

# Oakdale Emory United Methodist Men



UMM

## PURPOSE

- Mission Support
- Fellowship
- Spiritual Growth
- Community Service

### Note:

All men of Oakdale Emory are members of UMM.

All meals are free. We invite donations to support mission programs.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Stevensons 2

Anne Jordan Testimony 3

Devotional 4

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 7

OCTOBER 2011

## UMM Helps with Safety Day - September 11



## Free Country Breakfast

Saturday,  
October 1, 2011

All-you-can-eat omelets, eggs, pancakes, waffles, bacon, sausage, etc.

Donations are welcomed

## Faith and Technology in the Operating Room Ann Hellie - Guest Speaker on Tuesday, October 4

Ann is the daughter of Ira and Lawrie Branson and wife of TV Sports Anchor, Dan Hellie. For the past 10 years she has been a clinical industry consultant in operating rooms dealing with physicians treating spine fractures. She will tell us about new technologies for such fractures and for brain aneurysm treatment and how faith seems to play a role in everything.

The program will include good fellowship and a delicious meal prepared by our Kitchen Angels at 7 pm or join us for coffee, desert, and speakers at 7:45 pm.

Freewill donations go to UMM missions.





**Dick Stevenson - VP  
and proud father**



**Mary Anne and  
Jeff Stevenson**

**OAKDALE  
EMORY  
UNITED  
METHODIST  
MEN**

### UMM Officers:

**Dick Harris - President**

**Dick Stevenson -  
Vice President**

**Ron Hoggard - Treasurer**

**Ray Johnson - Secretary and  
Newsletter Editor**

**Bob Nordstrom - Chaplain**

**Contact Editor at  
[rav@radiationcounseling.org](mailto:rav@radiationcounseling.org)**

## Jeff and Mary Anne Stevenson

Jeff and Mary Anne Stevenson got the UMM program off to a great start for the new season on September 6. They spoke of their personal journey and how God has touched their lives.

They met in kindergarten and remained friends for many years. They reconnected during their young adult lives and eventually married. Jeff described his lifelong passion for sailing. This led them to purchase an existing yachting business, which included a fleet of boats. From 1989 – 1996, they operated Paradise Bay Yacht Charters offering cruises for individuals and corporate clients, and later added a bed and breakfast for overnight tours.

The business eventually expanded to become *Destination Paradise*. The number of corporate clients increased as did the volume of business. Jeff and Mary Anne then began partnering with local hotels to promote corporate meetings in Annapolis.

In addition to yacht tours, this business expansion presented Mary Anne with an opportunity to pursue her passion as an event planner and coordinator for major corporations holding

conferences in Annapolis. Both Jeff and Mary Anne talked of how blessed they felt regarding



the good fortune and success they have achieved in their business ventures.

### Business and Personal Setbacks

Mary Anne then told us that, at the age of 36, she was diagnosed with cancer. She underwent nine months of chemotherapy. All of this occurred around September 11, 2001.

After 9/11, travel within America decreased which resulted in a slowdown for their business. Mary Anne also learned that, as a result of the cancer, she would no longer be able to have children.

Despite these major challenges and setbacks, both Mary Anne and Jeff professed that they never lost their faith in God, or that all would work out in the end. They have been married for 16 years and Mary Anne is now cancer free.

They also showed several photos of their beautiful daughter Kimberly, or “Kimmy”, whom they adopted from China five years ago. Kimmy has truly blessed their lives. In fact, she had attended her first day of school on the day of this presentation to the UMM.

Their business is also doing well. Jeff and Mary Anne only hire other Christians and praised the excellent employees who work for them and contrib-

As always, those attending enjoyed an evening of fellowship and excellent food. A very special thank you to our Kitchen Angels who prepared a dinner with fried chicken as the main course and delicious cheesecake for dessert.

**A special thanks to  
Mel Sessa for photos and  
this article.**

## Anne Jordan - The Testimonial of An Angel Among Us



My grandmother’s passing proved to be a milestone in my spiritual journey. One evening just before Thanksgiving, I received a call that she was dying in Florida. By midnight, I was at her bedside and found her babbling intermittently and incoherently. Around 5 a.m., as I was holding her hand, she suddenly and clearly said the word “angels.” “What about angels?” I asked. “See angels,” she said. “You see angels?” “Talking to me,” she replied. In hindsight, I wish I had asked, “What are they saying?” but what I said instead was, “Angels are talking to you?” “Beautiful,” she said.

Those were her last words, but what a gift! If angels were real, then God also *must* be real. With that fleeting glimpse into eternity, I went from *believing* there is a God, to *knowing* there is a God. For me, it was a subtle but critical difference that brought a deep and abiding sense of peace, especially in the wake of the 9/11 and DC sniper attacks.

### Daily Life Was Still Stressful

My daily life continued to be fast paced and stressful. To encourage some down time, Jay and I bought a cabin near Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. Yes, it has running water—but no microwave, no TV, no Internet, no cell signal. Ironically, on the same day that we closed the deal and looked forward to frequent weekends away, Pastor Kevin Baker arrived at Oakdale Emory and all of our plans soon went out the window.

Suddenly, God's Word was being preached in a way we hadn't experienced before. Kevin noted that identifying oneself as a Christian doesn't always equate to actually following Jesus. His insights and interpretations were often radical and challenging—but consistent with Scripture and convicting. We found ourselves going up to the cabin on Friday evenings, but returning before Sunday morning. A constant theme in Kevin's sermons was *to trust God and take risks, believing that He will provide and protect*. That fall, we took a leap of faith and significantly increased our pledge to a tithe.

### God's Unanticipated Blessings

Did God's blessings flow as a result? Yes, but in unanticipated ways. A few months later, Jay lost his job in a round of layoffs as AOL struggled to "reinvent" itself. In the past, I would have considered this a crisis. But, although I still sweated lots of small stuff, my growing trust in God allowed me to be calm and supportive. Even before Jay received any severance and officially left AOL's payroll, he got two job offers. The one he accepted was with a technology company in Rockville, which offered a higher salary, a much shorter commute and savings on gas and tolls.

Meanwhile, I was serving as Vice Chair of Oakdale Emory's Church Council and had been asked to develop a job description for a Communications Director. In 2006, the Council approved the position in principle, but didn't budget any money for it. As I had been researching the responsibilities of such a job, I increasingly felt drawn to it, but there was no way I could do it for free—or so I reasoned. Who in their right mind would walk away from the salary and security of a 20-year career right before their children start college—or give up the prospect of becoming the top editor of a national magazine?

Nevertheless, God persisted in allowing the idea of volunteering for this job to rattle around in my head and heart—usually late

at night. Then He started addressing my objections through both His Word and deeds. When we learned that our son Davyd had been awarded a full-tuition scholarship to architecture school, God seemed to be saying, "I've covered him twice over. What more do you need?" I couldn't think of a comeback for that.

Still, I would be cutting our family's income in half! Jay and I discussed the



potential ramifications, but we never actually did any math because it would have looked too scary on paper. We chose to fully rely on God. I remember saying to our son Scott, who was then 13, "All I can promise is that you won't starve and you will have money for college."

### I Volunteered in Faith

Shortly afterwards, I met with Kevin and Leslie Myers. Apparently, people don't often walk into the church and offer to work full time for no pay. They were both stunned and enthusiastic. A few days later, after submitting my resignation at *Governing Magazine*, I drove home from the Metro wondering if I was crazy. Then my eye caught the license plate of the car in front of me. It read: SRVHIM. I took it as a sign.

Strangely enough, a year after I left the magazine, it was sold to a publishing company linked to the Church of Scientology, and all of the editors and senior reporters were fired. I hadn't foreseen the future, as my former colleagues believe, but of course God had.

I refer to my career change as the next step beyond a leap of faith, which I had made many years earlier. It was a "second conversion" reflecting my trust in God to fulfill His promises and my obedience to a longstanding call to ministry.

My salary had been our family's discretionary income, which enabled us to buy and do a lot of cool stuff—but it was *ALL* of our discretionary income. So when I came to work here in January 2008, we knew we'd have to make some lifestyle adjustments. Let me share with you what these changes actually looked like and how God has compensated us in creative ways—both large and small—even as Kevin and Leslie have committed to building a modest salary into the church budget over several years.

### God Has Blessed Us with Low- or No-cost Alternatives

As a former journalist, I love news and books. My subscription to the *New York Times* was one of the first things to go, but around that time the fee to view the entire contents of the paper online was eliminated. My office downtown at Connecticut & L was near Borders Books and Talbots. I was a frequent customer at both stores, but now I'm a regular at the public library and the Goodwill in Berkeley Springs, where I can find Talbots clothing for \$6. During our 40 Days of Community Lenten study, a small group here showed their appreciation for my service with a gift certificate to the Inn at Brookeville Farms. And after last winter's heavy snow, a church member chipped and hauled away the debris from bushes and branches that had fallen in our yard.

Over the years, I had belonged to several health clubs. But what I finally stuck with was a 5:30 a.m. exercise regimen in a local park. Jay soon joined as well. But when I started working at Oakdale, we could no longer afford the \$200 per month cost. So it was an answer to prayer when Joanna and Jason Franklin started Fit for Duty here, which offered circuit training set to Christian music in The Refuge. When their college schedules forced them to discontinue this ministry after a year,

(continued on next page)

## September Song

Devotional by

Bob Nordstrom September 6, 2011

Every month has its own personality; its own special treasure of emotions and feelings that come to mind when we tear off the old month from the calendar and face the new one.

September is no exception. In fact, for me, it's one of those months with very strong memories. I remember the first days of school in a new grade; the feeling of a new, stiff pair of



blue jeans around my waist, and shoes that haven't been worn in yet. I remember the magic and glamour of going to Ohio State football games with my father; walking across campus under a canopy of red and yellow leaves still clinging to the trees under a vivid blue sky. I remember the feeling of change in the air as the warm days of August give way to the crisp air of October.

Daylight savings time falls back

and the late afternoons become dark and moody.

I remember all of that and more when I think of September. A song writer seems to have tuned into the same set of thoughts and emotions with *September Song*

*"Oh, it's a long, long time from May to December  
And the days grow short when you reach September"*

When I think of the Septembers of bygone years, the nostalgia is strong in me, and I am willing to guess that the same is true with you. September does that to people. We gather here this evening in the warmth of fellowship, eager to begin another year of service to our church and to Jesus Christ. There are important sacrifices ahead of us as we enter a time of a building campaign within the church, and each of us must find it within himself to do God's will.

Yes, September is a time of change and spiritual renewal. But who can forget the September when tragedy struck ten years ago this week? The date was 9/11; the year was 2001. That is the day when 2977 victims along with 19 terrorists lost their lives in four separate acts of senseless destruction. September was forever changed. America was forever changed.

In the aftermath of that day, people asked where was God when all that happened. The family members of the victims, the friends, and acquaintances all wanted to know "Why?" Why did God let this happen?

I am not here tonight to answer questions of that magnitude. I side with those asking them. I do know that the question of why bad things happen to good people has been around for millennia, and will continue to plague mankind until Christ comes again. I don't have a good answer. That's where I surrender to God's will. I used to think that was a cop-out. There had to be a logical, satisfying answer to such questions, no matter how difficult they might be. My scientific background and education demanded it. Today, however, I have learned that with age comes wisdom, and wisdom tells me that there are things that are bigger than any of us and bigger than all of us.

The tragedy of 9/11 will always be with us. I know that with time, the wounds of this tragedy will lose some of their sting. They will never heal, but they will dull. We must find spiritual healing within ourselves. We pray the words in the Lord's prayer,

***"Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."***

And in so doing, we surrender to the will of God. We don't say "we will figure something out, and hope You agree with it." We surrender to the will of God no matter what the consequences. "Your will be done." Of course, we do so, knowing the promise given to us by our Savior Jesus Christ. He said to us,

***In my father's house there are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.*** John 14: 2-3

So, until the time when I am called to be with Jesus, I will continue to think on September as a time filled with the promise that God's will is the right thing to believe in, no matter what.

***Amen***

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### Anne Jordan Testimonial (continued)

I bumped into our previous fitness instructor who asked what we'd been up to. When I explained our financial constraints, we were invited to come back to the program at no charge.

#### Continuing Opportunities to Travel

Travel is one of my passions, but I assumed vacations, especially abroad, would also have to be curtailed. In the past three years, however, God has provided the opportunity for me to go on three mission trips—to Uruguay, which is the farthest distance I have ever traveled, to the mountains of Guatemala, which is the most remote place I've ever been, and to the mountains of Appalachia, which I am glad were not so remote since I needed to be taken to the hospital. Yes, I've gotten sweaty and dirty painting, digging trenches, hauling bricks, and mixing concrete, but I also have connected with the people, culture, and land more meaningfully than I would have as a tourist.

Although our family won't be booking another cruise on the Queen Mary 2 anytime soon, we have continued to spend time on the water by serving as the crew on a sailboat with the Boy Scouts in the Florida Keys, and I find quiet and contentment paddling my own kayak on the Triadelphia Reservoir.

#### A Faithful, Loving, God is With Us

Today, many people in our culture, including Christians, talk about luck and coincidence—either because they are unaware of or uncomfortable with the truth that a faithful and loving God is the heart and center of all things. As someone whose spiritual journey had been more intellectual than experiential for most of my life, I can now personally attest to the joy and wonder of God's presence, promises, provision, and protection. I invite you to join me in heeding these words of wisdom in the book *Ruthless Trust*, by Brennan Manning:

***"You don't need any more insights into faith.***

***You need to trust what you have already received."***