

2018 REPORT
(page 289-293, 2018 Arkansas Conference Journal)
Commission on Archives and History

The purpose of the Arkansas Conference Commission on Archives and History is to promote and care for the historical interests of History states: “Our understanding of our past helps us envision the future.” For, since the time of cavemen around a campfire, stories have brought us together and have helped us discover who and whose we are. Sharing stories has inspired mankind to see things in different ways and to try doing things in new ways. Stories have encouraged us to persevere through hardships and disappointments, and they have revitalized us when we were burned out. Stories in the Old Testament sustained the Israelites in exile, and vivid parables by the greatest of teachers, Jesus, help us remember what is important in our lives. Today, more than ever, we need stories of faith and of God-moments to “help bring people to some kind of ‘felt’ experience which plummets them into the love of God” (Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary, General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church).

Listed below are ways the Conference can measure the progress of its Commission on Archives and History, supported by apportioned funds:

Provide quality facilities with trained and enthusiastic personnel

Open to the public every Thursday and by appointment, the UM Archives of the Arkansas Conference, located in the library at Hendrix College, are available without charge to anyone wishing to do research on topics related to the United Methodist Church and its predecessor organizations. Two archivists, Marcia Crossman and Carole Teague, work independently and together to assist researchers, and both archivists are available by phone, e-mail, or appointment to help persons unable to come into the archives during regular hours. Both archivists have prior experience as employees within the Arkansas Conference and are well-versed in the terminology and organizational connections of the United Methodist Church. The UM Museum of Arkansas, located in First United Methodist Church, Little Rock, is open for walk-in visits each Wednesday and at other times by appointment. The Arkansas Conference is one of the few conferences that maintains a museum to preserve and display objects relating to our Methodist history. In early 2017 Shakeelah Rahman was appointed curator of the museum. With a master’s degree in public history from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, she brings a very professional and creative perspective to conservation and exhibition activities for the collection. Using the contemporary museum software PastPerfect, she has cataloged over 250 church plates. Additionally, the 1935-1937 Pearle McCain Diary has been transcribed by an intern from the Master’s Degree Program in Public History at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s History Department. (Dr. McCain, an Arkansas native, was a missionary to China and later to Japan.) Notably, in 2017 Martha Sowell of First United Methodist Church, Little Rock, created the Historic Arkansas Methodist Museum Endowment Fund to help support the work of the museum. The initial gift will be invested, and annual distributions will be used for essential operations of the museum. Such caring and generosity help this important ministry of memory to continue its work. The museum board will continue to seek contributions to build the endowment.