

Jim Lane

Pepper's Story

As the lay leader of Levy United Methodist Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas, I, along with our pastor, David Bush, decided to offer a 25-week study called Witness.

Our group had eight persons, six women and two men. We ranged in age from a single 23-year-old to the two of us who are grandparents. One married couple participated and one person was not a member of the church. Some of us were life-long United Methodists and one person was very new to the UMC.

But I want to tell you about Pepper. She is the mother of two, the youngest less than a year old when we started.

She and her husband joined our church when they were transferred into our area by his career.

Pepper admitted to a Bible illiteracy when we began. She excited all of us with her eagerness to get into God's Word and to learn to share her faith. She was so open and curious. She would ask extremely probing questions that would make us all stop and do some searching. We all helped her learn her

way around in the Bible. She finally bought a new version with a tab index. Pepper wanted to know about everything!

During the course of the year, she got deeply involved with our church's ministry with children and was elected as the Children's Coordinator at our last Charge Conference.

Like many churches in our area, our church has made a decision to change the children's graded Sunday School to a new concept called "Rotation Sunday School." Pepper and her committee visited other churches already into the program and they are almost ready to launch at our church. She so excited our Administrative Council about it that they gave her an ovation and no negative votes when she presented it.

She and another young mother have now begun a Mother's Day Out program two days each week. It will be fully licensed by the state within a year. Pepper has had to enroll for some graduate hours required for licensure.

We had been talking in our *Witness* group about those "Ah ha!" moments when we know that the Holy Spirit has come upon us and we really feel the presence of God's holy angels around us. We had also discussed the importance of everyone being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

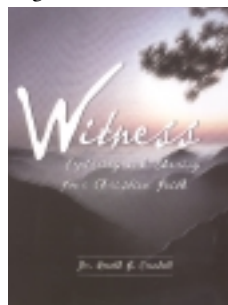
I received an e-mail from Pepper one day a couple of months ago in which she shared with me that when she was

Witness

Witness is a new, exciting resource for the training of persons in the skills and techniques of sharing their faith. Developed by the Foundation for Evangelism and the General Board of Discipleship, it is designed around the concept of hiking the Appalachian Trail. The twenty-five week study is divided into five trails: 1) "Exploring God's Purpose," 2) "Up the Mountain with Jesus," 3) "Into Life in the Holy Spirit," 4) "The Church and its Witness," and 5) "My Life as Christ's Witness."

At each session the group gathers around a make-believe campfire to discuss the week's journey during the "Trail Talk" part of the session. There are assignments each week which include Bible study and a recommended "Action Assignment." For example, one assignment is to visit with others about your faith journey: "During the week ask at least one person, 'Have you ever really wondered who Jesus is?' Encourage conversation that includes more than a yes or no answer." There is a video that introduces each of the five trails and one that closes the study. Like those hiking the real Appalachian Trail—we had ice cream at the halfway point!

More details are available at
<http://www.evangelize.org/news/Witness.htm>
To order, see pg. 19.



sending an e-mail to another of her planning group for the new Mother's Day Out program, when it suddenly occurred to her to call the program the "Little Disciples Mother Day Out" program. Her dream is not to just warehouse children, but to train them in Christian discipleship. Tears came to her eyes as she experienced God's Holy Spirit warming her heart and giving her a real "Ah ha!" moment.

Witness: Exploring and Sharing Your Christian Faith has that kind of transforming power. It is not just another Bible Study—it is a life-changing experience for those who are called to share their faith.

It surely did change lives at Levy

United Methodist Church around our weekly campfire, and the journey continues as we each witness to our faith in a new way.

It was such a joyful experience for me to see the deepening faith and trust of my trail hikers. Each met many hazards along the trail, in their personal and professional lives. But now they meet them with a new trust and assurance in the one who will catch them when they stumble. They found themselves trusting more than they ever had before, and willing to take on new unknown trails. They discovered within themselves a new

spirit of Holy Boldness when they now meet folks at crossroads in their lives.

You do not need any kind of special

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training to lead a "Witness" group. I have developed a set of lesson plans that you can find at

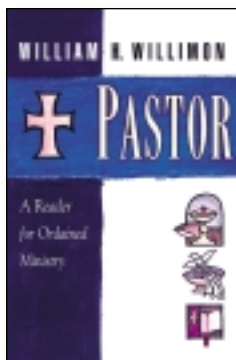
<http://www.jimlane.org/witness.html>

"Witness" takes you where others have failed to go—along a trail that is at times very difficult, at others times a downhill run, and at other times a place for when you just want to sit around a warm campfire and talk about how God has met you at every bend and rock in the trail! ☐



Jim Lane is lay leader of Levy United Methodist Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

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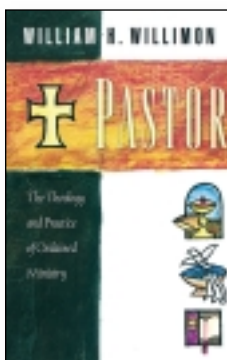
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