

# Faith & Family



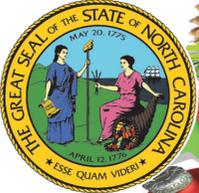
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*"Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point..." ~ Unknown*

# Faith in the midst of the storm

**By Teresa Gasperson**

Guest columnist

**H**urricane Florence will long be remembered for both bad and good. The bad, people losing their homes and possessions. The good people showing love for their neighbors (not just the people living beside them). Let me tell you about some of these people who showed their faith to me.

Edna is a strong, older lady with a smile that never ends. During the last hurricane Edna opened her door and the wind caused a fall breaking her hip. She continues to use a walker. Edna surprised us all by staying at home alone during this storm. She had faith that God was going to provide for her and she was so right. Edna had no electricity but she was brought coffee and oatmeal for breakfast and meals were delivered as well.

The Fire Department in Chinquapin takes care of their community but their building was flooded during Hurricane Florence. I saw people bringing donations while others were coming to get things just to get them through a few days. While talking to one of the firemen I learned that some of the men and women had lost their own homes but they were there to love their neighbors and assist as needed. Faith is often shown by actions.

While working with Disaster Relief I met the pastor of a church where the fellowship hall had flooded and he had lost his home. He was at the church offering everything he could give. This

man was putting everyone else before himself. He knows his God is a mighty God.

One day I served as a chaplain, while another volunteer did assessments. There was a man sitting in a swing in his backyard. He was alone. This is the third time that his trailer has flooded. I prayed with him and he said he knows God will take care of him because He always does.

Another family was sitting in their garage talking about what they needed to do next. Their entire house was flooded. During the time I was there they smiled and laughed and we prayed. They are thankful to live in a camper while they begin over.

I have volunteered with the Disaster Relief of the Eastern Baptist Association since the Hurricane and have worked with volunteers of all ages. They have not hesitated to do whatever is needed (lifting, cleaning, washing clothes, etc.) over and over again. These people are giving endless hours to help others even when some of them sustained their own losses from the storm. They are loving their neighbors and know that God will give them the strength to continue doing so. Many times we ran out of items and Tammy Weeks, the coordinator, would often receive a phone call asking to know what we needed. The items were delivered within hours or the next day. Tammy is a prayer warrior and her faith is shown every day.

Many residents who suffered losses during the storm did not even know



**Teresa Gasperson**

COURTESY PHOTO

what they needed. They waited in long lines and were thankful for what they received. They needed the smiles and the love. They saw the volunteers show God's love through the service provided to them.

I will not be the same person I was before Hurricane Florence. I did not

lose from the storm, I received a blessing. God gave me the opportunity to use my time, abilities and resources to help and love our neighbors. He strengthened my faith in the midst of the storm by showing me His grace and so many blessings. Needs still remain. Please volunteer your time to help and love on our neighbors.

# When blessings come from a storm

By Cheryl Hemric

James Sprunt Community College

**W**ALLACE — Thankful. Blessed. Together. That's how Ginger Jenkins, an accounting student at James Sprunt Community College feels as she prepares to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday this year with her family.

"We will be going to my cousin's house," said Ginger. "It doesn't feel quite like the holidays, but I'm going to try to be in the spirit for my children."

With three daughters and one son, and her father all living under one

roof, Ginger says she has a lot to be thankful for.

"We want to be thankful for what we have, for what we lost, and for where we are going to be," said Ginger. "We're all together and we are safe... our new home is a much smaller house, but we're thankful that we have a place to stay and a place to call home."

In September, Ginger and her family lost everything that they had during Hurricane Florence. Her home was a complete loss and has since been demolished. All that is left is the outline of where her house once stood.

"There are others who have lost just

like we have, we have all shared a loss in this community," said Ginger. "We just feel like we should be thankful for where we are at."

With this being the second flood Ginger has been through, she knew that when Hurricane Florence came through, she would need to evacuate.

"Hurricane Matthew was a major disaster, in fact we were airlifted out, and this time I wanted to make sure we were out before it got really bad."

Living about a mile from the Northeast Cape Fear River, Ginger did not think that the flood waters would reach as far back to her home, and she certainly did not expect the devastation that happened this time.

"We are not even on the river side," said Ginger, as she looks around her property after her home had just been bulldozed down.

"The more we ripped out walls, the more we just knew this wasn't going to work out," said Ginger as she talks about her attempts in trying to save her home. "Demolition was the next step to do. I have had a lot of family to support me in this, so that's been a good thing."

"The cost to repair would be extremely more than just rebuilding a house and starting over again," said Ginger. "There were holes in the floors from the water coming in, the middle section had already fell through, so it was easier to do it this way, even though it was heartbreaking."

With help from her family, her church family, friends, and neighbors – she was able to get the home completely demolished and have everything she ever owned carried away by dump trucks.

"My kids did not understand what had really happened with the storm until they saw the house being torn down. It was like they realized, they used to have this or that, and now they don't have those things."

Those things being toys, electronics, clothes, school supplies, their beds and furniture.

Ginger is unsure if she will rebuild again on her family's land, although she says "I have lived here all my life, this is home."

For anyone who would like to help those impacted by the Hurricane, Ginger says it's simple... "just put on some gloves and say, what would you like for me to do for you today... there are times when you just need someone to come and help you clean up for an hour or two."

With four children ranging from ages 11 to 16, Ginger has tried her best to move forward with a positive attitude.

"With the kids being able to go back to school, it has helped to bring back some normalcy," said Ginger. "They were out for well over a month, and they were happy to go back. It seems like where our norm usually is, it has not been there, so we have had to come up with a new norm."

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**Ginger Jenkins of Wallace had to relocate following Hurricane Florence, but says she is blessed and thankful her family is together.**

COURTESY PHOTO

Improvising and making due with what you have is key, Ginger says. They have put up air mat-tresses to create bedding in the living room for her children, who take turns sleeping on the couch.

"It is a hardship, but I'm willing to work through it," said Ginger. "Renting is something I have not done in a very long time. We were fortunate enough in this place that I am renting that it came with a lot of appliances that I do not have to buy right now."

With her home being destroyed,

dealing with the daily stress of trying to rebuild her life and her home, as well as getting her kids back on a normal schedule, has not been easy. Keeping up with her studies at James Sprunt has been also been challenging.

"It is difficult to keep your mind on work, to keep up with all the work," said Ginger. "I stay motivated knowing that I will graduate in May – I stay focused on that....My plans are to clean up my property, graduate, keep working... and then hopefully I will be able to build my house back in a couple of

years."

Having worked in accounting for over 20 years, Ginger came back to school seeking to match up her experience with a degree, and she encourages others who may be in the same situation as her to stay in school and not be discouraged. "The best thing for any student is to continue with their education no matter how hard it is."

Even though Thanksgiving will be a bit different this year than in years past, Ginger is looking forward to moving

past what they have lost, and putting everything in perspective.

"Every day it gets better.... It has been a hard transition for my kids seeing their house torn down and understanding you know, that we are not going back to our old house," said Ginger.

"We are adjusting to what works, what doesn't work.... There are some days that you want to cry, some days that you smile. It's hard to have fun, it's hard to enjoy what we've got, but we have to enjoy where we are at, because in the end, we'll have more."

With Christmas just around the corner, Ginger is determined to try to make it one of the best holidays for her children, her father, and herself.

"Christmas is important for everyone, but being together is what matters the most.... We are going to have to downsize a lot from years past, with our priorities being focused on our needs such as replacing things we've lost."

Ginger says that the love she has felt from her community, and the outpouring of support from her friends, and even strangers, has made this process easier.

"We can always pick up, no matter how hard it is, from where we are at, no matter what we have or don't have, and start all over again," said Ginger. "Those are my intentions, and to be better, and I hope this makes me and my family better."

"This has made my faith stronger," added Ginger. "I know God will provide, and right now, the biggest thing is that I know I'm right where I'm supposed to be."

# Give the gift of you this Christmas

**By Becky Spell Vann**

Contributing columnist

**W**hat gifts are you giving your family for Christmas this year? Does anyone really need anything when we have everything? Do you give your loved ones everything ...but you?

Billy Graham's Christmas saying stirred this story on a stormy Saturday at Topsail Beach. Sitting on my daybed with computer in lap surveying the wonder and majesty of lightening that lit the night sky and loud blasts of thunder that seemed to say, 'Behold my Son was born in Bethlehem long, long ago. As you celebrate Christmas, behold the King of Kings who sits by My side and will return soon by splitting the eastern sky!' Soaking up the good Lord's light show, I sat in silence - knowing He is God and how He must feel when we become consumed and give our Lord and loved ones everything... except us! We sing carols and visit the sick, mail family portrait cards and drop coins in red kettles, buy gifts galore and complain about no time to wrap them, try to find an open date for Sunday School parties and star in church plays with little time

to practice, prepare goodies for people who help us throughout the year but delivering them before Christmas causes fear, shop for new styles for parties galore with no time schedules for family prayers and time together ... which children truly adore but don't get much of it ...anymore! Hectic holiday hassle steals the greatest gifts we can give...time with Father, family, and friends with the focus on Him! Give the gift of YOU this year and enjoy CHRISTmas all year long!

Billy Graham's wisdom and love for Jesus shines in words he shared before God called him Home. "I think we've taken the meaning of Christmas out. People don't stop and think about Jesus or the birth of Jesus. When they think of Christmas, they think of Santa Claus and - for the children, and they think of giving gifts and out - giving the next person - of spending their time looking for the right thing for somebody who has everything."

Erma Bombeck's writings portray sincere, simple pleasures of Christmas also. Her sad quote relates with many people reading this story, 'The sad part is waking up on Christmas morning and

not being a child.'

Pope Francis says, "Christmas is joy, religious joy, an inner joy of light and peace."

Caroline Kennedy shares, "It's true, Christmas can feel like a lot of work, particularly for mothers. But when you look back on all the Christmases in your life, you'll find you've created family traditions and lasting memories. Those memories, good and bad, are really what help to keep a family together over the long haul"

Reading a quote from Queen Elizabeth II soothes my soul. "At Christmas, I am always struck by how the spirit of togetherness lies also at the heart of the Christmas story. A young mother and a dutiful father with their baby were joined by poor shepherds and visitors from afar. They came with their gifts to worship the Christ child."

Are we struck by the gift of being together with those whom God has gifted us to love and cherish until death parts us? Our greatest gifts are truly giving ourselves and truly spending time focusing on the Lord and loved ones! Are we so consumed that we get

lost in Christmas causing our families to lose sight of togetherness and closeness to Christ? Would we travel afar seeking Christ or do we neglect to travel short distances to worship Him in churches here at home?

Charles Dickens said, "Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childhood days, recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth, and transport the traveler back to his own fireside and quiet home!"

Are you preparing for a happy Christmas where Jesus is right at home,



Mac McPhail

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not merely a guest for His birthday celebration? Do you rush like Martha with little time to sit down and listen to loved ones or are you Mary minded with time allotted for family to gather by the fireside to laugh, talk, sing praises, and share testimonies of love they have experienced throughout the year? Will you take time to sit and listen or excuse yourself to tend to things that tell your family, "I am busy and making sure every little detail if perfected is more important than giving myself to YOU and making memories that time cannot take away!"

Thomas Monson sums up the message of this story that has hopefully, stirred your heart to take time to give YOU to those who long to spend quality time sitting and sharing the wonder of it all.

"What will you and I give for Christmas this year? Let us in our lives give to our

Lord and Savior the gift of gratitude by living His teachings and following in His footsteps. Finding the real joy of Christmas comes not in the hurrying and scurrying to get more done, nor is it found in the purchasing of gifts. We find real joy when we make the Savior the focus of the season."

So, what gifts are you giving this year? Will you truly take time to cherish the heart of Christmas and give YOU to those who long to spend time with you... especially the Lord and your loved ones?

Christmas is the perfect time to celebrate the love of God and family and to create memories that will last forever. Jesus is God's perfect gift! We can receive this gift and share it with others on Christmas and every day of the year. Make this your best Christmas ever... give the gift your heavenly Father and precious family truly want...give YOU!



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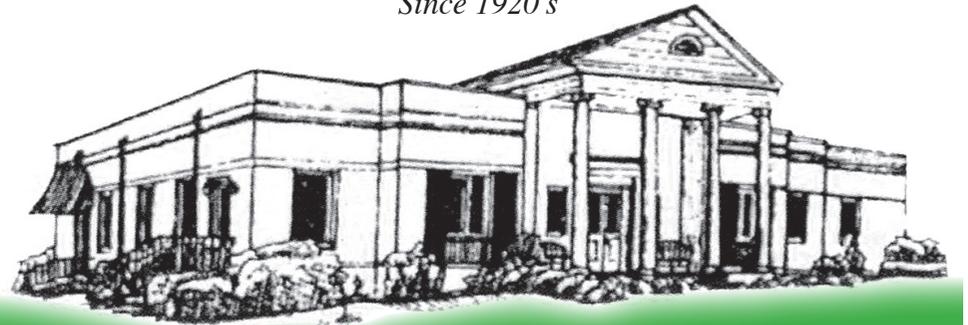
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# It is well, with brother Ralph

By Mac McPhail  
Contributing columnist

Well, it was another week and another funeral. It seems like that has been happening a lot lately. But this one was had special meaning.

Rev. Ralph Jernigan passed away last week at the age of 89. He had been a licensed minister with our denomination for 68 years. He had been retired from pastoring a church for quite some time. But Brother Ralph still had the heart of a shepherd. I heard several stories since his passing telling of his delivering a kind word, making a visit, or spending time in prayer with someone in their time of need. I personally have such a story, and I will always be grateful.

During the funeral, Rev. Jernigan's son, Ralph, Jr., led the congregation in the singing of "It is well with my soul." As we sung, I thought back about the origin of the song and its writer.

Horatio Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago in the mid-1800's. On October 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire swept through the city. Horatio was a prominent lawyer in Chicago, and had invested heavily in real estate and the fire nearly wiped out everything he owned. Two years later in 1873, Spafford decided that he and his family should take a vacation in England and to hear his friend and famed evangelist D. L. Moody preach. He was delayed by business, but sent his wife, Anna, and their four daughters ahead.

Tragically, on November 22, 1873, the ship they were sailing was struck by another vessel and 226 people lost their lives, including all four of Spafford's daughters. Horatio's wife, Anna, who survived, telegraphed her husband back in the United States to tell him of the

terrible loss of the four daughters, whose ages ranged from two to eleven years old. It was on that long, lonely voyage to England to meet his wife that Horatio Spafford penned the words to "It Is Well with My Soul." Spafford's ship actually sailed over the same location where his daughters died.

I wonder if the seas were rough and the skies threatening when he wrote,

"When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll;

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,

It is well, it is well with my soul."

How can anything be "well with your soul" after experiencing such tragedy? It's hard to me to fathom, but the key is found in the first line of the song, "peace." Peace is a word you hear quite often during the Christmas season. You know, "Peace on earth and goodwill toward men." Then, what is peace? It's probably easier to define what peace isn't, rather than what it is.

Peace is not the absence of strife. Peace is not the lack of hurt or pain. Peace is not "being happy," because happiness is based on a particular situation you are in and is, well, situational. Peace is not a feeling, although there may be feelings and emotions involved. True peace is the peace that comes from God. It's hard to understand and describe. As a matter of fact, Philippians 4:7 in the Bible states that "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

It is hard to imagine saying "it is well with my soul," after losing four daughters. But Horatio Spafford did. It does transcend all understanding and cannot be completely explained. But it is real. You may know or have known this peace in your life, or

may have seen it exhibited in the life of someone around you. The funny thing about the peace that comes from God; if you have it you know it and if you don't, you know it.

The holidays tend to magnify feelings and emotions. The joys seem greater. But the sorrows can seem greater, also. Sorrows, like battling sickness, financial problems, or being without that loved one are always difficult. And seeing others seemingly full of joy during Christmas only tends to make it worse. But that's when the true story of Christmas can become a reality.

Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."

It is indeed well for Brother Ralph this Christmas. He is in the presence of his Lord, Jesus Christ. But it may not be well with you this Christmas season. But the



Mac McPhail COURTESY PHOTO

little baby that was born in that manger so long ago can make it well with your soul. Because He is the Prince of Peace.

Mac McPhail is a columnist with The Sampson Independent and has a column on the opinion page every Sunday.

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# Friendship, family, faith unite UMO students

By Rhonda Jessup  
University of Mount Olive

**M**OUNT OLIVE — Friendship, family, and faith are the bonds that tie together Sampson County natives Hunter Britt and Ty Hunter. Friends since birth, Hunter and Ty attended the same school growing up, graduated from Hobbton High School together, attend Mount Vernon Baptist Church, and share a passion for the outdoors. The pair also attend the University of Mount Olive (UMO) where Ty is majoring in ag production with a concentration in business and Hunter is majoring in ag business.

Ty enrolled at UMO straight out of high school, in the fall of 2016.

“I have always been interested in agriculture,” he said.

Ty is the son of Missy and Eric Hunter of Clinton, and brother to Kyle-15. His grandparents are Lettie and the late Max Hunter and Marshal and Mittie Tyndall, owners of Tyndall Seafood located on Southeast Boulevard in Clinton. Ty jokes that he has worked at the seafood market since he was old enough to stand on a bucket and look over the fish counter. Even now, with a full college load of 16 to 18 credit hours per semester, Ty works at the fish market about 30 hours a week. “It is tough juggling it all sometimes,”

he acknowledged. “But, I would do anything for my grandparents, and they know that.”

Having a good work ethic is something that comes naturally for Ty. He recalls having labored many summers for local produce farmer, Danny Joe Pope. Ty packed peppers and squash; the hours were long, and it was hot and dirty work. However, the lessons Ty learned about responsibility, dependability, and hard work have stuck with him.

He has applied those lessons often at UMO. All UMO ag majors are required to do an internship before graduating. This past summer, Ty completed his internship with Pope and Son out of Clinton.

“It was a great experience,” he said. “And they have told me I can come back to work with them any time.”

Ty is keeping his options open, but one thing is for certain, he hopes to keep his roots tightly connected to Sampson County.

“Sampson County is special,” he shared. “There a lot of people who can’t wait to graduate and leave, but not me. My family is here. I know the roads and the woods like the back of my hand. I may get a job where I travel all over the nation, but ultimately I still want to call Sampson County home.”



**Sampson County natives, and friends, Hunter Britt and Ty Hunter enjoy taking classes together at The University of Mount Olive.** COURTESY PHOTO

Ty’s good buddy, Hunter, has a similar outlook on life, labor, and a love for the outdoors. The two can often be found duck hunting in the swamps around their homes, or deer hunting from a tree stand...waiting, watching, and wishing for the next “big one” to show up.

“I got my first buck when I was six years old,” Hunter boasts. “Well, I got my first deer in the third grade, but I

have been hunting since the second grade,” Ty added with a smile.

The friends share more than a passion for hunting. They both have a shared faith that has been cultivated in the walls of Mount Vernon Baptist Church where the two attend with their families.

“When half of the congregation is related to you, you know it truly is a



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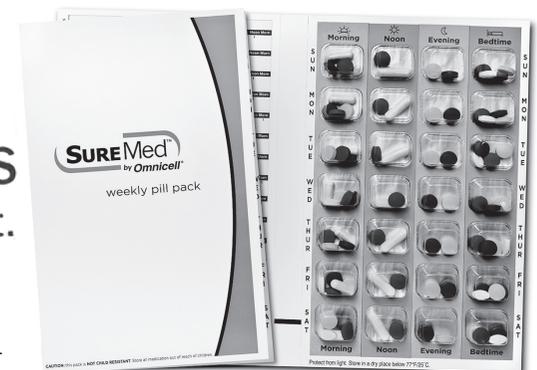
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*Continued from page 13*

church family,” Ty laughed.

Hunter recalls helping build wheel chair ramps for those in need, and participating in derby car races as a youngster in RAs (Royal Ambassadors).

“Faith in God is what keeps you going,” Hunter said. “We each have a choice every morning when we wake up. To either give it all we have or to just get by. I pray that God gives me the ability and strength to do the best that I can at all that I strive for each and every day.”

Hunter’s faith and trust in God are two things that he feels led him to attend the University of Mount Olive; that, and a passion for baseball.

Hunter started his college experience on a baseball scholarship at ECU. He opted to be redshirted during his freshmen year to maintain athletic eligibility. He then decided to transfer to UNCW.

“At the last minute, I changed my mind and decided to come to UMO,” Hunter said. “I had talked to Coach Carl Lancaster and felt good about the program here, so I enrolled in the fall of 2017.”

It is a decision he has not regretted.

“UMO is a good fit for me,” he said. “It is close to home, has excellent academics, and a great baseball program.”

Hunter is a right-handed pitcher and is slated to be a starter for the Trojans during the 2019 season. He averages speeds of 93 miles per hour (MPH), and has pitched as fast as 96 MPH.



**Hunter Britt and Ty Hunter**

COURTESY PHOTO

“Baseball is kind of my thing,” Hunter said. “Outside of hunting, it is the one thing that I think I am good at, and that I really enjoy. I work hard to get better at it every day.”

Most would call Hunter a late bloomer in the baseball world. He didn’t start playing the sport until his sophomore year in high school. “I could throw hard and fast, but I wasn’t always in control of where it went,” he joked.

By the time Hunter was in the eleventh grade, he had gained the attention of many scouts. At one time, he was listed as one of the top five pitchers in North Carolina and one of the top 100 in the nation.

He talks about his abilities with a quiet

humbleness. The six-foot-six-inch tall young man could be considered a gentle giant. On and off the field, he leads by example.

Like Ty, Hunter worked for Danny Joe Pope for many summers during his youth, and also cut grass. This past summer, he had a brief job shadowing experience with Ag Technologies which gave him a glimpse of what his future might hold. He hopes to do an internship with them soon.

“I really enjoyed the variety of work,” Hunter said. “I could see myself doing something like that, if and when I am done with baseball.”

Hunter would ultimately like to make it to the major leagues. And, the

possibility is very real. He was once offered the opportunity, but turned it down.

“I was just too young,” he admits. “But, now I am working towards that goal all the time. To me, it is important to have the whole package. I think you need to be successful in the classroom first, and then the athletics will come.”

Good insight for a 20-year old. Probably advice that he learned from his parents, Barry and Lynette Britt, or from his grandparents, Loraine and the late Harold Britt of Faison and Lib and the late Franklin Pope of the Herring Community. And, it is advice that he will surely share with his brothers, Daniel-16 and Garrett-12.

"My brothers like to come see me play when they can," he said.

On game day, Hunter can also often spot his friend, Ty, in the stands cheering him on.

"That is what is so great about our friendship," Hunter said. "We have known each other whole lives. When one of us needs something, all we have to

do is call the other one."

Ty agreed, "Hunter is the kind of friend that will never let you down."

Adding to their many commonalities, Hunter and Ty hope to share the graduation stage in the spring of 2020 when they anticipate earning their degrees from the University of Mount Olive.



Service Times:  
Sunday School: 9:45 am Sunday Worship: 11:00 am

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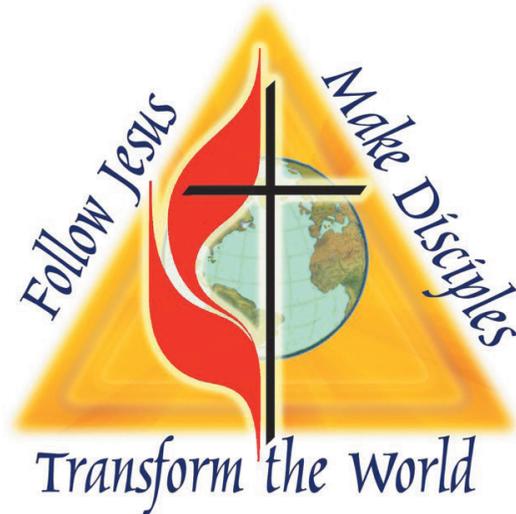
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