



# Cross Connection

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## What's Inside

Marvin UMC To Host Pirtle Lecture Series 2

Local Pastor Feels At Home As Hospital Chaplain

What Difference Does A Missionary Make 3

Summer 2009 Caregiver Conference

National Attention For Methodist Children's Home Program

Youth Academy Photos Changes Lives, Reshapes Futures 4

United Methodist 'Rethink Church' Ads To Appear On Times Square 7

Spotlight On Local Church Ministries 8

*Vibrant, growing congregations changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ*

## Youth Academy 2009

### Inspirational event changes lives, reshapes futures



**Bishop Janice Riggle Huie joins the Youth Academy participants, mentors and resident artists on the final night of the 2-week program.**

**By Eleanor L. Colvin  
TAC Director of  
Communications**

Twenty-six Texas youth recently experienced the transformative power of living, serving, learning and worshipping in a community of like-minded believers during the first ever Texas Annual Conference Youth Academy.

Held July 5-18 at Southwestern University, the academy brought together youth entering 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who are aware of God's calling in their lives. Participants represented the entire annual conference – from Galveston to Rockdale to

DeKalb – along with two students from the Central Texas Annual Conference.

“Every church in its heart of hearts wants to have this kind of community. As you well know, many of them don't,” said Bishop Janice Riggle Huie in the final hours of the 2-week academy. “I'm incredibly proud of all of you! You give me a great amount of confidence, trust and hope for the world, because you're going to be in it and leading it.”

Some of the young leaders already have accepted a call to ordained ministry. Others are evaluating their aspirations –

*Continued on page 4*

## Intergenerational blessing

### Choir camp instructs and inspires Bishop and her grandkids

Recently I joined with nearly 4,000 other members of the Texas Annual Conference in attending one of the summer camps at Lakeview as a camper. I accompanied Abby and Riley, our two grandchildren, to Choir Camp. This year was the 58<sup>th</sup> time that children, youth and adults have joined together to enhance their capacity to praise God with singing, liturgical dancing, conducting, and playing musical instruments from guitar to handbells to organ. It was a growing and learning experience for all three of us. We look forward to attending next year.

Choir camp is designed as an intergenerational experience, and I was delighted to connect both with new campers and with campers who have a long

history of annual participation. Some churches bring lots of people. Other congregations send one or two. A number of older children and youth attend both a district summer camp

es who has attended more than 40 times.

It is no wonder people return. Numerous small group and age-level classes create opportunities for children,

**Please accept my thanks to all of you who make District and Choir Camp possible. I trust that summer time can also be a time of refreshment and renewal for each of you as well.**

**Bishop Janice Riggle Huie  
Texas Annual Conference**

and choir camp! One camper, who has attended since he was a child, just graduated from Westminster Choir College. He brought his fiancé – a lay-woman from one of our church-

youth and adults to learn from some of the best musicians and worship leaders in the U.S. Age-level choirs offered large group opportunities for singing. Small group classes gave peo-

ple the opportunity to focus on their special interest. Outstanding counselors like Martin Hinshaw insure that kids get to be kids and have a really good time swimming, fishing, making friends, and eating!

Worship was truly “passionate worship.” Developed by a team of clergy and laity from different churches, worship was thoughtful, carefully planned and led with excellence. It was designed as a learning time as well as a time of being transformed by God. Services always included children, youth, and adults in leadership—a great model for any congregation. Most of the worship could be replicated in a small or medium size church as

*Continued on page 7*



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**Resident Bishop**  
Janice Riggle Huie

**Director of Communications**  
Eleanor L. Colvin  
ecolvin@txcumc.org

**Editor**  
Thelma Jones  
thelmaj@methodists.net

**Web Content Manager**  
Brant Mills  
bmills@txcumc.org

**Communications Assistant**  
Rebecca Garcia  
garciar@methodists.net

**Conference Web Site:**  
www.txcumc.org

**To Subscribe:**

**Send your subscription fee of \$20 payable to the Texas Annual Conference to:**

**Cross Connection**  
5215 Main Street  
Houston, Texas 77002  
713-521-9383



## Marvin UMC to host Pirtle Lecture Series



**“How Not to Get What You Really Want...,”** a provocative question for believers, is the focus of

the 2009 Pirtle Series to be offered by Marvin UMC, Tyler, Texas, August 15-17.

The George W. Pirtle Series is a lectureship established in 1945, by George W. Pirtle, a prominent Tyler geologist and independent oil producer, a Methodist, and active member of Marvin UMC. Pirtle served faithfully as administrative Board chairman and other positions in the church until his

death in 1985. The Series is a part of his legacy to Marvin Church and the community of Tyler, Texas. Because of his vision, and Marvin UMC support, many outstanding theologians have been guest speakers for the George W. Pirtle Series.

Distinguished theologian, Dr. Alyce McKenzie will be the guest speaker. Dr. McKenzie is the Associate Professor of Homiletics at Perkins School of Theology. Her academic and preaching career spans three decades. She is a frequently featured preacher, bible study leader and teacher at workshops, conferences, and worship services both in Texas and throughout the country.

Dr. McKenzie will speak in

two sessions and preach in three services, each focusing on the series theme: **“How Not to Get What You Really Want: Discipleship and Desire in the Gospel of Mark.”** The challenge to know Jesus, and who believers are to become as we follow him, reflects one of her many special interests as she preaches and teaches on biblical wisdom and the words and parables of Jesus.

Dr. McKenzie has an extensive body of written work that ranges from articles and books on preaching to writing small group Bible studies for youth and adults. Her articles have appeared in a wide spectrum of periodicals, such as *Quarterly Review*, *Word and Witness*,

*Leaven*, *Interpretation*, *The Living Pulpit*, *Circuit Rider*, and *Theology Today*. Since 1996, she has written four books about preaching for pastors. The fourth book, *Novel Preaching: Fiction Writing Strategies for Sermons*, will be published in 2009 by Westminster John Knox.

Come and discover, *“How Not to Get What You Really Want...”* Reservations required by August 11, for Saturday evening banquet and Monday lunch. Childcare will be provided.

Contact the Marvin Welcome Center by phone: 903-592-7396, email: info@marvinumc.com, or website: www.marvinumc.com.

## Local pastor feels at home as hospital chaplain

**By Brant Mills**  
Web Content Manager

*This article is part of a series offering a snapshot of extension ministries of the Texas Annual Conference. Watch the conference website and Cross Connection for future articles.*

The Methodist Hospital Chaplain Rev. Sandy Londa says the life of a chaplain is full of surprises. “Just when you think you’ve got it all down and don’t think there will be anything new, just wait one hour and something happens.”

Before working in ministry, Londa learned what it was like to serve others in a hospital setting. She was a physical therapist for over three years at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. She recalled one experience that influenced her when she was in her early 20s.

“I was a kid and had a very profound experience of caring for a man who had been burned over 100% of his body in a natural gas explosion. He was in such pain. His corneas were burned and the tips of his fingers were burned off. He was blind and couldn’t even read Braille. He asked to die repeatedly. His pain was excruciating, and this was back before people had the right to die at end of life.”

A few years later, Londa found herself called into ministry and became a Diaconal Minister. “I was on staff at



Rev. Sandy Londa

Chapelwood UMC in Houston for 13 years as the Director of Singles and Older Adults.” She was ordained as a deacon in 1997, but while working in this role experienced what she describes as a change in pastoral identity.

“We took a mission trip to Maua Hospital in Kenya. I had an overwhelming desire to be in ministry to a place I felt people were really in need.” She took two trips to Africa and made the decision to enter the chaplaincy.

Londa had completed seminary and had been a Diaconal Minister for years, and now had to return to seminary. She enrolled in Perkins in 2001 while at the same time beginning residency. “My life was just upside down,” she said. “And then September 11 happened. Nothing but the grace of God brought me here and allowed me to make it through.” She was ordained as a full elder in 2006 and has been a chaplain for eight years including residency. She is

board certified with the Association of Professional Chaplains.

“On any given day a chaplain can change hats two or three times,” Londa said. They take turns leading worship during a daily prayer service every morning, and leading chapel on Sundays. They are on call during the week and periodically have an over-night call.

Chaplains are available for families during pre-surgical visits, spiritual care visits and offer support to patients and families in the face of major decisions. “Our primary role is to provide spiritual support for patients and families, and to be an advocate for them. I think more frequently than anything I see myself at the bed-side providing support and being a non-anxious presence for someone going through a difficult hospitalization,” she said.

She added that their ministry is “ecumenical, interfaith, and international. Our doors are open to people from different Christian denominations and to patients from different faiths and different countries.”

Londa also serves on the Methodist hospital’s bio-medical ethics committee and is one of the ethics consultants on call. “When a person is receiving medical care, situations arise where family may be in dis-

agreement with the physician or with the level of care the patient is receiving. An ethics consultant helps sort out concerns and helps with communication between the patient, their family, and the medical team... Being on the ethics committee is a form of risk-taking mission. It takes chaplains beyond what you would consider would be their stereotypical role and uses the gifts and graces and skills that a chaplain has to have to help with some of those sticky communications situations,” she explained.

“Accountability is one of the values of the hospital and is one of our key drivers in the Annual Conference as well. At the hospital we say we are honest and ethical in all we say and do. That under-girds our integrity and accountability. It means follow through, timely referral and hand off of information; accurate charting in the electronic medical records. I’m accountable to my District Superintendent and the Bishop. Accountability is a big deal, and ultimately I’m accountable to God.”

Londa will be leading a Seminar at the 2009 Greater Houston Leadership Education School in September.



## What difference does a missionary make?

*This is the first of a series of articles highlighting missionaries in relationship with the Texas Annual Conference.*

**By Rev. Noel Denison  
TAC Secretary of  
Global Missions**

If you have ever worked alongside a missionary in her/his setting, you will know the answer to this question. I have been blessed to have been

United Methodist missionaries are.

Over 300 UM missionaries are sent out by the General Board of Global Ministries to serve in over 60 countries and in 100 Methodist institutions. One half of these missionaries do not come from the US – a testimony to the health and depth of the global United Methodist church.

Where there is a missionary, there is an opportunity for

of our global Christian brothers and sisters and our own spiritual poverty, and of our dependence on the grace and power of God.

On a mission trip to Alaska, Rev. Tom Morgan of St. Paul's UMC in Bay City became acquainted with two missionaries serving there. Members of his team served in one of their ministries, and upon return to their home church, mission team members involved the

entire church in supporting that ministry and missionaries. Every Christmas, the congregation gave gifts to Jesus by collecting

for this Alaska mission

Partnerships with missionaries can be created through the Covenant Relationship program of the General Board of Global Ministries. Congregations can covenant with missionaries at the level of \$1 for each member of the congregation or \$2,500. Individuals can covenant with missionaries at the level of \$500 a year.

These covenants create supportive relationships for the missionary and underscore the advantages of the United Methodist connection in accomplishing the goals of mission.

"On the hardest days, we fight the temptation to believe that we are all alone," write missionaries Ardell and Gordon Graner. "Then we receive glimpses of God's unending faithfulness through an email from a conference mission secretary or a letter from a covenant church."

For more information about establishing a Covenant Relationship, please contact the Conference Secretary of Global Ministries, Rev. Noel Denison, at [ndenison@att.net](mailto:ndenison@att.net). Information about Covenant Relationships is also available online at [www.advancinghope.org](http://www.advancinghope.org).

## Support of missionaries allows a congregation to fulfill Christ's call to care for the least of these all over the world without being physically present.

on teams or sent teams to work alongside missionaries in Bolivia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Oklahoma and Kenya.

Missionaries make a world of difference.

They have gone before us and find a niche for mission team to be a significant part of their ministry, enhancing the effectiveness of the team. They faithfully continue the work after us, ensuring its completion and contribution to the greater, global mission of the church.

Where there is a missionary, there is evangelical witness and outreach to people who often feel forgotten by God or who are seeking to know God more deeply. Missionaries are living reminders of God's love and God's mission to "redeem, restore, and reconcile the whole of creation and all creation." We take seriously our witness to the world in word and deed to the revelation of God in Christ.

Yet many of us are not equipped with cultural understanding, language, life circumstances, or call to make the long term personal and physical commitment to made disciples of Jesus Christ in other countries or cultures. Our

a local church to be in mission in the world, unfettered by geography, distance, language, or culture.

Rev. Lynn DeMoss, former missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo and presently a UM pastor, says, "Missionaries like to feel that they are in mission with local churches rather than for local churches."

A relationship with a missionary creates a partnership which broadens the mission of the local church and broadens the hearts and minds of the congregation. Through communication, missionary visits, and education about the missionary's setting, members of the local church can expand their cultural and global vision. Support of missionaries allows a congregation to fulfill Christ's call to care for the least of these all over the world without being physically present.

From missionaries, we hear stories of incomprehensible human need and challenges of ministry which lead us more deeply into prayer. Through personal relationship and contact with missionaries, congregations gain an increased awareness of the needs of the world, of the spiritual richness

## Methodist Children's Home Program receives national attention



**Rehan McNeil is the coordinator of the Grandparents as Parents Program (GAPP).**

According to the latest census figures, 6.7 million children in the United States are being raised by grandparents and other relatives. And in Texas there are over 257,000 grandparents raising their grandchildren in their homes. For Methodist Children's Home, these statistics serve as a call to action.

The Home began the Grandparents as Parents Program (GAPP) in 2006, hoping to relieve the financial, social and physical burdens that face many central Texas grandparents. Rehan

McNeil, the coordinator of the Grandparents as Parents Program, has been instrumental in the exponential growth and success of the program over the last few years, even garnering respect from a national perspective.

McNeil will represent GAPP at a national conference July 27 through August 1. Her presentation, entitled "How Old is Too Old to Parent a Grandchild?: A Social Paradigm for Ageism or Moral Obligation," will be featured during the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Generations United International Conference in Washington, D.C.

McNeil is proud of the service and support that MCH offers to grandparent families. "Without the Home providing services through GAPP, many grandparents would not be able to provide the basic necessities for their families," McNeil said. "In addition to meeting the most basic needs, GAPP strives to provide occasions for emotional and intellectual growth for people of all ages."

## Summer 2009 Caregiver Conference

*Equipping and Encouraging Family* is the theme for a Caregiver Conference scheduled for Saturday, August 15, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. (Lunch is included with pre-registration).

*Are you equipped to be a caregiver?*

Few people "plan" to be a caregiver. It's often an unfamiliar role that becomes a reality when least expected. However, as the nation ages, preparing ahead can provide a sense of relief. As a free service to the community St. Luke's United Methodist Church will host its third Caregivers Conference.

See the complete list of work-

shops and registration information at [www.stlukesmethodist.org/caregiver](http://www.stlukesmethodist.org/caregiver). The conference is hosted from 8:30- 2 p.m. at 3471 Westheimer by St. Luke's United Methodist Church in partnership with Interfaith CarePartners. Additional information: 713-682-5995.

### DID YOU KNOW?

According to recent statistics from AARP: Forty-one percent of American adults are older than 50, the highest percentage in U.S. history! By 2011, the American 50+ group will surpass the 100 million mark.



# Youth Academy 2009 changes lives, reshapes futures

*continued from page 1*

which range from becoming a chef, psychologist, athlete and photographer — in light of what they learned about God's calling on the lives of all Christians.

"No doubt, ministers will come out of this program," said Jud McCleod, youth director at First UMC Nacogdoches, who added that he felt the sense of community and accountability created would significantly impact that. "At home, these kids say: 'I feel God calling me,' and others say, 'What?' But here, they hold each other accountable, will follow up with one another ..."

"What I'm excited about is that it won't just be their youth director behind them, it will be the whole Annual Conference and the Bishop. That's an answer to my prayers — that's something to praise God about."

## Daily orders

Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. was the hardest thing for some attendees to swallow.

By 8:45 a.m. bodies and souls were awakened with Morning Prayer in the chapel.

And, by 9:45 brains were being stimulated with seminary-level theological lectures, facilitated by instructors such as Bishop Will Williamson of the

Alabama Annual Conference and Dr. Elaine Heath of Perkins School of Theology. Topics ranged from resurrection to reconciliation.

Baptism was the topic that stood out the most for Ke'Andra Levingston. "It's what we started talking about on the first day," said the 15-year-old member of Jones Memorial UMC in Houston. "I was reminded that in the church, everything has to come back to baptism, because that's our covenant with God."

Afternoon activities alternated each day between community service projects at an area thrift store, the Boys and Girls Club and an equestrian center for disadvantaged youth and between visits to "arts villages" to explore storytelling, visual arts, altar arts and photography and video.

Mentor groups met twice daily to help the students process all their experiences. And workshop workshops were held twice daily for youth to plan diverse worship — including high church, gospel, contemporary and contemplative.

Ashley Hamel of First UMC Lufkin was among those who had never planned worship before. "We had some ideas about what we wanted to do,"

she said, "but we just prayed about it, to see what God wanted us to do." The result

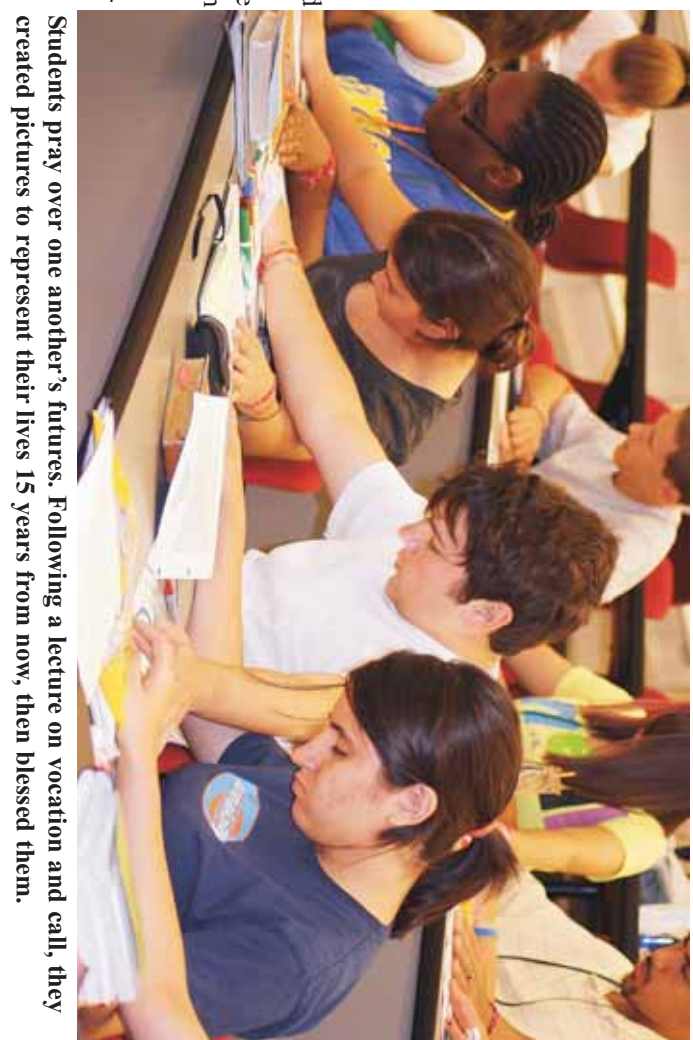
included a painted religious icon covered by a dove bathked on a scrim to represent the Holy Spirit; poetry, prayer, candlelight and participatory art for worshippers.

Every night, worship started at 7:30 p.m. But, there was no guaranteed "ending time" — since students would often start singing again or gather in small groups to pray.

"We can't get them out of the sanctuary!" said Dr. Don Waddleton, director of the Center for Congregational Excellence. "We have a lot of young people in our congregations that are hungry to understand who God is in their lives."

## Planting seeds

The Youth Academy provided the opportunities to serve, learn, study, converse and fellowship their way toward answers. After studying a similar program at Duke Divinity School, Dr. Karen Dorris, who previously directed the Center for Congregational Excellence, and a planning team began a more than 12-month



Students pray over one another's futures. Following a lecture on vocation and call, they created pictures to represent their lives 15 years from now, then blessed them.

development process.

"We owe Dr. Dorris a great thanks," Waddleton said. "I got to experience the product of the seeds she planted."

And there is no telling what fruit is yet to come from those seeds and the watering of minds and souls that took place at Youth Academy 2009.

"This has been life changing," said Alex Wilson of A&M UMC in College Station. "You usually get a 'retreat high' or 'camp high,' but here, we've grown incredibly and I'm not just going to forget it all in a couple of weeks."

Jacque Anaya of Moody Memorial First UMC in Galveston summed up what's to come with this sentiment: "Even though we may all go in different directions, this was a great place to be."



Jud, a mentor from Nacogdoches prays with the harmonica.



Jessica paints a 'bathed' Garden of Eden. Batik is an Indonesian art form students learned.

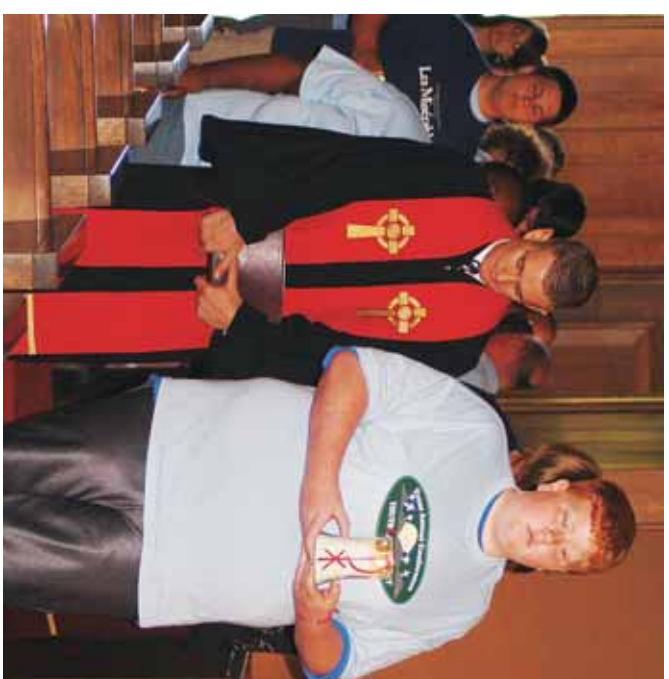


Above: Bishop Janice Riggie Hute sits and prays with a youth during the final worship service.

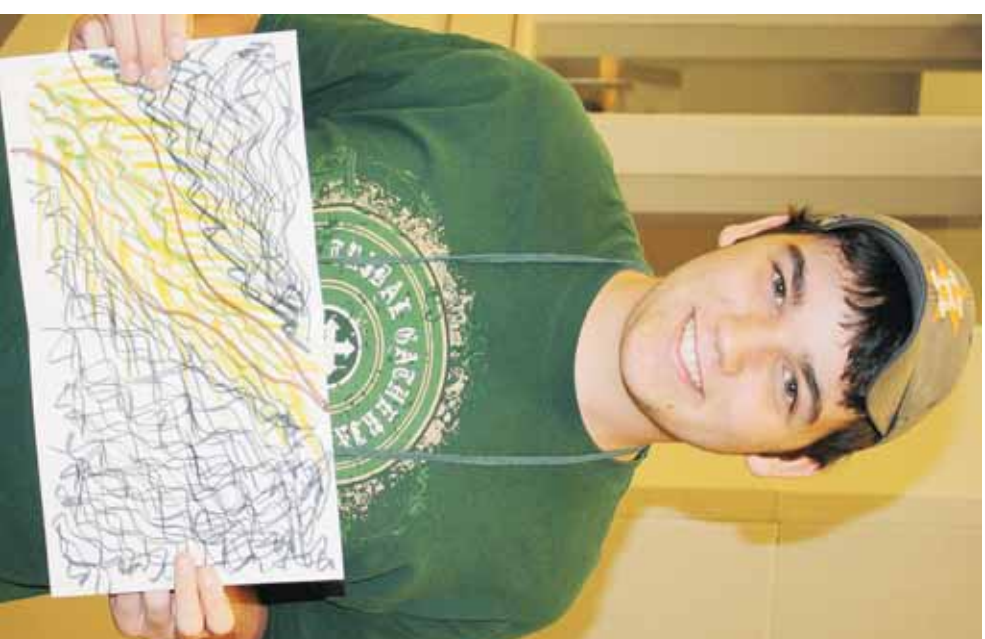
Left: Mary Ellen attended the storytelling art village twice and walked away with rocks to help her articulate her faith journey.

"The first one was flat — it didn't look like a rock and it had points going in every direction. It wasn't focused or centered," said the 17 year old from St. Paul's UMC Houston. "The second was flat on one side, like it had been cut open. That smooth side represented how I'm open now, and the rough, wild edges are slowly getting chipped away."

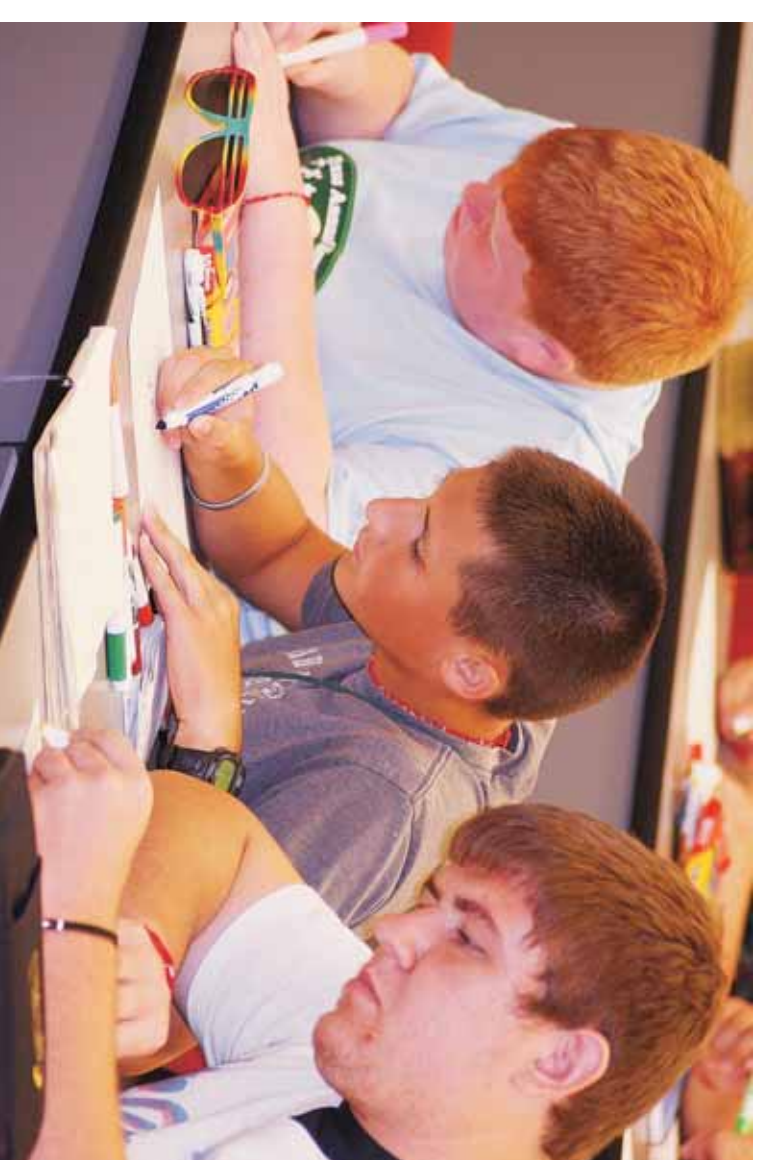
"The third one was almost perfect — with one part chipped out. It shows how I want to be solid and whole, but there's always going to be one part of me missing that only God fills."



Kelly of St. John's UMC Texas City and Rev. Ben Trammell of Lakewood UMC lead worshippers silently into the sanctuary.



Left: Fifteen years from now, Jacque of Moody Memorial First UMC prays that communion remains a sacred reminder for her, and that she remembers to share Jesus' light and love worldwide. Staying covered by wings of grace and continuing to grow are also a part of her 15-year plan. Above: Cole of Chapelwood UMC Houston, says his drawing "The Path of Life" includes green lines to represent the highs and orange lines to symbolize the lows of life. "In every-where I go and in everything I do, I want to shine the light of God into darkness," Cole said.



Left: Julie of Cypress UMC touches up her collage that reads: He came so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. Above: Students praise God during the final worship service.



Left: Julie of Cypress UMC touches up her collage that reads: He came so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. Above: Students praise God during the final worship service.



Above: Bishop Janice Riggie Hute sits and prays with a youth during the final worship service.



Above Left: One of the twice daily mentor groups begins with prayer. Above: Mentor Jay assists Ashley of Lufkin in outlining a dove's wings with wax. The art later adorned the altar in worship. Left: John Wesley UMC youth, Patrick, practices patience, while Brittani of Beaumont molds a mask to his face.

## Congratulations and God bless the first Youth Academy class of participants

Jacqueline Anaya  
 Alison Anchors  
 Chelsea Baker  
 Robert Braddock  
 Neal Byerly  
 Brant Campodonico  
 Jessica Connell

Ethan Gregory

Benjamin Grismer  
 Jeremy Hall  
 Ashley Hamel  
 Marquice Hobbs

Moody Memorial First UMC Galveston  
 Holy Covenant UMC Katy  
 First UMC DeKalb  
 First UMC Pasadena  
 First UMC Daingerfield  
 Cypress UMC  
 First UMC Mansfield  
 Central Texas Conference  
 First UMC Mineral Wells  
 Central Texas Conference  
 St. John's UMC Rockdale  
 Chapelwood UMC Houston  
 First UMC Lufkin  
 Jones Memorial UMC Houston

Cole Jodon  
 Jacob Joplin  
 Cassandra Joyce  
 Brittani Kilgore  
 Kelly Lee Jr.  
 Ke'Andra Levingston  
 Jarrett McMahan  
 Patrick Neitzy  
 Daniel Rigsby  
 Julie Smith  
 Joseph Tutt  
 Jathan Watson  
 Mary Ellen Weylandt  
 Alexander Wilson

Chapelwood UMC Houston  
 First UMC Teague  
 Montgomery UMC  
 First UMC Beaumont  
 St. John's UMC Texas City  
 Jones Memorial UMC Houston  
 St. John's UMC Texas City  
 John Wesley UMC Houston  
 First UMC Nacagdoches  
 Cypress UMC  
 First UMC Orange  
 St. Luke's UMC Kilgore  
 St. Paul's UMC Houston  
 A&M UMC College Station



# Intergenerational blessing

*Continued from page 1*

well as enhanced for a large congregation.

Our grandchildren attend a small-to-medium county seat town United Methodist Church in another conference in Texas. Like many children in our annual conference, their church doesn't offer a graded choir program or diverse worship opportunities. As long as it is done well, their pastor would be happy to include children singing an anthem or dancing liturgically in the regular worship service. However, learning the music would have to be done individually or in a small group. Abby and Riley's grandmother has been eager for her grandchildren to experience music and worship opportunities that a larger setting like choir camp can provide.

Abby, who is nine, participated in the full range of choir camp activities. She roomed with other elementary

age girls, stayed up late at night, swam every day, and tried to talk her grandmother into sliding down the Wet Willy. (Oh, well, maybe next year.) In addition, by the end of the week, she could sing two anthems from memory and sing two more with the music. Her liturgical dance class had performed "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" in one of the worship services, and she had learned other dances as well. She participated in a beginning handbell class — a first for her. She experienced her first real children's choir and heard the sound of lots of children singing.

Six-year old Riley attended Kids Kamp. Designed for young children, Kids Kamp teaches beginning music to young children while their parents or grandparents take part in adult activities. Both classes of

Kids Kamp are led by musicians who love young children and make music fun! Riley's class worked with rhythm instruments, learned to sing and play two songs with their ukulele, and performed "God bless America" for the Variety Show. Kids Kamp children eat meals and room with their parent or guardian. Unfortunately, Riley's grandmother didn't score particularly high as a counselor. At the end of the week, Riley told me that his favorite part was fishing with Dr. Jerry Pennington (who

return to his/her local church with fresh energy and enthusiasm for singing with excellence. They would bring new ideas for worship. Someone might even be inspired to serve on the worship team, and we would already share some common ideas. Other participants would be "worship ready" to offer music or dance or instrumentals during the remaining summer months. One or two might be inspired to begin a children or youth choir and have some ideas about how to lead it. Adults, in particular,



**Campers share a liturgical dance during worship.**

helped him catch two bass). His least-favorite part was that he had to throw his fish back in the lake!

In the adult choir section, we were pushed to new levels of excellence vocally and musically. As a church choir member who has never had much confidence in her singing and who has grown a little sloppy in these years of no longer singing in a choir, I enjoyed the simple pleasure of singing praise to God just a little more beautifully than when I arrived. We learned some wonderful new music. I learned to blend in better with some of excellent sopranos. That made me sound better! It was great practice in Christian unity — the whole choir improved when we listened more to each other.

I couldn't help but reflect on the Choir Camp experience as a pastor. Every participant would

would have networked with persons in similar congregations, and traded ideas and resources about making worship more passionate. As a pastor, I would welcome any or all of those outcomes. I might even decide to attend myself.

The children and I are looking forward to next year. Who knows? Abby might even bring a friend, and I'm thinking about bringing my guitar.

Please accept my thanks to all of you who make District Camps and Choir Camp possible. I trust that summer time can also be a time of refreshment and renewal for each of you as well.

Grace and peace,

Janice Riggle Huie

## United Methodist 'Rethink Church' ads to appear on Times Square

**By David Briggs  
United Methodist  
News Service**

The United Methodist Church is taking its Rethink Church advertising and welcoming campaign to one of the world's most trafficked locales — New York City's iconic Times Square. How will you and your church bring the message home?

On July 1, the church began airing spots on the CBS "Super Screen," a full motion, 26-by-20-foot screen on 42nd Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues. Two 15-second spots per hour will air 18 hours per day through Sept. 30.

"Times Square is an ideal fit for our Rethink Church campaign," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications. "You'll find people of all ages, backgrounds, and ethnicities in Times Square, and we want to tell each of them, 'There's a place for you in The United Methodist Church.'"

Rethink Church, the next evolution of The United Methodist Church's "Open

hearts, open minds, open doors" welcoming and advertising campaign, highlights the many opportunities available within United Methodist churches to engage with the world.

July's spots will focus on literacy and environmental awareness. The first spot asks, "What if church was a literacy program for homeless children? Would you come?" The second asks, "What if church considered ecology part of theology?"

Each 15-second spot includes accompanying visuals and an invitation to "Rethink Church at 10thousanddoors.org," a Web site where visitors may interact, learn more about The United Methodist Church, and search for opportunities to be involved.

The Texas Annual Conference has not customized a special Rethink Church campaign. Leaders believe that if laity and pastors are actively living the conference's Core Values and focusing on *The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, then they are also "Rethinking Church."

**If your congregation has taken a faith step and implemented new ways to Rethink**

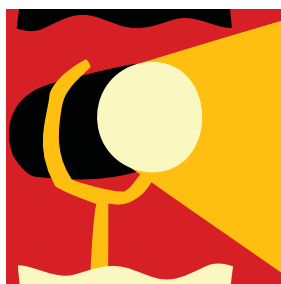
**Church, let us know, by emailing**

**[ecolvin@txcumc.org](mailto:ecolvin@txcumc.org). Or, register on the**

**conference Web site to upload your ministry videos at [www.txcumc.org/video](http://www.txcumc.org/video) or**

**ministry photos at**

**[www.txcumc.org/galleries](http://www.txcumc.org/galleries).**



## Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

### Learning Opportunities

#### Houston Lay School of Theology

The Houston Lay School of Theology is sponsored by SMU's Perkins School of Theology in cooperation with the Center for Congregational Excellence of the Texas Annual Conference.

The event, scheduled for August 15 at St. Paul's UMC Houston offers an opportunity for laity and others to explore issues of spirituality, theology, religion and church leadership with faculty from Perkins.

Advance registration of \$49 will be accepted through August 7, 2009. After August 7, persons can register at the door for \$59. Continuing Education Unit (.5 CEU) credit will be provided for a \$20 fee. For more information, visit the conference website, [www.txcumc.org](http://www.txcumc.org).

#### Early Responder Team Training

Early Responder Teams (ERT) are trained and equipped to enter a disaster site soon after one strikes. They are self-sustaining in that they have their own transportation, fuel, food, equipment, and lodging already covered. They are able to bring immediate assistance to make an area safe, sanitary, & functioning.

The Texas Annual Conference, in partnership with UMCOR, is now conducting Early Responder Training using approved UMCOR curriculum. Early responders representing our conference must take this training to be certified. The goal is to have 25+ persons in each district trained.

Training will take place at the following locations:

#### August 1

League City UMC  
1411 W Main St  
League City, TX, 77573  
David Armiger, 281-332-1557  
[daarmiger@yahoo.com](mailto:daarmiger@yahoo.com)

First UMC  
PO Box 757  
Groves, TX, 77619  
Rev. Alan Van Hooser,  
409-962-1072  
[revavanhooser@aol.com](mailto:revavanhooser@aol.com)

#### August 22

Christ UMC  
4201 State Highway 6 S  
College Station, TX, 77845  
Rev. Tommy Myrick,  
979-690-4673  
[tmyrick@txcumc.org](mailto:tmyrick@txcumc.org)

The cost of \$15 Per Person includes the manual, lunch, a T-Shirt, Safe Sanctuary, & Photo Badge. For more information, contact Clay Whitaker at [claytonwhitaker@sbcglobal.net](mailto:claytonwhitaker@sbcglobal.net), or 281-452-2861.

#### Wesley Study Bible Promotion

Cokesbury Christian Bookstore will host this event highlighting the new Wesley Study Bible. The promotion is scheduled for July 20 - 31, Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Cokesbury Bookstore is located at 3502 West Alabama, Houston, 77027.

Contact Stephanie Kimble, 713-621-1755, [houston@cokebury.com](mailto:houston@cokebury.com) for special prices or to order for small groups or Sunday School members.

#### Disciple Bible Study Mini Training Events Scheduled

The following are current opportunities for you, and your church leaders, to participate in a free mini-training event.

DISCIPLE mini-training events are available to persons, lay or clergy, wishing to gain insight about how to bring these life-

changing studies to your church and community. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about the study format, explore various ways in which DISCIPLE studies might be offered, scheduled and funded, and discuss advertising and registration details that might benefit their particular group. The training dates and locations are listed below:

#### Sunday, August 2; 2-5 p.m.

First United Methodist Church,  
Jefferson (North District)  
305 West Henderson Street  
Jefferson, Texas 75657  
903-665-3268

#### Saturday, August 8; 1-4 p.m.

McMahan's Chapel UMC (East District)  
9 miles East of San Augustine  
on Highway 21  
Sabine County  
409-382-8218

#### Sunday, August 9 2:30-5:30 p.m.

Emory United Methodist Church (Northwest District)  
456 North Texas Street  
(2 blocks North of intersection  
of Highways 19 and 64)  
Emory, Texas 75440  
903-473-2411  
[www.emoryumchurch.org](http://www.emoryumchurch.org)

There is no cost in participating in any of the DBS Mini-Training Events, but please notify Jill Krone (903-473-3755 or [jill.krone@gmail.com](mailto:jill.krone@gmail.com)) of your intentions so that materials may be prepared.

If you have a DBS 1 Study Manual or other materials (no tapes needed) available, please bring these with you to the training event to allow you easier access as you follow along. NO materials are sold at these events. Again, these events are open to all, laity or clergy, who desire to know more about Disciple Bible Studies.

#### Wills and Powers of Attorney Seminar

Rev. Steve Turner of Heartspring Methodist Foundation will review the requirements and necessities of wills and powers of attorney at Rehobeth UMC on Saturday, August 1, from 9- 11:30 a.m.

Rehobeth UMC is at 2207 US Hwy. 59 North, Carthage, TX, 75633 (2 miles north of loop). For more information, contact Rev. Jack McMahon at 903-693-6150 or visit [rehobethumc@yahoo.com](mailto:rehobethumc@yahoo.com). The event is free.

#### Harmonicas at Church

First UMC Hemphill has a new harmonica class, with a great teacher, Cliff Benoit. The class is open to the community and varies in size from 4 to 8. All are beginners, who are learning to play with no prior experience.

The goal is to be able to play occasional anthems in the worship service or just be able to praise God through the music of the harmonica.

#### Wooden Toys Made for Underprivileged Children

Hugh Parker spent his vacation delivering hand-made wooden toys to the Craddock Center in Cherry Log, Georgia where they will be distributed to 1,400 under-privileged children at Christmas.



Over 8,000 toys are made annually by the volunteer wood-

workers at St. Luke's United Methodist Church.

### Fellowship Opportunities

#### Beyond Sunday Worship

Does your church offer worship opportunities at times other than Sunday morning? What has worked well for you and what were the challenges?

If you have personal experiences to share, or know of resources offering guidance to churches seeking to do 'beyond Sunday' worship, contact Rev. Darwood Galaway, 903-984-3576, [darwoodgalaway@sbcglobal.net](mailto:darwoodgalaway@sbcglobal.net).

### Mission Opportunities

#### Mexico Mission Trip

The mission trip to Mexico is scheduled for August 2-8, by First UMC in Pearland.

Most work will be construction in Carbonera, a fishing village located on the gulf; and one day working at an orphanage in San Fernando. Both locations are in the State of Tamaulipas.

VBS coordinators are welcome. Cost: \$150 includes meals, lodging and transportation. Contact Lori Saia, 281-485-1466, or [lsaia@fumcpearland.org](mailto:lsaia@fumcpearland.org). [www.fumcpearland.org](http://www.fumcpearland.org).

**Do you have information about your church or ministry you would like to share with others?**

**Contact Thelma Jones at 713-521-9383, ext 335 or [thelmaj@methodists.net](mailto:thelmaj@methodists.net)**