

Near the Cross Emmaus



May 2012
Volume 7, Issue 5

37 New Members Look Forward to 4th Day

Men's Spring 2012 Walk

All 17 Pilgrims went to the microphone to reflect on their experiences at Walk #23.

"It was spectacular," one of the men exclaimed. "We serve an awesome God!"

"I experienced the Holy Spirit in me," another man related. "And I'm going to take the Spirit back to my church."

"I was skeptical, but my skepticism was blown out of the water," a young Pilgrim said.

"I had become so stagnant in my spiritual life that I was just going through the motions," another explained. "But the Lord touched me this weekend. He knew what I needed."

An enthusiastic Pilgrim said, "I'm going to let Christ's love shine through me to my family, my church and people I don't even know."

"For years I did some things I shouldn't have done, and I hurt so many people," another recalled, "but I threw my guilt into the basket. I know God forgave me but I needed to forgive myself."

Still another man said, "I learned what fellowship is all about, and what church is all about."

Welcome New Members!

Men's Walk 23

James Baker
Brent Benson
Chris Buxton
Blake Culbreath
Mark Duncan
Brock Ferguson
Joe Ferguson
Amon Firestone
Keith Mitchell Hensley
Clint James
Joe Little
Thomas Martin
Toy Morgan
Ronald Palmer
Scott Ralston
Robert Smith
Jay Wilson

Women's Walk 24

Carolyn Baldwin
Shirley Coble
Sara Culbreath
Christina Dickerson
Susan Glasgow
Marsha FitzPatrick
Mary Grubbs
Dawn Harris
Teri Hinson
Mary A. Jeter
Jennifer Kaiser
Jane Lindsey
Darby Merrill
Sharon Nichols
Rikki Painter
Donna Palmer
Amanda Pulliam
Renuka Singh
Amanda Weaver
Natalie Williams

Next Gathering May 5

Jonesboro 1st UMC

11:00 Followup

(All sponsors & pilgrims are expected to attend)

Noon Gathering

Potluck Lunch

4th Day Speaker

Holy Communion

Women's Spring 2012 Walk

Cornerstone United Methodist Church was the site for the Walk 24 Closing Sunday as 20 Pilgrims shared their testimonies.

"The last 72 hours set my heart afire and I got to know who I am in Jesus," one lady said.

"I have the love of God in my heart and I want to show His love to someone else," a Pilgrim disclosed.

Another said, "We laughed more and cried more than I've done in my whole life. It was 72 hours of love."

"God is always there, no matter how far off the path we might have drifted," declared a Pilgrim.

"I slept through the night for the first time since my pregnancy," a young mother related.

Another Pilgrim said, "On that first night I felt what it meant to walk with Jesus."

"I am free! Praise God, I am free! The grace of God is in my heart." An excited young lady declared. "Now I can show love to somebody else."

Another lady said, "I learned servant-hood from people here. It has been overwhelming. I have found a new family and I know God will not fail me."

"This weekend gave me the chance to let go of things I cannot change. I learned to turn them over to God."

Wisdom Giveth Life...

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Ecclesiastes 7:12

An Interview with Rev. Glenn Pettus

"If you told me that we would have three Emmaus communities in Arkansas I wouldn't have believed it, but here we are," Rev. Glenn Pettus exclaimed. With Dr. Perry Hope and a few others, Pettus founded Noah's of Ark Emmaus and Noah's of Ark Chrysalis. Given the chance to help start NEAR the Cross Emmaus, Pettus said, "I wanted some of the younger people to have the honor," so he stayed on the sidelines.

However, he supported and encouraged the Emmaus movement in his church. For the first time since NEAR the Cross was founded, Glenn worked this spring as a speaker in the men's walk.

His friend, Rev. Scott Gallimore, was NEAR the Cross Community Spiritual Director before moving from Jonesboro's First United Methodist to Piney Grove United Methodist Church at Hot Springs.

Those attending the Arkansas Conference of the Methodist Church still remember the time when Pettus and Gallimore were the last two clergymen to file in for the event. Pettus is 6'5½" and Gallimore is 5'3". People in the auditorium started laughing. "I had no concept of why," Pettus related. "When suddenly Scott just grabs me around the waist and hugs me.

"The audience roared! He was aware they were laughing at the one foot-plus difference in our height. When he hugged me I leaned over and hugged him. He has never let us get paired since then!"

Pettus was 5'10" in high school at Forrest City, then grew 7½" in college. "I had an unusual pituitary that caused the growth," he explained. It also has prevented him and his wife Eva from having children.

While she was teaching at Piggott, her doctor was certain she had a malignant tumor, so during the surgery every student in her choir got on their knees and prayed for her healing. To the doctor's amazement the tumor was benign!

Before they were wed, Eva asked her choir for permission to marry Glenn, and the

ceremony took place at Piggott High School.

It was at Piggott that Pettus became friends with Perry Hope who was superintendent of schools. God's wisdom was evident in putting the people together as part of His plan, but the launching of Noah's Ark didn't come until Pettus was assigned to the Tuckerman-Swifton charge.

Later while pastor of Oaklawn UMC at Hot Springs, Glenn devised a promotion in which he had 1,000 passes printed: "Good for admission for one person or one family." When these passes started showing up at the race track, they asked him to discontinue the promotion. He still has 750 of the unused passes!

While at Oaklawn, Pettus helped launch the Noah's Ark Chrysalis community. After five years at Hot Springs, he went to Forrest City for seven years, followed by three brief appointments (Harrison, West Memphis and Warren) caused by unexpected pastor moves.

Then came four year appointments to Pocahontas and Dumas-Tiller. He and Eva have been at their current appointment at Wynne for two years.

That's familiar territory for Glenn, who grew up in the Colt community and graduated from Forrest City High School. After starting at Arkansas State, he transferred to the University of Arkansas where he earned a degree in agriculture science.

After graduation Pettus looked for a job in his degree field. No luck, but he finally got a job in social services working out of West Memphis. On his first day of work, he suddenly blurted out "I don't want to be a social worker." This came just as he was nearing the Parkin exit off I-40. He drove to the school to see if they needed a teacher.

By this time school had been going on about six weeks. It turned out that a sixth grade teacher had walked into the office and quit the evening before. "I was hired on the spot to teach social studies and reading. They corrected that mistake quickly and made me the physical education instructor. I went to night school and summer school to get my education hours," he related.

"My children at school realized quickly

that I was not a Christian," he explained. "I thought I was a real good Christian but my actions, my words, my constant sipping cough syrup (slow gin) revealed the truth to them. Sadly, my church upbringing and teaching at no point made me think there was anything wrong except my cursing. I honestly believed I was a good Christian. I had a lot of hidden knowledge, was on almost every board or committee, taught Sunday school and even led a Bible study.

"One day a little girl reminded me of her relationship with her best friend. They were so close and talked so much we had separated them into two different classes. They were the very best friends and had a close intimate relationship with one another. She held up two crossed fingers and told me that she and Mary were that close. Then she impressed on me that Jesus and I could be, too.

"You are crazy!" I said. "You can know Jesus like I know Mary," she replied. Pettus reminded her that was against the law to talk about Jesus Christ in this new system, so she had to write 100 times "I will never talk to Mr. Pettus about Jesus Christ again."

"The next day I had to sign 100 sentences to all 36 students in the class. The day after that I had to sign 100 sentences to every student in all seven class periods.

"Persecution does result in an explosion of playfulness to Christ. The last time I assigned sentences before the summer break a student had to write 1,000 sentences.

"Thank God for the summer break because I thought they would forget over the summer. WRONG! Even the new incoming class was ready to pray for and witness to Mr. Pettus. The punishment grew worse (I am too ashamed to share about it.)

"Normally, our church kept a preacher only one year, but this one asked to stay, so I was hearing Christ not only at school but also at church from a preacher who was on fire for the Lord.

"Then came the Gideons. Their speaker gave Bibles to everyone in my 5th grade class. He had one left, so he gave it to me. One of the class members, a child named Kay, told me that I ought to read the book

(Continued on page 3)

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because it would do me some good.

Pettus read the entire book over the next week, and when Kay asked what I thought about it, I replied "it is the stupidest book I ever read." Kay said I wasn't being fair. "I stared at her as my blood pressure went up. Then I calmly leaned forward, looked her in the eye and told her that I have a bachelor's degree, have worked on two master's degrees and a teacher's certification. I am smart enough to be fair," I said. "I will read it again and I will be fair."

That afternoon as he entered his car to go home, he looked up to heaven and in a very insincere way said, "God, if you are real—show me."

"As I read the Bible a second time I suddenly realized if you are going to play on His ball team you must be willing to die. As a coach I demanded my players to shed their blood through skinned knees and elbows if necessary to get the ball. This Coach expected more!

"The next week I continued to assign reading lessons in class so I could hide the Bible behind my textbook to read it for the third time.

"The next week was horrible as everything that could go wrong went wrong in school land in my personal life. I did not sleep Tuesday or Wednesday nights, so I was worn out by Thursday. I had just finished reading the cost of discipleship in the Gospel of Luke.

"I never saw anybody at church do anything that cost them a thing, but the children at school sought punishment to get my attention."

At morning recess, Rev. Glenn heard someone way off in the distance yelling, "that will teach you never ever to talk to me about Jesus Christ again! I wondered who and what, but as I looked down I realized it was me.

"Glued to my waist was a child from the mentally retarded class. I had his right arm in my left hand and a belt doubled in my right hand. I looked down into this little black dusty face and saw tears streaming from it."

Pettus saw how this child was speaking through love and hurt. "That's all right, Mr. Pettus, I love you and I am praying for you!" The 6-foot-5 teacher saw that a mentally challenged 10-year-old child was paying the cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

"The shame, the shock, the horror of what I had done brought me the truth. I had been baptized, was a church member and had a head knowledge of Christ, but I real-

ized I WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN."

"I knew that if I slept that night I would die and go straight to hell! At 5:30 a.m. I called my pastor and gave my life to Jesus Christ."

Three years later, he was called to preach and attended Asbury Seminary. While working on a doctorate at Asbury, his advisor told him about the Emmaus walk. He arranged for Eva and Glenn to meet with Dr. Maxie Dunham, pastor of Christ UMC in Memphis and a leader in the Emmaus movement.

The result was Glenn and Eva attending the Memphis Emmaus walks in 1984. "We saw the lives of others changed and envisioned the spiritual impact Emmaus could have on the church. We began to sponsor others.

His first appointment in Arkansas was the Green Forest-Alpena charge, followed by the Piggott-Simmon's Chapel charge. Then in 1984, the Cabinet appointed them to the Tuckerman-Swifton-Strangers Home charge.

That same year, Richard B. Wilke was named bishop of the two Arkansas conferences. When he found out that Rev. Pettus had been on an Emmaus walk, he quickly said, "I want you to bring it to Arkansas."

Pettus took him seriously and worked 77 nights to get the walk off the ground. He ran up a \$1,200 phone bill talking to every Emmaus community in the nation while sponsoring people to walks in Memphis, Nashville, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Mississippi (74 pilgrims in all).

Eva taught music K-12 at Tuckerman and every cent of her salary went into Emmaus. With the help of the Memphis Emmaus community, the first walk was held in Arkansas in February, 1986. The first Emmaus teams, male and female, were 50% from the Memphis community and 50% from Arkansas.

The Memphis community chartered buses to attend candlelight at the first Arkansas walk. L. Glenn Pettus was spiritual director for walks one and two, while Jimmy Davis of Green Forest was lay director for the men and Eva L. Pettus was lay director for the women.

Noah's of Ark got its name when Glenn and Eva were taking Perry and Barbara Hope to attend a Memphis walk. "It was coming a horrible downpour with thick black clouds and extremely limited visibility." As they neared Marked Tree, the clouds opened to reveal a bright double rainbow.

Barbara exclaimed, "I feel like I'm on Noah's Ark." Ms. Eva said, "That's it! That's a perfect name for our Emmaus community: "Noah's of Ark."

Later Bishop Wilke asked Glenn and Eva to start a Chrysalis (youth Emmaus), followed by

Northwest Arkansas and the Philippines.

When he was appointed to Pocahontas in 2002, laity urged him to start a community in Northeast Arkansas. It was to be NEAR the Cross, with the first three letters standing for Northeast Arkansas. Glenn and Eva urged them to allow other ministers and laity to experience the awesome joy of birthing a new community.

"Our prayers and support were firmly behind them and we were thrilled to hear of the birth of our fourth grandchild (Emmaus in the Philippines, Chrysalis, Emmaus in Northwest Arkansas and now, NEAR the Cross Emmaus.)"

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Fall Walks

Men's Walk #25

Sept. 13-16

Jim Markley,
Lay Director

Women's Walk #26

Sept. 20-23

Shelly Fulks,
Lay Director

Near the Cross Emmaus

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