for children are bright and colorful and have an extra surprise attached, such as a toy car on a car-print quilt, a plush duck on duck-print quilt, or a teddy bear on a bear-print quilt. Recently we sewed several quilts featuring patriotic fabric and wildlife scenes, and they were received and quickly used.

Last Christmas Peregrine volunteers assembled 126 Christmas gift packages that were delivered to the cancer patients by Highway Patrol Troop C.

All materials for the quilts are donated by church members, families and friends and by a local organization called Charity Sharity, a clearinghouse for fabrics, yarn, sewing accessories and equipment for more than 150 charitable groups in the St. Louis region. In addition to the fabrics, Charity Sharity recently donated a sewing machine to the ladies at Union.

Verneal Barlow is a member of United Methodist Women at Union United Methodist Church in St. Louis, Mo.

Christmas gifts for Della Lamb

United Methodist Women at Ives Chapel United Methodist Church sew purses for teens at Della Lamb Community Services.

by Joy Uthoff

As a Christmas project, the United Methodist Women of Ives Chapel United Methodist Church in Baldwin City, Kan., made cloth purses for teens at Della Lamb Community Services in Kansas City, Mo. Della Lamb is a United Methodist Women National Mission Institution.

Ives Chapel United Methodist Women is a small-member unit with a big heart. Three members sewed the items, some provided material, and the rest contributed to the project in various ways to make it successful. Two members delivered the purses personally to Della Lamb Services, about an hour’s drive.

The purses were displayed prior to their delivery at the unit’s annual Chicken Noodle Dinner, their only fundraiser.

Joy Uthoff is president of United Methodist Women at Ives Chapel United Methodist Church in Baldwin City, Kan.

The Della Lamb Community Services is supported by United Methodist Women’s Mission Giving. You help provide services for more than 10,000 low-income families in the Kansas City area, including educational, athletic, recreational, and cultural activities and drug and violence prevention programs for youth. Thank you for your giving. You Make It happen.

Above: Purses made by Ives Chapel United Methodist Women displayed in the church’s sanctuary during the unit’s annual fundraiser.

Left: From left to right: Jeroldene Martin, Rosann Elder and Peggy Ford pack purses to deliver to Della Lamb Community Services as gifts for teens for Christmas.
Following God’s plan
Ethel Born’s life took turns she did not expect but that led her down the right path.

by Sandy Wilder

Ethel Born says, with a twinkle in her eye, “It was not in my plan.”

Not in her plan to devote herself to decades of work with United Methodist Women and the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women? Not in her plan to become the chronicler of the World Federation? Not in her plan to become a well-respected leader in United Methodism? Perhaps not—but it was certainly in God’s plan.

Growing up, Ms. Born and her family were active in the Methodist Protestant Church in Morgantown, W.Va., where she was baptized and joined the church on profession of faith at the age of 7. Ms. Born’s transition from the youth department to participation in the young woman’s circle at the church happened at about the time of the Methodist Church union in 1939.

At the age of 18, Ms. Born served as Fairmont District Treasurer of the Women’s Society of Christian Service. “The women were so much older than I, my mother’s age, and their spiritual depth deeply impressed me,” she said. Ms. Born made posters, spoke at women’s meetings and grew in love and commitment to the women’s mission organization. After she married her husband Harry they moved to New York City briefly and then settled in Northern Virginia near Washington, D.C.

Ms. Born became a member of the National League of American Pen Women and the National Association of Parliamentarians. She served as president of the Virginia Conference United Methodist Women then as a director of the General Board of Global Ministries from 1976-1984.

Ms. Born at a book signing for From Memory to Hope.

During those years she also served on the United Methodist Committee on Relief and the Women’s Division boards. From 1980 to 1984 she was vice president of the then-Women’s Division, serving on the division’s history committee for its 100th anniversary celebration. She later served on the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, the Interfaith Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ, the Pan Methodist Commission on Cooperation and as North America Area President of the World Federation of Methodist Women. “The whole world had caught my attention,” she says.

All the elements were now in place for one of her greatest legacies to Methodism. She had friends in many countries, was accustomed to traveling, was a gifted interviewer and storyteller, and was keenly interested in capturing the histories of World Federation leaders in the church, society and world.

Ms. Born’s third book, From Memory to Hope: A Narrative History of the Areas of the World Federation of Methodist Women, was the result of years of work crisscrossing the globe to collect 80 interviews with women in the nine areas of the World Federation of Methodist Women. “I think I was called to do this,” Ms. Born said of her nine years as a volunteer archivist for the World Federation. The taped interviews and the printed materials she collected are catalogued and permanently stored in the World Federation archives at the World Methodist Council headquarters at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Had it not been for Ms. Born’s work and the foresight of the World Federation leaders who asked her to undertake this project, these histories might have been lost.

Ms. Born’s interest in the World Federation of Methodist Women began during her term as vice president of the Women’s Division, as this organization was included in her work as ecumenical officer for the division. The women of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) had just organized in 1980 and became part of the North America Area World Federation. Following her term on the Women’s Division, Ms. Born served as president of the North America Area, and Wilhelmina Lawrence of the African Methodist Episcopal Church served as vice president. The two became very close, described by Ms. Born as “sisters-in-the-spirit.”

“When Wilhelmina died unexpectedly of recurring cancer,” said Ms. Born, “her love of the Caribbean women came to mind.” The result was Ms. Born’s planned gift to establish the Wilhelmina Lawrence World Federation of Methodist Women Caribbean Seminar Fund, a permanent fund with the United Methodist Women National Office. Every five years income from this fund helps underwrite the expenses of the seminar in perpetuity, bringing together Caribbean Methodist women of all denominations. Ms. Born’s generosity leaves a legacy for others long after she is gone.

Today, Ms. Born lives in Salem, Va., where she continues to write, serve as parliamentarian, lead an adult Sunday school class, weave, and gather response readers around her dining room table each month to expand concepts of mission as they read and discuss the current issue.

Sandy Wilder (SWilder@unitedmethodistwomen.org) is a major and planned giving consultant with United Methodist Women.

Your Mission Giving

What is mission and mission support? National Mission Institutions, international ministries projects, scholarships, grants, current and retired deaconesses and home missionaries, Reading Program, print and media resources for mission education.

What is membership and leadership development? Leadership Development Days, Mission u, Assembly, Voices, National Seminar, Limitless, Seminar Program, ecumenical connections.

What are administrative costs? Expenses that apply to running the overall organization, to keep it moving forward—any expense that is not a direct cost of the mission but of the organization. (In other words, money that still also supports mission!) Read our annual report at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/about to learn more. More information can also be found in the United Methodist Women Handbook 2013-2016.
Mission Resources

The Church and People With Disabilities: Awareness, Accessibility, and Advocacy
by Peggy A. Johnson

$10.00 | English (M3182)
Spanish (M3183) | Korean (M3184)

This book calls the church to provide full accessibility to services and opportunities and promotes advocacy for justice for people with disabilities. Unlike other categories of human experience, disability crosses all lines of gender, orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic position, age and culture. A disability can happen at any time to anyone. This book will encourage you to identify ways that your church can do more to be inclusive, 82 pp.

Spanish and Korean coming soon!

NEW!

A Place for All: Faith and Community for Persons With Disabilities (DVD)

$25.00 (M3209)

This documentary, produced by Diva Communications, explores the courageous stories of persons with disabilities as they succeed in making their faith communities truly inclusive. The DVD also includes lively interviews with leaders of different faith groups. 57 mins. (approximate).

Welcoming Persons With Disabilities Into Our Lives

NEW!

by Beth Miller

$10.00 (M3200)

This curriculum uses the symbol of a jigsaw puzzle as a basis for exploring disabilities. The lessons and activities offered here dispel myths and fears and lead to better understanding and inclusion of all persons. As participants put the pieces of this study together, they will develop a new understanding of persons with disabilities. 71 pp.

NEW!

Disabilities and Our Response: A Study for Youth
by Beth Miller

$10.00 (M3199)

This transformative resource for young people explores attitudes and responses toward persons with disabilities. This curriculum acknowledges all as children of God, each created in God’s image but unique, each bringing different abilities and disabilities to the community. In God’s kin-dom, everyone has a place. As youth become acquainted with the material, they will develop a new understanding of persons with disabilities. 74 pp.

How Is It With Your Soul?

NEW!

by Priscilla Pope-Levison and Jack Levison

$10.00 | English (M3179)
Spanish (M3179) | Korean (M3181)

This resource brings into balance the inner and outer dimensions of the Christian life. Organized around four verbs—pray, learn, mentor and transform—the book will challenge you to become a more vibrant disciple of Christ. 120 pp. (approximate). English available February 2014. Spanish and Korean coming soon!