

**FQ**  
**NEWS**  
**& NOTES**  
**FOR**  
**FAITH**  
**QUEST**



THEME:  
 DIGITAL  
 TECHNOLOGY  
 & THE CHURCH  
 (add to Tab B in  
 your Leader Notebook)

## Welcome to a New Millennium

*A message from Betsey Heavner, Director, FaithQuest*

“For most United Methodist churches, the year 2000 was not so different from 1999, despite overhyped fears of the Y2K bug and the apocalypse” is the opening line of the year-end wrap-up article from United Methodist News Service (UMNS # 564). The article goes on to say that, while daily life seems the same, there has been an **undercurrent of wrestling with major issues.**

Congregations have filled out charge conference reports and, for the most part, things seem the same. The numbers are slightly different; church leaders continue in their roles. FaithQuest groups are starting

to notice the “undercurrent” of change in congregations and in the world. Our challenge as people of faith is to listen deeply for the voice of God so that among many issues and undercurrents we follow God’s lead.

One undercurrent building at warp speed is the digital revolution. Change in this area is so rapid that equipment and knowledge improve (or at least change!) weekly. Even the language we use to describe what is happening is constantly being modified! This issue of FaithQuest News focuses on the digital world.

THE LORD SAID, “FORGET WHAT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO! DON’T THINK ABOUT THE PAST. I AM CREATING SOMETHING NEW. THERE IT IS! DO YOU SEE IT?”  
 (ISAIAH 43:18, CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION)

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Our guest writer is Donna Gaither, director of The Learning Center at the General Board of Discipleship. Donna recently completed a study leave during which she explored the implications of digital technology and distance learning for the church and for the General Board of Discipleship.



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## Changing Technology & the Church

*by Donna Gaither*

There is a current TV commercial showing persons standing in a store holding signs that read “CD,” “DVD,” “MP3,” etc. I confess that I don’t even know what all those initials mean! What I do know is that there is a technology revolution profoundly impacting society, and the church must quickly and thoughtfully decide how to respond.

I see these new technologies not as threats or frivolous



toys, but as tools for making disciples. Used correctly, contemporary technologies such as the Internet, interactive video, and distance

learning can do for our century what the printing press did for Martin Luther and other leaders during the Protestant reformation—allow us to quickly and effectively reach a larger, more diverse audience with our message. To use these new technologies to spread the gospel, we need to focus on three things:

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### 1. Focus on Results

Decisions about technology should be based on the church's mission and the specific results we hope to gain. Technology should not drive our decisions. Before any equipment is purchased or any project using new technology is begun, ask these questions:

- How will this technology help us make disciples?
- What do we want to happen as a result of this action?
- How will we measure the results of this project?

- How will we know if this technology/project enhances faith formation of individuals and of our congregation?
- How will this project impact our present work and resources?

### 2. Focus on Values

It is tempting to let a desire to be on the "cutting edge" drive our decisions about using technology. But the key question is, Can new methodologies and technologies help us support the spiritual formation of individuals and congregations? Using technology does not necessarily negate values such as transformation, renewal, communication, connection, and the formation of community. Using technology can actually enhance these values. Lay and clergy persons are already using the Web to connect with each other. There are chat rooms, book study groups, covenant prayer groups, ministry websites — all focused on building up the body of Christ.

### 3. Focus on Learning

One of the most exciting opportunities that the new technologies offer is the ability to learn over distance. Sharing information through email, videoconferencing, computer-based instruction, online courses — all of these offer new ways to increase skills and knowledge. The possibility exists to build "virtual learning communities" where persons share knowledge and experiences electronically as they work together to solve problems and increase effectiveness in their ministries.

As the FaithQuest congregation clarifies its mission, vision, and values, the church will be able to make wise use of this new digital frontier.



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## Email Updates from FaithQuest Groups

#### From Rocky Mountain Conference

FQ study group has been "life-changing" for these folks.

#### From East Ohio Conference:

FaithQuest is up and running — and running well here at Main Avenue UMC.

We started in October with a rather rough beginning. The videos are great, as is the whole lesson layout. What I didn't take into consideration was that most of the church leaders have NEVER been in a structured Bible study. We spent a lot of our time on the Bible study, as that is what they were most interested in. I kept trying to use the videos, but finally decided to use them a different way. I now use them in MY preparation and include the information in another way. I also bring the church issues and plans into this class. There have been wonderful suggestions from the class in regards to our church and how we carry on the business of furthering the kingdom of God. For example, during Communion we put pieces of paper with these words: "Lord, I know I am a sinner, please forgive me especially for..." in the bulletin. The congregation was instructed to write and bring

the papers forward as they came for the Lord's Supper. At the close of the service, we shredded the papers, symbolizing how God removes our sins. Another thing is that the FaithQuest group is shaping goals for 2001 planning. This is only a tip of what is happening with our FaithQuest group. The group includes people who have not come together before to learn and share. The leadership of our church will be strengthened by the time we come to the close of this study.

#### From Louisiana Conference

Everyone has found the Bible study interesting and feel that we have learned to look at the Scriptures from another aspect.

#### From an annual conference coordinator

Exciting reports from churches that were in our fall training event here — so good in fact that the Capitol District wants to sponsor a training event soon. It will be a statewide event again, but they want to really do a focused push on their district churches.

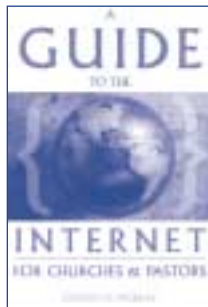
PRAYER FOR LEADERS: LOVING GOD,  
OPEN MY EARS AND EYES TO PLACES  
YOU WANT ME TO GO. MY OWN  
RESISTANCE KEEPS ME FROM HEARING  
YOU AS I PLAN AND SPEAK AND  
LEARN WITH YOUR PEOPLE. AMEN.

# The Bookshelf

These book reviews help church leaders learn about technology and the church. Go to [www.gbod.org/quest/bookreviews](http://www.gbod.org/quest/bookreviews) for other book reviews.

## Equality of Access

One of the important issues the church must address is unequal access to technology, or the “digital divide.” Studies show that, although 60% of all households now own computers, ownership in lower income homes and many racial/ethnic households is less than 10%. This is important to remember as we heed the call to share the good news with all God’s people. As the culture and the church become digital, the church must reach out in new ways to help everyone get information and grow in faith. When a church moves into offering (and even expecting) persons to access information and learning through technology, we must be aware that this will exclude a number of people. Alternative methods of delivery will have to be prepared and in some instances the church may even need to provide the hardware and software along with the content.



### ***A Guide to the Internet for Churches & Pastors***

By Steven M. Murray  
*Discipleship Resources, 1998*  
Reviewed by Donna Gaither

This invaluable tool discusses how the Internet can open a whole new way for the church to be in ministry. In non-technical language it shows how the Internet can assist in the spiritual growth of the individual Christian and how a congregation can use the web to reach out to the community. The most helpful aspect of the book may be the wealth of information on websites that focus on topics ranging from Bible study to parenting, from preaching to personal devotion.

Available from Discipleship Resources:  
[www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org) or  
800/685-4370



### ***the cluetrain manifesto: the end of business as usual***

by Levine, Locke, Searles, and Weinberger  
*Perseus Publishing, 2000*

Reviewed by Betsey Heavner

The book jacket reads, “Written by four of the liveliest voices on the Web, the cluetrain manifesto is a spirited, original, and wonderfully irreverent conversation that will challenge, provoke, and forever change your outlook on the digital economy.” The authors ask, What if the real power of the web is not the technology behind it, but the way it opens communication among buyers and sellers, young and old, rich and poor. Written from a business perspective, *cluetrain* calls for both translation and reflection to a church setting. It has certainly stirred the thinking of the people in my book discussion group! The ‘manifesto’ in the title refers to 95 theses; you may read them online at [www.cluetrain.com](http://www.cluetrain.com).

## FaithQuest Photos

Photos courtesy of Betsey Heavner



FaithQuest leaders in the Illinois Great River Conference planning for a FaithQuest study in their congregation



In the South Carolina Conference, leaders discuss important FaithQuest concepts.

## *Other resources recommended by Donna & Betsey*

### ***Out on the Edge: A Wake-Up Call for Church Leaders on the Edge of the Media Reformation***

By Michael Slaughter. Abingdon, 1998. [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

### ***Teaching Online***

By William A. Draves. Learning Resources Network, 1999.  
Online: [www.lern.org](http://www.lern.org)

### ***“The Household of Jesus Christ in the Age of Access”***

By M. Douglas Meeks, in *Quarterly Review*, Winter 2000, pp. 353-68.  
Offers theological reflection on the meaning of community in the digital age.

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*This is a periodic newsletter to resource  
FaithQuest congregational leaders.*

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## News from the 'Net

*Here are some websites to check out as  
you build your FaithQuest team.*

**United Methodist Information—  
The Official Website of  
The United Methodist Church  
[www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)**

An excellent starting point for information on United Methodist churches with webpages, denominational news and reports, United Methodist agencies, apportionments, doctrine, structure, mission, ministry, and much more.

**General Board of Discipleship  
[www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org)**

Information about all areas of Christian discipleship in the local church, as well as GBOD staff contacts.



**The Upper Room  
[www.upperroom.org](http://www.upperroom.org)**

The Upper Room is included within the GBOD website, but has so much helpful information for individual spiritual growth it deserves a separate mention.

## Themes for Future 2001 Issues

### **MARCH**

Reaching Out to  
All Generations

### **APRIL**

Leading through Change:  
Skills for Mediation and Conflict

### **MAY**

Resurrection Promise:  
Change and New Life

### **JUNE**

Summer as Sabbath:  
Renewing Spiritual Life

Share your experiences and discoveries as we build FaithQuest knowledge! We welcome email reflections, book reviews, and web addresses that relate to these themes and to FaithQuest.

**To order FaithQuest study materials, call toll-free 877/889-2780, Ext. 7674.**