

OPEN HEARTS ~ OPEN MINDS ~ OPEN DOORS

*"making disciples for the transformation of the world."*

September 2011



## MONTGOMERY ~ PRATTVILLE DISTRICT NEWS

### “Thank You Linda Murphy and Welcome Ashley Epler”

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The month of September brings some transition in the district office. Linda Murphy is in the process of moving back to her home in Louisiana. Ashley Epler will be assuming the duties as Administrative Assistant for the Montgomery Prattville District.

As Linda begins a new season in her life, I would like to express a word of gratitude for her phenomenal work as the first Administrative Assistant for two districts. What a treasure Linda has been to District Superintendents, pastors, and lay people throughout the two Montgomery Districts. Included in this responsibility has been keeping up reports, records, and requirements for 200 churches and pastors. She has done this work and ministry with a high degree of commitment. Linda has been so well liked and respected by all in which she has worked. Personally, she has been indispensable in my first two years on the district. She has helped so much with her knowledge of both the pastors and churches of our district. She will be missed. We of the Montgomery Prattville District will especially miss Linda. We pray God's blessings on her move back to her home Louisiana.

We are fortunate to welcome Ashley Epler to succeed Linda as the new Administrative Assistant for both districts. The Epler's have just moved to Montgomery. Ashley brings with some knowledge of the work required in our office in being the wife of a United Methodist Pastor, Dr. Neil Epler. Neil is the Coordinating Pastor of Congregational Care on the staff of Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church.

Our transition has been orderly as Linda and Ashley have worked together during the month of August. The work and ministry of the Montgomery Prattville District will move on through the fall and with plans for 2012. The fall calendar, charge conferences, district gatherings and meetings are before us. I pray God will bless our time of district office transition. In the meantime, I know you will want to take the time to say "thank you" to Linda and "welcome" to Ashley.

Shalom,  
Philip



## Welcome to the District Office: Ashley Epler



Mrs. Ashley Epler was born in Selma, She and her husband, Dr. Neil Epler, have been married since 1982 and have 2 sons, Charles and Joel and Hayden their 3 year old grandson. Ashley was working in a doctor's office in Enterprise, Alabama when Neil was appointed to Frazer Memorial at this Annual Conference and they moved to Montgomery in June. She began working in the Montgomery Districts Office August 1<sup>st</sup>.

*"I am looking forward to meeting you and working closely with you in this capacity. Feel free to contact me anytime you need to. I am always available for a question or to help you reach the D.S. when needed. If you need to reach me at times other than office hours, my cell number is 850-266-4550 and my home number is 334-215-6796."*



### **Our office hours are:**

**Monday-Thursday** 8:30 am-4:30 pm

**Friday** 8:30 am-12:00 noon

**Email:** [mtptds@knology.net](mailto:mtptds@knology.net)

**Phone:** 334-239-7329

**Website:** [www.themontgomerydistricts.com](http://www.themontgomerydistricts.com)



September 2011						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>11</b> 5:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Trinity, Pine Level, Autaugaville  6:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Combined Worship  7:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Locust Bluff, Ivy Creek/Mt. Zion Charge, Booth	12	13	14	15	16	17
<b>18</b> 5:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Sandy Ridge Charge, Burkville  6:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Combined Service  7:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Hope Hull, Pintala, Fairview	19	<b>20</b> DEADLINE for the Harriott II Luncheon Cruise for Older Adults	21	22	23	24
<b>25</b> 5:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Cameron Ch. Chg, McKenzie, Friend- ship/Wesley Ch. Chg  5:00 PM <u>Sepulga C</u> Charge hg, Pineap- ple Charge  6:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> Combined Worship  7:00 PM <u>CC MTPT</u> : Greenville First, St. Paul/Rhodes Chapel Charge, Wesley Chape  7:00 PM <u>Georgi-</u> ana/Oak Grove Charge, Forest Home Charge	<b>26</b> Catapult Con- ference  6:00 PM <u>MTPT</u> UNITED METH- ODIST WOMEN:  	<b>27</b> Catapult Con- ference  	<b>28</b> Catapult Con- ference  	29	30	

# Know Your DS: Dr. Philip McVay

Shared from Alabama West Florida Conference: Mary Catherine Phillips 8/23/2011



The next six editions of the NewsCONNECTION will feature a district superintendent. This edition's spotlight is on [Dr. Philip McVay](#), Montgomery-Prattville District Superintendent.

## **What Brought You to the Ministry?**

Actually, [Blue Lake](#) had a strong role in my entering the ministry. After a forgettable camp when [Dan Morris](#) and I broke a window at Blue Lake with a baseball (he should have caught my good throw), something very wonderful happened! God called me into ministry while attending another camp shortly after high school graduation. Two weeks later my pastor, [Rev. Wilbur Majors](#), asked me to preach and I told everything I knew on that day. The sermon was eight minutes long! My D.S., [Roy Sublette](#), visited me a few days later, and he stated clearly the next steps of becoming a United Methodist Pastor. A year later I was appointed to pastor the Coatopa Charge at age 19.

## **The Best Book I've Read About Methodism Is:**

John Wesley's *Book of Sermons* as a classic read and anything by Adam Hamilton for a modern view.

## **Favorite Summer Vacation Destination:**

Anywhere with a beach or water as my most peaceful moments have been around water.

## **Best Summer Memory:**

Going to Hawaii with my wife Karen for our 25th anniversary last year.

## **Instead of being a minister, I almost was...**

a coach (to this day I love sports way too much!).

## **One of the goals for my district is:**

The starting of new churches, new campuses and new sites. We have gone for decades without a sustained new church start in our district. Our district incubator team has been working on a plan to start new churches, campuses and sites in greater number and with greater success.

## **What is one challenge you see for your district?**

So many of our churches are becoming smaller and older. We need to change this outcome. Every church has the opportunity to start something new to reach people for Christ not currently being reached. The context may vary but everyone can start something new. One of our rural churches started a "prayer shawl" ministry last year and has already impacted people for Christ.

## **What do you like best about serving the AWF Conference?**

Our conference has been blessed by phenomenal people like [Bishop Paul Duffey](#), [Dr. Karl Stegall](#) and [Dr. John Ed Mathison](#) that have raised the leadership bar. I perceive that another generation of great young leaders is emerging before our eyes. As I think about the strong leadership of Bishop Leeland who is developing generative ideas for ministry throughout the conference, I am confident our best days are ahead of us!

**What do you do in your free time.....the little there is!** Running and training for marathons. I have run 25 marathons and recently qualified for the Boston Marathon by 29 seconds!

**Most people don't know that I:** really like being called Philip instead of my title or role. The role does not really define me as a person. As a senior pastor and now in the role of D.S. I like to be known first as Philip and then my role. Also, I am greatly outnumbered at home. I have three wonderful daughters and my incredible wife. I do not stand a chance!

**The most important thing I've learned since my first appointment is:** Do not be afraid to think big as God is able to do amazing things in the church!

## Take a luncheon cruise with your friends on the Harriott II

Tuesday, Oct. 11 \$25/Per Person  
Reservations Required

Meet at the Boat Dock at 10:15 am

Cruise: 11:00 – 12:30

Additional afternoon touring opportunities:

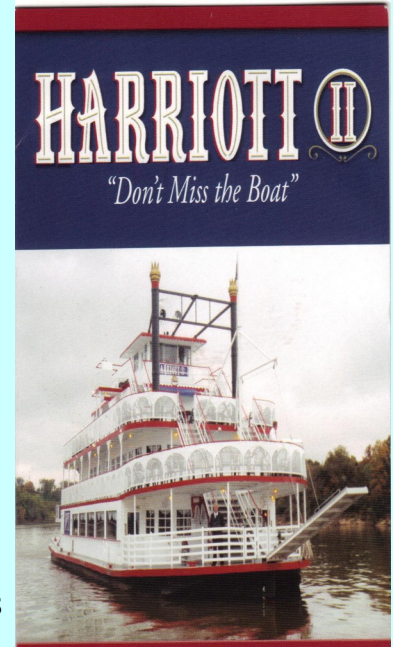
Little White House of the Confederacy  
Alabama State Archives

Trolley Ride Tour Ends 2:30pm

Sponsored by the Older Adult Task Force  
Ala-W. Fla. Conference of the UMC

Deadline: Sept. 20, 2011

Contact Sonya Murphree at FUMC Prattville Travel Ministry to make reservations  
334-365-7264



## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN:



Prattville UMC Annual Salad Supper is scheduled for Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 pm. All UMW members in the District are invited to attend this exciting event. Our wonderful cooks at Prattville First prepare an array of salads and desserts and we have the best fellowship around! Ms. Jan Love, Dean of Candler School of Theology, will be our guest speaker for the evening. She grew up in this annual conference while her father served as an elder so many of you probably already know her.

Please, let the UMW President of your unit know you are planning to attend so she can turn in a count to Prattville First – we want to prepare enough for everyone!!

## Local Church Jobs

**8/18/2011 -**

### [Student Minister - Trinity UMC \(Phenix City, AL\)](#)

Trinity United Methodist Church (Phenix City, AL) is looking for a 3/4 time student minister. This position will oversee a healthy and growing Children's Ministry and be the "hands on" leader with the Youth Ministry.

#### **Preferable Requirements:**

- A United Methodist
- Bachelor's degree
- 3 years' experience
- A strong walk with God
- A self-starter,

A passion for youth/children ministry

For a detailed job description please contact the church (334) 298-4140 or pastor, Rev. Steven Gregg [PastorSteven-Gregg@att.net](mailto:PastorSteven-Gregg@att.net)

## Local Church Needs:

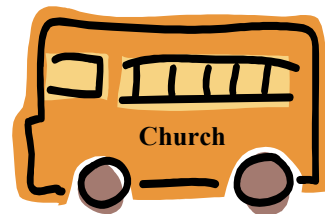
8/25/2011

Pentecost UMC is in need of 40 metal folding chairs to help furnish our Fellowship Hall. As many of you know Pentecost UMC was completely destroyed by a fire last September. We will be in our new building on October 1, 2011!!! If anyone can help us meet this need we would be grateful. Any number of chairs your church can donate will be greatly appreciated. I will be available to pick them up. Please contact me at 334-546-8176 or at [pastorbob67@yahoo.com](mailto:pastorbob67@yahoo.com)  
Thank you all in advance!

In Christ,  
Rev. Bob Bachant  
Pastor Pentecost UMC

8/14/2011

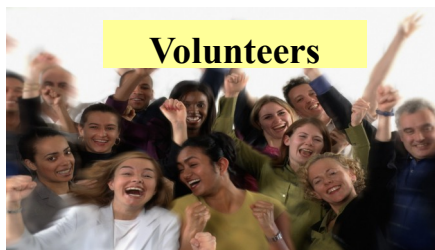
**\*\*Does your church have a van or bus for sale?** Please contact Arthur Brown, member of the Board of Trustees at FUMC Milton, at [a125b@bellsouth.net](mailto:a125b@bellsouth.net).



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### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ASAP**

You may have seen in the Montgomery Advertiser a few weeks ago that Reality and Truth Ministries was feeding the homeless nightly at Overlook Park in downtown Montgomery. As of August 14<sup>th</sup>, Overlook Park is being renovated and the event was in need of a new home to continue this crucial and powerful ministry. We, at Dexter Avenue United Methodist, prayerfully considered this wonderful opportunity to delve into the work for Christ and as of August 15<sup>th</sup>, we will be teaming with Reality and Truth to continue this much needed ministry in downtown Montgomery. As you can imagine there are many issues which have worked to derail this ministry, but God is good and has put the pieces in place so that we can put our faith into action as a local church through the broader support of other servants in the River Region. With the ministry occurring each night of the week from 5pm-6pm, we are in need of many volunteers who would be willing to help serve meals to our brothers and sisters in Christ. If you are interested in serving, cooking, or simply committing yourself to prayer for this missional opportunity, please contact Gail Pelt (phone: 334-451-4494 or email: [GPelt@alfains.com](mailto:GPelt@alfains.com)). We need several volunteers for the evening meal each night, especially weekend nights, and would appreciate any individuals or groups that would feel called to commit on a regular basis. There is a vast ministry field in Montgomery and we are hoping that this partnership is the one small step to show the love of Christ to our community through the local church.



In Him,  
Tony McCullough  
*Minister*  
Dexter Avenue United Methodist Church  
(Email) [tmccullough74@hotmail.com](mailto:tmccullough74@hotmail.com)  
(Cell) 334.301.2415

# MTPT White Christmas Children's Home Banquet

**Date:** Thursday, October 20, 2011

**Time:** 06:30 PM -

**Location:** Prattville First United Methodist Church

**Cost:** \$10.00



A delicious meal; entertainment; inspirational speakers and a wonderful night of fellowship will be the flavor of the night!

Nursery is provided for infant ~ 5-years old (must reserve spot in appropriate nursery when making reservations for the meal)

We will need your reservations in by Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup> in order to prepare for the evening. We also need to know if you require a nursery. When you make your reservation we need to know what church and how many will be coming and, if you need a nursery, how many children and what age.

You may make your reservations by calling Ashley at 334-239-7329, or by using the form below, or by e-mailing me at [mtptds@knology.net](mailto:mtptds@knology.net) (If you e-mail me and I do not respond – I DID NOT GET IT – try again.)

Plan now to attend and bring a friend or two!

## **Soul Care:**

**A special retreat for clergy (Elders, deacons, local pastors, and provisional and associate members) and their spouses. Soul Care is designed to refresh, reconnect and renew participants:**

·**Refresh.** The average pastor works 60 hours a week. Ministry is exhausting work! Soul Care gives participants the opportunity to renew bodies, minds, bodies and souls through rest and relaxation.

·**Reconnect.** Many pastors feel isolated and alone. Soul Care gives participants the opportunity to reconnect with God and other clergy through meditation and fellowship.

**Renew.** Do you remember the passion you felt for ministry when you first answered God's call? Soul Care gives participants the opportunity to renew the call through theological reflection and prayer. Soul Care begins Sunday, October 2 with a special celebration and cookout. Blue Lake is providing free accommodations to all participants Sunday night and First United Methodist Church, Brewton is providing dinner. It will be a night you will not want to miss!

Monday morning will be a time for rest, fellowship, and contemplation including options to ride motorcycles together, golf, play tennis, walk or bike around the trails of Blue Lake, visit the Solon Dixon Nature Center, enjoy the lake, hike to the streams, learn about stewardship or wellness or talk to one of the spiritual directors available to you during the Soul Care retreat.

The remainder of our retreat will consist of four (4) sessions with Dr. Roberta Bondi and plenty of time for fellowship, rest, worship, prayer, and reflection.

The cost for Soul Care is \$130 per person which includes the program and materials, accommodations at Oakwood (double occupancy) and all meals. If space becomes available, partial or non-resident fees will be determined. It is our hope that everyone would stay at Blue Lake and participate in the entire event.

Click **HERE** to register. Deadline to register is August 31.

Questions? Contact Pat Luna [patluna@charter.net](mailto:patluna@charter.net)

Montgomery ~ Prattville Spouses  
Blog Spot - Mrs. Karen McVay  
<http://mpspouses.blogspot.com/>



**We're on the web**  
[www.themontgomerydistricts.com](http://www.themontgomerydistricts.com)



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**Montgomery AL 36117**

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**Email:** [mtptds@knology.net](mailto:mtptds@knology.net)

## Need of Children's Musical

8/5/2011

First United Methodist Church in Clanton is in need of the children's musical, "American Ideal- A Children's Musical about Humility" created by Janet McMahan-Wilson; Arranged by Ted Wilson. We are looking for the Split Track Accompaniment CD, 8-10 Choral books and 10-15 Listening CD's. If anyone has this musical and is willing to let us borrow it, please contact

Chanel Bingham at [children@clantonfumc.org](mailto:children@clantonfumc.org) or  
205.755.0490. Thank you.

Chanel Bingham  
Children's Minister  
First United Methodist Church  
Clanton, AL  
205-755-0490