

Spiritual Formation for Adults



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OPEN FORUM

Thanks for devoting an entire edition of the *Circuit Rider* to worship, the most important discipline Christians do.

A big concern of mine is there seems to be a fine line between worship and entertainment in our churches these days as many participants feel the need to applaud individuals and groups who provide "special music" even in traditional services. Members of congregations who applaud begin to see themselves as persons who go to church to enjoy worship and those who provide musical leadership tend to see themselves as performers. I also believe applause has a way of diverting our attention from the Holy One we come seeking to find and worship.

Merlin Ackerson
Keokuk, IA

"Where Can I Find Methodist Worship?" by the Tongan pastor, Sione Tu'uta (Jan/Feb/2005) rang several bells for me. As a missionary for the Methodist Church (before we became "United"), serving in Mexico, I worshipped in rustic little chapels in far-flung villages of pueblos, and found a oneness in Jesus Christ beyond language and cultural differences through the hymns and the Bible. It was like instant communication; instant identification.

That oneness was so profound that I married a Mexican pastor and seminary teacher. We taught and lived in the predecessor of the Seminary in Mexico City where Sione Tu'uta had his experience in 2001.

Earlier on furlough, I had studied at the Graduate School at Drew University at the time when another Tongan, the Rev. Sione (John) Havea, was at Drew, and we

started a friendship which was renewed in 1981 when my husband, Ariel Zambrano and I were able to attend the World Methodist Conference in Hawaii.

So I am thankful for the Open Forum which serves as a locus for "family reunions" like these.

Mary Fitzpatrick Zambrano
Claremont, CA

The January/February edition of *Circuit Rider* is the most challenging, upbeat, relevant issue of *Circuit Rider* in many years — and that is not at all meant to disparage what went before this edition.

The great Gospel sound comes when I join you, with surprise and joy, as you describe ways in which the United Methodist Church is rethinking worship, with prayer, concern and hard work. Please keep that movement going! You have already enlivened my sense of the power of the United Methodist Church to serve the hungry souls who keep appearing at our church doors!

Wesley Sheffield
Nokomis, FL

The *Circuit Rider* 2004 Index is available upon request by calling (615) 749-6751 or email: nselah@umpublishing.org

The Hope of Africa

The November/December 2004 issue of *Circuit Rider* (Africa—God's Blessing), was devoted to the blessings and challenges of God's work in Africa. It is an issue full of hope! If you missed it in November, you can read the articles now at www.circuitrider.com.

Editor's note: Our thanks to Rev. Blythe Stanton in Auburn, Washington, for pointing out that the map of Africa on p. 6 is out of date. Instead of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it includes the previous name of the country (Zaire.) *Circuit Rider* regrets the error. Detailed, current maps of Africa are available at www.sitesatlas.com. The site is free, however permission must be obtained to make copies.

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—Barbara Kingsolver

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—Richard Foster

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