

# SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL WISDOM

## Upcoming Summer Sessions

The School of Essential Wisdom is offering two more Thursday sessions @ 11:00 AM **FREE** of charge. That's right: no fee for Summer 2023! But you will need to register your attendance at the link on: <https://www.upumc.org/our-ministries/upacademy.html>, if you haven't already.



July 20: Rev. John Mollet Texas Methodist Foundation

Rev. Mollet will offer a guide to help us through important end-of-life and legacy decisions. His topic:

**"Putting Your House in Order"**

**PLUS a Complimentary Catered Lunch for all Attendees!**



August 17: Detective Angelica Martinez and Detective Christopher Love

Detectives Martinez and Love are members of the Dallas Police Department Financial Crimes Unit. They will address the topics of:

**"Internet Safety" and "Scams & Fraud"**

Full catered lunch available for in-person attendees: \$14.00



## S.E.W. FALL TERM PREVIEW THURSDAYS, 11:00 A.M.



**SEPTEMBER**

C.S. Lewis Meets John Wesley

**OCTOBER**

In Search of the Apostles

**NOVEMBER**

Rediscovering the Holy Land: from the Persians to the Romans

## BIBLICAL MASTERPIECES BIBLE STUDIES

SUNDAYS, 5-6 PM

**SEPTEMBER 10 -  
OCTOBER 1**

Luke's Story: from Bethlehem to Rome  
*The Gospel of Luke & Acts of the Apostles - Robert Thetford*

**OCTOBER 8 -  
NOVEMBER 19**

Life-Long Lessons from Ephesians  
*- Bishop James M. Stanton, Episcopal Bishop (Ret.)*

FIND US ONLINE: To view detailed information about our Senior Life Ministry, or read current and past issues of the Spotlight newsletter, please visit our website at [www.upumc.org/seniors](http://www.upumc.org/seniors).



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Summer is upon us. For kids, it is much anticipated because it is full of swimming, WORD, and most importantly no school. For us adults, we sometimes dread those long hot days. If you are one of those (even if you are not), I challenge you to look at summer differently.

Look at summer as a season that gives forth an abundance of life, joy, and renewal. As the sun shines brightly, casting its warm rays upon the earth, nature awakens in a glorious display of colors and sounds. The vibrant hues of blooming flowers, the melodious songs of birds, and the gentle rustling of leaves in the breeze all seem to proclaim the magnificence of God's creation. In this season of abundance, hope springs forth, reminding us of the divine presence that permeates every aspect of our lives.

I also see summer as a time of growth and transformation. Just as seeds planted in the springtime burst forth into beautiful flowers and bountiful harvests, the summer season offers us an opportunity to cultivate our own spiritual growth. The longer days invite us to explore the outdoors, engage in activities that nourish our souls, and connect with the natural world. Through this connection, we witness firsthand the intricate balance and wisdom woven into the fabric of creation, inspiring us to seek spiritual growth and deepen our relationship with God.

Overall, summer stands as a testament to God's hope in the world. It is a season of life, growth, and abundance that invites us to embrace the beauty of creation, cultivate our spiritual journey, and recognize the divine love that surrounds us. Through the warmth of the sun, the melodies of nature, and the bountiful harvest, we are reminded that God's love and presence are woven into the very fabric of our existence, urging us to live with gratitude, faith, and a deep sense of awe and wonder. So, take this summer as an opportunity to nourish your soul.

May peace be with each and everyone of you, until we meet again.

*Mary Jo McCurley*

Mary Jo McCurley  
Lay Director of Senior Life Ministry

Maryam Mathis, Editor | Trey West, Layout & Printing | Contact Maryam at 214-437-6311 or [mmathis@upumc.org](mailto:mmathis@upumc.org)

University Park UMC | 4024 Caruth Blvd., Dallas, TX 75225 | (214) 368-1435 | [mjmccurley@upumc.org](mailto:mjmccurley@upumc.org)

## Robert Rhoads Named Distinguished Alumni of TAMU Commerce

On April 29, 2023, Texas A & M Commerce held an Awards Gala recognizing six new Distinguished Alumni. This honor "has been presented... for the past 56 years to an 'elite few' who exhibit extraordinary distinction in their profession or life's work. The award also recognizes recipients for excellent service to the university..." One of this year's honorees is Robert Rhoads, a long-time member of UPUMC.



Robert grew up in Bogata, in Red River County. After graduating high school, he matriculated to Texas A&M Commerce, which at the time was called East Texas State University. He attributes his passion for educating young adults to two professors who mentored him at TAMU Commerce: Dr. Dorothy Ingram and Dr. Fred Tarpley. After graduating with a double major in American Literature and Physical Education, Robert became a teacher at Highland Park High School.

Robert speaks very fondly of his alma mater, founded in 1889 as East Texas State Teachers College. He emphasizes that the original mission statement of the college, "Educating the rural youth from northeast Texas," has remained a constant, vital part of the vision of TAMU Commerce. Passionate about making higher education accesible to all the youth of north Texas, Robert devotes much of his time now to serving on the Foundation Board of Texas A&M Commerce, evaluating candidates' applications for Regency Scholarships and Honors College Scholarships.

In addition, Robert has worked for over three decades with the State Fair of Texas Big Tex Scholarship Program. Each year, his team raises funds for graduates of six Dallas ISD high schools in the Fair Park area: Roosevelt, Lincoln, Madison, North Dallas, Woodrow Wilson, and Irma Rangel. Robert serves as a selector in the process, which includes grading essays in student applications. This past year, the Big Tex team awarded over \$1.3 million in scholarships.

When asked what advice he would share with young people who are beginning their journey through higher education, Robert says: "I would tell them to be open to new ideas, and remember that their paths may change, and that's OK. They should embrace the change." This advice comes from Robert's own career experience: He started out as a high school teacher, moved from there into the world of banking, and ultimately became a successful home builder for almost four decades.



Robert's wife Susan was an educator throughout her career, serving as librarian at Highland Park High School. Early in their marriage, the couple attended a Presbyterian church. Then one evening at a party, Carmen and Randy Emery invited the Rhoads to visit their neighborhood Methodist church, and the rest is history. After almost 30 years at UPUMC, Susan passed away in June of 2020.

As a newly minted TAMUC Distinguished Alumni, Robert continues to spend much of his time volunteering. He not only fundraises for Scottish Rite Hospital, he also keeps his hand in a select number of home building projects. In addition, Robert's passion for collecting classic cars is high on his list of leisure time fun.



## BOOK REVIEW

by Sharon Christen



Kristin Hannah's book, *The Four Winds*, is on the United Women in Faith reading list in the category for Social Action; but don't let that scare you. It is an excellent overview of our nation's history during the years of the dust bowl and the story of Elsa, a woman who finds reservoirs of courage she didn't know she had.

When the book opens in 1921 Elsa is the 25-year-old daughter of a well-to-do family in a small town in the Texas panhandle. She has been treated as an invalid due to an unnamed illness in her childhood. With two beautiful and talented sisters and unloving parents, she faces a grim future as a spinster. Secretly she begins seeing Rafe, the 18-year-old son of Tony and Rosa Martinelli, emigrants from Sicily. Of course, you know what happens. Elsa gets pregnant and her parents disown her and deposit her at the Martinelli's wheat farm.

Fast forward to 1934. Elsa is now the mother of two children, Loreda and Ant (a nickname for Anthony), a beloved daughter-in-law, and a loving wife to Rafe. But the dust and drought and unbearable heat continue to devastate the land and the people. Not able to deal with this new reality, Rafe disappears and is never heard from again. The author subtly suggests that farmers were the last to be helped because FDR had been elected with the support of large landowners. When help did come from the government, farmers were too proud to be on the government dole and unwilling to change their farming techniques to protect the land – and their livelihoods!

According to Wikipedia, this was a period from the 30s to the 40's that greatly damaged the ecology and agriculture of the American and Canadian prairies. Aggressive farming techniques, combined with drought and high winds, led to massive dust storms that drove thousands from their homes and created a large migrant population of poor rural Americans. By 1934, 35 million acres of formerly cultivated land had been rendered useless for farming. Another 125 million acres (3/4 the size of Texas) was losing its topsoil.

To survive, Elsa takes her children and moves to California. Millions of others from Georgia, Alabama, Kansas and Arkansas join them. Things don't improve in California as they are forced to become migrant workers picking cotton. The state is overwhelmed; Elsa and others must prove residency for a year before they can access any state or federal funding for migrants. Eventually, they become part of the efforts to unionize the farm workers. The ending will surprise you. I will stop there, hoping that this review will encourage you to check out Hannah's book to learn what eventually happens to Elsa, Loreda and Ant.

### UPUMC Delegation at the North Texas Annual Conference



Old friends find each other at the Conference: Carmen Emery, Dianne Boone, Blair Thompson-White, and Christy Baker



(L>R) Kim Brannon, Jennifer Scott, Joe Stobaugh, Jillian Bunn, Christy Baker, Mary Jo McCurley, Carmen Emery, Emma Williams

### Christ UMC Plano June 11 - 13



Henry Williams, 6 (son of Rev. Emma Williams), blesses a retiree: "You are a child of God, and you are a blessing."