

# Near the Cross Emmaus



September 2011  
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## Prepare Now: Fall Walks Just a Few Days Away

### Andy Slaven, Lay Director For Men's Walk #21

"Emmaus has been a blessing for me, especially when I see the scales fall from a Pilgrim's eyes," said Andy Slaven, lay director for men's walk number 21. "I have never felt worthy to do any of the jobs that I faced through leadership progression, but God has made me worthy through Jesus. Each time I faced a new job, I made up my mind that it is a blessing, but I went through leadership progression kicking and screaming."

"I was amazed at how empowered the speakers were on my Pilgrim walk at Noah's of Ark in 2005," he explained. Andy became involved with the organization of Near the Cross Emmaus the next year. He was an assistant table leader on walk number one, then he was elected to the board. Because this was a brand new board the members drew numbers to see who would have one, two and three year terms. Andy drew a one-year term, but then was elected the next year to a three year term.

"I have been blessed to have an employer who would let me work for God Thursday through Sunday at each walk," he commented. Andy is division manager for Dallas-based Russco Packaging, selling corrugated materials for industries in this area.

A native of Bono, Slaven graduated Westside High School in 1981, then went to Central Baptist College in Conway on a basketball scholarship. He joined his dad as an over-the-road truck driver, then started his career as a truck driver, working up to sales and managerial jobs with various packaging companies.

### Check List for Fall:

- **Gathering Sept. 10**  
(Noon, 1st UMC, Jonesboro)
- **Download Sponsor Form**  
(go to [nearthecrossemmaus.org](http://nearthecrossemmaus.org))
- **Training (inside team) August 26**  
(Cornerstone UMC, Jonesboro, 6:00 pm)
- **Training August 27**  
(8:30 am)
- **Training for all Sept. 17**  
(8:30 am, Cornerstone UMC)
- **Sign up for Prayer Vigil**  
(go to [www.nearthecrossemmaus.org](http://www.nearthecrossemmaus.org))
- **Sept. 29: Men's Walk Sendoff**  
(7:00 pm, Cornerstone UMC)
- **Oct. 1: Men's Walk Candlelight**  
(7:00 pm, Mt. Zion Baptist, Walcott)
- **Oct. 2: Men's Walk Closing**  
(4:45 pm, Cornerstone UMC)
- **Oct. 6: Women's Sendoff**  
(7:00 pm, Cornerstone UMC)
- **Oct. 8: Women's Candlelight**  
(7:00 pm, Mt. Zion Baptist)
- **Oct. 9: Women's Closing**  
(4:45 pm, Cornerstone UMC)
- **Nov. 5: Gathering/Follow-up**
- **Dec. 3: Gathering**

At a revival at the Herman Baptist Church, he made a commitment to Christ as his Lord and Savior when he was 18. He and Sherri have two children, Drew and Reid. Sherri was elected to the Emmaus Board last year, working as transportation and luggage chairman. They are loyal and active members of First United Methodist Church, where Sherri also is a part-time worker in the finance office.

### Wendy Jones, Lay Director For Women's Walk #22

"Our walk is not for us," Wendy Jones explained. "It's for people we haven't even met yet." It doesn't take long to understand Wendy's attitude toward anonymous servant hood. "The only way God can be effective is to keep pointing to Him," she added. "We're going to be under attack, so our walk must be bathed in prayer."

Mrs. Jones knows the Holy Spirit must be present at all times. "We must yield and let the Holy Spirit work in the lives of the Pilgrims," she continued.

She and her husband Allan have been active in Emmaus since they did their walks at Noah's of Ark in 1999. Allan was Lay Director for Emmaus Walk #9 in 2008, and both of them have served as Assistant Lay Directors many times. David and Susanne Belk sponsored them for their walks at Noah's of Ark near Little Rock. "God knew what we needed," Wendy said.

Wendy was born and raised in Poplar Bluff, Mo. (Butler County). She was named for her grandfather, whose nickname was Windy, because he was champion hog caller for Butler County. When the nurse wrote her name on the birth certificate she spelled it "Wendy" so that name stuck.

She and Allan have three children: Weston, 17, a senior at Ridgefield Christian School (where Wendy teaches), John Henry, 14, and Allison, 9. Wendy stayed home with the children for 10 years before beginning her teaching career 10 years ago.

While at her parent's home with a child sleeping on either side of her, Wendy woke up in the middle of the night and gave her life to Christ. "The next morning, I was a different person," she added. "My parents didn't understand because they felt they had raised me in the church, but I explained that God doesn't have any grandchildren!"

Allan surrendered at almost the same time, pulling his car off to the side of the road and praying for Jesus to be his Lord and Savior.

# Blessed Assurance

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4th Day Talk

*Editor's note: This is the fourth day talk presented by Jennifer Clack at the June gathering.*

When Mr. Fleming asked me to speak today, my mind started spinning. What did I learn through my Emmaus experience to bring into my 4th day? I had headed off to Mt. Zion in April with no idea what to expect.

I came back with more than my faith renewed. I got back the memory of what God's peace was really like.

Have you ever lost someone and forgot what her voice sounded like? Or what he smelled like when you hugged him? I had a time in my life when I felt God close and His peace around me. But over the years, I lost that sensation or even the memory of it.

I'll give you a little back story. I grew up here in Jonesboro and was anxious to get out and find my own way in the world. I chose to go to college at Washington University in St. Louis. I had a great time and learned so much in my freshman and sophomore years. Toward the end of my sophomore year, I applied to be a resident assistant in the dorms. I knew a lot of the RA's and residence life staff and had every confidence that I would get a position. Through some unexpected twists I did not get to be an RA. I was shocked. I hadn't had a lot of experience in rejection yet. So I did what any normal 19 year old would do. I threw a minor fit to my suitemates and decided that I didn't want to live in those stinky dorms anyway.

As God's will would have it, one of my sorority sisters really wanted to live in an apartment, and we set out on a search for a great place to live. We found a cute little place about two miles

off campus. We signed a lease and looked forward to moving there in the fall. Let me also add that I didn't have a car. But I was 19 and that was a little detail I could deal with. So everyday (OK, most days) I would walk two miles to campus and two miles back, almost always with a backpack loaded with too many textbooks.

That year was starting out to be as great as my first two. I had great friends, a great roommate, and classes were going well. I started stumbling quite a bit as the semester progressed. I didn't think much of it. I am not a graceful person by any measure.

I usually had someone walking with me who helped me regain my balance and laugh it off. The stumbling turned into my legs collapsing under me. Then the pain started. I couldn't step on my right leg without pain shooting everywhere. I had gone through this before when I was 13.

Back then, I had a small benign tumor in my spine that wreaked all sorts of havoc. I thought—"Here we go again." I was too stubborn to quit walking to class. No stupid tumor was going to slow me down. I had too much to do! I usually relented at the end of the day and allowed someone to drive me home.

By this time, the semester was wrapping up. My parents made all sorts of appointments for me in Jonesboro to find out what was going on. I wasn't concentrating on classes. I couldn't go out with friends.

You would think that I was a big unhappy mess, wouldn't you? But that was the odd thing. I felt this sort of warmth around me most of the time, a peace that settled in my heart that let me know it would be OK again. God seemed to stay close, and I welcomed Him to stay

with me. In my mind, I felt calm, content and cared for. My professors were supportive and got me through finals when I wanted to go home early and finish my finals later. I made it to Christmas break.

I was very happy to be one of the earliest recipients of an MRI in Jonesboro. We showed up at the doctor's office pretty sure we knew what was going on. We expected a tiny little tumor around one or two of my vertebrae. Instead, we saw a big black mass that used to be my hip bone. My spine was curved a bit where the tumor was pushing it.

We just stared at it for a little bit before my Mom asked, "How in the world could she walk like that?" The doctor had a theory from the detailed history he had pried from me at our pre-MRI appointment. It seems walking four miles a day with a backpack is really good for your abs and back (or as we call it now, your core).

All of those muscles were literally holding me together and keeping that tumor from crushing my spine. The bone already was starting to grow back at that point so all I had to do was rest, heal and keep up that strength as best I could. I took the next semester off from school so I could do just that.

I rested in the same peace that kept me sane during the whole ordeal. I could see where God had been working months before to save me from a life in a wheelchair. As the pain slowly subsided over the next weeks, I could grasp just how much He had been surrounding me with the people and resources I needed. I could already look back on that time with fondness, knowing how close God was to me.

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# Blessed Assurance Blessed Assurance

(Continued from page 2.)

I went back for my senior year, graduated and started my adult life. I was active in churches wherever I lived. I even went to seminary for a while. But that peace had started to slip away, little by little. I think I was just distracted by my relationships, career, then marriage and parenting. I never doubted God's power or my faith in Him. I was still blessed and happy for the most part. But that encompassing sense of peace was just a tiny whisper of what it used to be. I could start to grasp it and it would slip away.

One of the things that my Walk to Emmaus gave me was a strong reminder of what that peace felt like. I could take a tight hold of it and remember. I'm still very tempted to let the world take that away from me.

This world loves drama and manufactures it so we can watch it on TV, just in case we don't have enough in our lives. I still find myself wanting to create my own scenarios of justice and righteousness. But as a new era of my 4th day begins—one with a family home for the summer and the start of a new career—I can close my eyes and renew myself with the peace of God. He's still been with me over the years. Just like He was when I was more aware of Him.

Emmaus reminded me to be conscious of my walk with Him. Let Him have His way with me. He can handle things a lot better than I can. I wish that for all of you as well...that God's peace surrounds you during your 4th day no matter what you are going through.

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. Col. 3:15.*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)*

**Next Gathering, Sept. 10  
Noon, 1st United Methodist  
Jonesboro**

## Near The Cross Emmaus

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### Check us out!

[www.nearthecrossemmaus.org](http://www.nearthecrossemmaus.org)

From the website, you can post prayers and praises, print sponsor and work forms, see reunion groups and upcoming events.

**I saw Jesus everywhere.  
Serving food to the pilgrims.  
Welcoming us to Candlelight.  
Being friendly to newcomers.  
I thought, "that's someone  
I know"...**

**It was always Jesus.**

**I could tell by the way  
they serve.**

**Maybe someone will see  
Jesus in you this weekend.**

## Sponsorship: The Most Important Job of All

Sponsorship is the most important job in Emmaus. It is more than "signing up people." The quality of sponsorship influences the Pilgrim, the health of the Emmaus movement, and the church affected by the movement. Good sponsorship undergirds the whole weekend with sacrificial love on behalf of each Pilgrim.

Sponsors use discernment in recruiting Pilgrims and provide personal acts of Agape during the 3 days of the Walk. These acts include prayer, Agape letters, presence at Candlelight, Closing and Follow-up.

Emmaus is for active church members whose own renewal will mean new energy, commitment and vision in the church. Among those to be considered:

† Dependable church leaders who are the quiet backbone of the church.

† Less active members who need the awareness of grace rekindled and their commitments renewed.

† Christians who want "something more" and who want to grow spiritually.

† Church members who will help Emmaus remain theologically sound, centered on the essentials of our common faith.

It is not recommended for those undergoing an emotional crisis or who are emotionally unstable. It is not for those whose theology is notably different or incompatible with the traditional theology represented by the Walk to Emmaus.

Pilgrim application forms and Sponsor forms are available on line at [www.nearthecrossemmaus.org](http://www.nearthecrossemmaus.org) or from registrar Bob Rogers, [bobgoeagle@att.net](mailto:bobgoeagle@att.net)