



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Interim Executive Director to Lead Scarritt Bennett Center



Nashville, Tennessee – January 10, 2017 – Sarah Wilke has been appointed interim executive director of Scarritt Bennett Center, effective January 3.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Sarah, and we know she will bring leadership, passion and creativity to this role,” said Patricia Clark, president of the Scarritt Bennett Board of Directors. “She was a natural choice, considering her extensive background in nonprofit management and her long history with the United Methodist Church.”

Wilke, 54, served from 2009 to 2016 as publisher and world editor of the Upper Room Ministries, a United Methodist global ministry that produces the popular daily devotional. During her tenure, she expanded the Upper Room’s digital and demographic reach, oversaw the opening of a regional office in Latin America and laid the groundwork for an Asia headquarters and launched digital collaborations with Global Ministries, all while creating a strong financial base for growth.

“I’m excited about this new opportunity to serve,” Wilke said. “My career began at an institution of the UMW, so this brings me full circle. I’m thrilled to be a part of such a tremendous resource for learning and leadership.”

Besides her work at The Upper Room, Wilke served as the chair of the most recent World Methodist Conference, held in Houston in August 2016. More than 3,000 delegates from around the world gathered to celebrate the fellowship of Methodist, Wesleyan, and relating Uniting and United Churches. For her work, Wilke received the Order of Jerusalem, an award created by the World Methodist Council to recognize “individuals whose service to the global Methodist/Wesleyan family has been marked with honor and distinction.” Wilke also is a member of the Executive Board of Southern Methodist University’s Perkins School of Theology.

Prior to her work at The Upper Room, she was the chief executive officer of UMR Communications, a Dallas-based ministry that published *The United Methodist Reporter*, an independent newspaper that reported denominational news.

Before joining UMR in 2004, Wilke served for four years as the North Texas Annual Conference's urban strategist, an extended-cabinet-level position; she led inner-city efforts in Dallas to form new congregations, revitalize existing churches, and spearhead community-development projects.

Wilke began her career in 1986 as the executive director of Wesley-Rankin Community Center, a century-old mission of the United Methodist Women. During her 14 years of service to a predominantly Hispanic community in inner-city Dallas, she spearheaded a \$650,000 capital campaign, developed programming for every generation, and served a key role that brought new housing and a city park to the neighborhood. At her departure in 2000, the Wesley-Rankin youth and board of directors named the center's new satellite structure the Sarah Wilke Youth Center.

In 1997, she co-founded Project Transformation, a college internship program in Dallas that provided free after-school tutoring and a summer day camp for children in low-income families. The initiative – which drew dozens of churches and several United Methodist institutions into collaboration – has grown to serve thousands of children at a host of inner-city and suburban sites around the country.

An accomplished public speaker, Wilke has regularly addressed groups over the years on such topics as church communication, community collaboration, youth, poverty and violence; in 1998, she spoke before 10,000 United Methodist Women at their quadrennial assembly in Orlando, Florida.

For her work at Wesley-Rankin, Wilke was named Community-Based Ministries Administrator of the Year by the United Methodist Association in 2000.

Wilke came to the community center after serving in the U.S. Peace Corps, helping Costa Rican women develop small cooperative businesses. While there she became fluent in Spanish.

In 2004, she earned an executive MBA at Cox School of Business, Southern Methodist University. She earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Kansas in 1984.

About Scarritt Bennett Center

Scarritt Bennett is a non-profit education, retreat and conference center that creates space where individuals and groups engage one another to achieve a more just world.

Your support, through the rental of our historic facilities and donations, helps us to offer educational programs around our mission and core values, which include the empowerment of women, eradication of racism and spiritual enrichment.

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