

### Profile: Ezri Gomez

Ezri Gomez has been an integral part of UPUMC's summer intern program for six years now. It was at the invitation of Richard Hearne that Ezri first came to us while he was still a student at Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso. After LPI, he chose to study at Centenary College, from which he will graduate next spring with a degree in Business Administration and a minor in Computer Science.

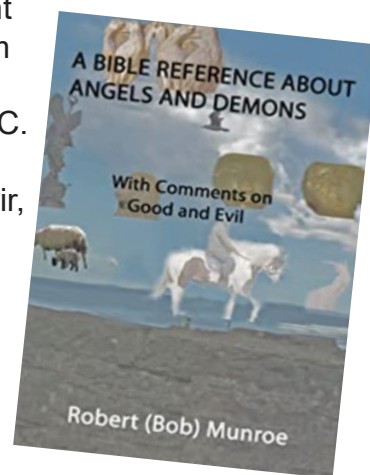
Ezri has been busy this summer helping lead our youth in weekly service projects. They have ranged from painting picnic tables at Wesley Rankin to unloading groceries for the food pantry at Christ Foundry. "About 70 families were fed the day we helped stock the food pantry," Ezri said with a smile. He has been active in

the Project Transformation summer programs as well. When his workday ends, Ezri spends time with his "other families" here at UPUMC. This summer, those include the Hearnese, the Hodges, and the Manleys. When it comes to his passion for mission and service work, Ezri credits the influence of his dad: "He always told us it is better to give than to receive, and that we should pass our blessings on to others." Ezri's father teaches math to middle-schoolers in Juarez, where his mother is a kindergarten teacher. In addition to the impact his parents have had in his formation, Ezri makes the point that his growth as a person and a Christian has been greatly influenced and strengthened by the people in this church. "I feel as if I have a second family at UPUMC. To have this kind of support has been a 'game changer' for me. I am very blessed."

When asked about his post-college plans, Ezri explained thoughtfully that he understands the time for decisions is upon him, and that he is praying about what direction his future will take once he embarks on a career. Even though decision-making can sometimes be overwhelming, Ezri says he "tries not to worry too much about the future." He believes that in spite of how much negative energy there appears to be around us, there are still "enough good people in the world." In a kind of profession of faith in God's steadfast love, Ezri frequently ends his prayers by telling his heavenly Father: "Hey, you got it, big man!"

### Bob Munroe's New Book

Fifty-three years ago, Bob Munroe wrote a book about Angels and Demons. A couple of years ago, he presented its content to the Senior Life audience. Now, Bob has made it available on Amazon, in Kindle format for \$6.00 and in paperback for \$8.00. The Angels and Demons title will be for sale (@\$8), and Bob will be available to sign copies, at the Welcome Home event on Aug. 22 after the 11am service. All net royalties will be donated to UPUMC. Bob will also have on hand copies of his memoir, An Engineer's Space Race Stories and More (@\$17). Cash or check only please.



### WELCOME HOME SUNDAY AUGUST 22

All are invited to kick off fall with our welcome home Sunday celebration on August 22. Join us for worship at 8:30am or 11am followed by lunch, fun and fellowship. We hope you will join us, so add this date to your calendar today!

## UPUMC SENIORS

# SENIOR *Spotlight*

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Today I parked in the "Pickwick Parking Lot" at the church because there was no Weekday School or other children's activities on this day. Thus, no human or vehicular traffic congestion to deal with. I'm being mindful of the Covid-19 Delta variant that may yet be around, so I'm avoiding crowds unless necessary (and then I wear a mask). And between my truck and the church door there was a mockingbird totally oblivious, it seemed, to any crowd or lack of crowd or anything else, just singing non-stop like crazy. Somewhere. I thought maybe I could spot it. In the scrubby little oak tree shooting up out of the jasmine bedding? No; the singing was coming from higher up than that. Over by the building. On a gutter, maybe? No; higher still. Looking up to the rooflines and where they all meet above the atrium sits a cupola. I didn't see him anywhere on the cupola, but above the cupola, stands a simple cross. And above the cross, perched on the tip-top of it, a mockingbird with its head tilted back and singing its unmistakable mish-mash of other birds' songs to the highest heavens.

Some people don't, but I like mockingbirds. I like the songs they sing. They're called mockingbirds because – not having a typical song of their own like most birds – their song is an imitation of other birds' songs. They mimic the high-pitched EEE-EEE-EEE-chirrup-chirrup-chirrup EEE-EEE-EEE-chirrup-chirrup-chirrup of a sparrow, the CAW-CAW-CAW of a crow, the GRACKLE of a grackle, the TRILL of an oriole, and the descending slide whistle CHEEEER-CHEEEER-CHEEEER-rup-rup-rup of a cardinal. Sometimes they replicate the WARBLE of a warbler, the cheer-UP cheer-UP of a robin, the ERK-ERK-ERK of a chickadee, the WEEP-WEED of flycatchers, the CHIR-CHIR-eer-a-REEP of a thrush, and even the COO-ing of doves. Their loud songs can be an unwelcome disturbance to sleep when sung at night, and they can also be quite aggressive if you get near their nest. But their songs! Man-o-man, they're the masters of taking other birds' single patterns and composing them together into a veritable symphony of birdsong. And this one was singing its little head off.

You can speculate that the bird up above the cross was attempting to attract a mate. And maybe it was. I've heard that humans do that, too, with tweets on Twitter. But I like to think that bird was just singing the way he was because he could. Is it too much of a stretch to think so? What I do know is that it brightened my day. It made me think of what "songs" I need to sing today, and every day, and how doing so might brighten someone else's day. You know what I mean by singing your song, don't you? Anything you're good at; something you enjoy doing; something that might lift someone else's spirits – even if only a little bit.

There are 107 sets of questions and answers in the classic Church of England Westminster Catechism of 1646. The first (in modern English) reads, "Question: What is the main purpose of humans? Answer: The main purpose of humans is to glorify God and enjoy God forever." Today you can say you were informed (or reminded) of this fact by something you read. I can say, "A little birdie told me so."

- Stephen

THE UP ACADEMY  
and  
THE SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL WISDOM

This *may* be the first time you have heard of the Academy. But it has been taking shape ever since our new young minister, Joe Stobaugh, met with Stephen Fleming and me to discuss our ministry to senior adults. Joe expressed his desire to emphasize education throughout the various ministries of the church with the Biblical directive ‘Love the Lord with Thy Mind.’

As a result, when Stephen and I took a look at our existing senior life programs, we realized how closely our ministry’s initiatives resonated with Joe’s vision. We already had several activities underway that fit naturally under that umbrella; we even had a couple more waiting in the wings. So we established the UP ACADEMY last year. The ACADEMY is the overarching concept under which five ministries are currently operating. They are:

- The School of Essential Wisdom
- The Senior SPOTLIGHT newsletter
- Podcasts of conversations with members of UPUMC
- EQUIP, an annual conference for church leaders involved in Senior Life Ministry
- The University Park Press

These five programs each play a vital role in the overall Senior Life Ministry. You are already familiar with our *Senior Spotlight* newsletter, and you probably read in last month’s *Spotlight* about the collection of stories, *I Witness*, published by the UP Press.

For several months, Stephen and I have been interviewing members of the church for the sole purpose of getting to know each other. We now have the first 20 podcast interviews appearing on our church web-site and at upumc.podbean.com. Most recent additions include conversations with Dub Newman, Diana Wilson, Bill Strother, Arlene Brantley, and Maryam Mathis.

EQUIP 2022 is set for January 25, 2022. This is our third Conference and our emphasis this year is Leadership. Featured speakers are: Greg Bustin, George Pearson, Connie Calhoun-Amox, and Dr. Bill Hendricks of the Giftedness Institute.

Our first session of the School of Essential Wisdom was a huge success. Fifty-seven people enrolled and viewed the program via ZOOM at 11 a.m. on Thursday or the recording aired at 8 p.m. that night. The summer session has been enthusiastically received so far and promises terrific theatrical performances by some of our members throughout August. Stephen is Dean of the School.

REMEMBER: beginning in September, our Fall Semester of the School of Essential Wisdom will feature the following speakers:

- September – Mary Jacobs – THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF JOURNALISM
- October – Brian Daniel – OUR ECONOMY IN FLUX
- November – Bill Matthews – THANKSGIVING SQUARE: THE ECUMENICAL PRESENCE
- December – Monsignor Don Fisher – CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS FOR A NEW DAY

GO TO THE UPUMC WEBSITE AND REGISTER EARLY! [www.upumc.org/upacademy](http://www.upumc.org/upacademy)

IN MEMORIAM

The following message was received from Mary Clutts:

Dear UPUMC,

I want to let you know that my Dad, James A. (Jim) Clutts, FAIA died on May 28, 2021. He and my Mom, Alva Clutts, were long time members of the church. He was a former Sunday School Teacher, Usher, and Chair of the Administrative Board. My parents were past members of the Wedding Ring Class and the Mr. and Mrs. Class. Although Dad was not active in the past few years, he held the church close to his heart. As the designer and architect of many churches in North Texas, he counted commissions with Bonham, Commerce, Dallas, Mesquite, Mount Pleasant, Richardson, and Tyler among his favorites. His obituary can be found here:

<https://obits.dallasnews.com/us/obituaries/dallasmorningnews/name/james-clutts-obituary?pid=199330569>

Poems & Prose

Spring Lemonade (excerpts)

In late April they spread manure on the fields  
the same week the lilac hedges bloom,  
so the nose gets one of those symphonic challenges  
that requires you to stand out on the porch and breathe.  
The earth goes around a corner, the dresser drawers slide out  
and naturally, we change our clothes,  
putting the long underwear away,  
taking out the short-sleeve shirts, ....  
Last night the sunset was so pink and swollen  
the sky looked like it had gotten an infection.  
We were sitting on the lawn and sipping lemonade.  
Inflamed clouds were throbbing in the fevered light....  
And the smell of lilacs and manure blew out of the fields  
with such complexity and sweetness, we closed our eyes.  
It had nothing to do with being good, or smart, or choosing right.  
It had to do with being lucky —  
something none of us had ever imagined.

by Tony Hoagland  
from *What Narcissism Means To Me*

I am attracted to this poem because of its lush and sensuous imagery that succeeds in drawing me in, causing me to feel I am, or have been, sitting on the lawn, sipping lemonade, with these people, observing the incredible colors of the sky and the complex aroma of the scents of lilacs and manure blending together. And at the ecstatic height of this sensual experience – right at the end – the author gives credit to something totally beyond our deserving of it. He calls it “luck.” I call it God’s creation and prevenient grace. I believe those who call it luck can be drawn closer to God and a healthy spirituality without naming it “God.” Perhaps one day they will. For now, it is a moment of awe and wonder and joy and mystery. That’s not bad place to begin a journey deeper into the love of God. – Stephen Fleming

Notes from the Library

The Fiske Miles Library is open for business. During the summer we are here on Tuesdays from 9 AM until 2 PM. Beginning on August 11th, we will shift library hours to Wednesdays. On Wednesdays we also plan to participate in Brown Bag Book Club, scheduled from 1 – 2 PM, live and in person in the Caldwell Room. For your convenience, the Fiske Miles Library is set up for self- check-out. When we are not here, you are welcome to browse the shelves and check out using the instructions posted at the circulation desk. Here are a few of the new titles added in the last month: Can Only One Religion Be True? (a dialogue with Knitter and Netland), Documents for the Study of the Gospels (Cartlidge and Dungan), Deep and Simple: A Spiritual Path for Modern Times (Lozoff), Lord, Teach Us to Pray: A Study of Personal Prayer (Margie Burger), and When Grief Breaks Your Heart (James Moore). And, **coming soon**: new fiction by authors like David Baldacci, Sandra Brown, Mary Higgins Clark, and Clive Cussler.

