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

Created to give



Perhaps you have seen the 30-second United Methodist television and internet Christmas spot. No words are spoken. The listener hears the melody of the Christmas carol "What Child is This," then sees a middle-aged, homeless woman with her belongings in a shopping cart moving slowly down a lonely street. Crawling across the screen in white letters is this invitation: "This Christmas remember those who are shopping for hope, acceptance and love."

A friend suggested that I watch a recent edition of "60 Minutes" online. The program featured Dr. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church and author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and Bill and Melinda Gates, founder of Microsoft and global philanthropists. They were discussing what motivates them to give away so much of their time, talent and money.

Rick Warren commented that a person can give without loving, but no one can love without giving. As a person of Christian faith, he believes that "we don't give because we should, but we give because we must." He went on to describe his family's personal practices of giving, which involve giving away 90 percent of his income.

Bill and Melinda Gates described how they are making a positive difference in the lives of millions of people, particularly women and children. They are absolutely confident that through their own giving and the giving of others, malaria can be eliminated and pneumonia and diarrhea in children prevented. To them every life is equally valuable, and they

expect to spend the rest of their lives making life better for others.

Dr. Bill Carter, a Presbyterian pastor, tells a story about a rabbi who was approached by one of his students. The student said, "Rabbi, I love you." The rabbi said, "Oh, really? Well, do you know what troubles me most?" The student said, "No, I don't know what troubles you the most." The rabbi said, "How can you say that you love me if you don't know what troubles me most?"

As we prepare to celebrate God's love made known to us in the birth of Jesus, it is not hard to see the various troubles that people close to home and around the world are experiencing. They range from the homeless woman with her shopping cart to families where the primary breadwinner is unemployed to parents watching helplessly as another child succumbs to a preventable childhood disease and many more. All of them long for hope and acceptance and love as well as food, clothing, shelter and medicine.

We who have been blessed to experience God's love cannot help but give and give and give — our time, talent and treasure. It is not an obligation. It is a deep and abiding joy. After all, the one to whom you give may well be the one of whom the carol sings, "This, this is Christ the King whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary."

God bless you all.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie

p.s. You can watch the UMCOM television spot on our conference website at www.txcumc.org/christmasspot.



An Asbury House student learns to count numbers and blessings.

'12 Ways of Christmas'

Bless these ministries of the Texas Conference with holiday gifts

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

1. Asbury House

The inscription on the newly-dedicated pavilion at Asbury House Child Enrichment Center reads: Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray (NRSV). That's just what Asbury House has been doing since 1969. Supported by the United Methodist Churches and families of the North District, Asbury House provides education and child care within a nurturing Christian environment.

Executive Director Pam Surles said Asbury House serves financially-disadvantaged children whose parents must be working or going to school. "Most of our parents are single moms, working 40 hours a week, making minimum wage. Many of our parents have had their hours cut recently due to the economic crisis. Our parents are really struggling to make ends meet, despite the fact that they are

working."

Donations can provide scholarships for students or support the Asbury House Endowment Fund. Currently, the school cares for 36 students, age three to five. The dream is to add two additional classrooms, Surles said, which would allow them to care for 60 children. The endowment fund would provide the additional monthly expenses for the additional children.

The center already expanded this fall, with the addition of The Carpenter Pavillion, which provides a place for children to play outside when the Texas sun and seasonal rains would typically send them inside. Temple and Sandra Carpenter of Greggton UMC donated the pavilion in memory of their twin sons Corey and Christopher, who died three years apart. A vehicle struck Corey, causing his death; and his brother died in a boating crash. Memorializing their sons' lives turned into an act of extravagant generosity

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The Twelve Days Of Christmas

Contrary to common belief, the Christmas song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is not actually the 12 days before Christmas.

In the Western Church, the 12 days are the 12 days from Christmas until the beginning of Epiphany, the time when the three Wise Magi arrived to present gifts to the young Jesus. It is, in fact, traditional in some cultures to give gifts for each of the 12 days of Christmas (from December 25 to January 6).

The popular song dates back as far as the 16th century, during the period 1558-1829, when Catholics were prohibited from any practice of their faith by law, whether private or public. It was written in England to teach catechism secretly to the young.

God Himself is the "true love." The "me," who receives the presents, refers to every baptized person who is a part of the Christian Faith.

Let's look at the gifts one by one

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We recall Christ's sadness over the



fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but you would not have it so . . ." (Luke 13:34)

The two turtle doves represent the Old and New Testaments.

The three French hens are the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

The four calling birds are the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five gold rings represent the first Five Books of the Old Testament, which gives the history of humanity's sinful failure and God's response of grace in the creation of a people to be a light to the world. Some say

the five gold rings represent the five wise brides awaiting the bridegroom.

Six geese a-laying symbolizes the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming signify the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, ministry,



mean the 11 Apostles, excluding Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus.

And finally, 12 drummers drumming signify the 12 points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

Merry Meaningful 12 Days Of Christmas To You All!



teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and compassion. (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

Eight maids a-milking are the eight Beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing represent the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, goodness/kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Ten Lords a-leaping symbolize the Ten Commandments.

Eleven pipers piping





12 Ways of Christmas

Bless these ministries of the Texas Conference with holiday gifts, future pledges

Continued from page 1

that will bless the lives of Longview area children for years to come.

That type of individual donation is also a testament to the power of the connectional system – in that members of all the area churches support Asbury House.

“It would be difficult for a single church to provide the income to care for financially disadvantaged families, but by several churches joining together, we are able to make a huge difference in these children’s lives,” Surles said. “Asbury House is truly a ministry and we see each day how our ministry is changing lives.”

Make checks payable to Asbury House and send to 320 S. Center, Longview, Texas, 75601.

2. Wesley Community Center

For more than 100 years, the Wesley Community Center has ministered to the needs of individuals and families by helping people help themselves and each other. Originally focused on providing personal growth opportunities in the Northside Village community of Houston, the center now serves more than 16,000 residents in 113 ZIP codes across the greater Houston area.

To further expand its reach, the WCC is engaged in a \$3 million capital campaign. The Kurtz Family Education and Recreation Center will enable Wesley Community Center to serve an additional 300 people weekly.

The new computer lab will support students of all ages pursuing GEDs, English as a Second Language, and those completing research, homework or submitting applications online. The recreation center will house everything from walking and yoga for senior citizens to youth soccer, basketball and volleyball leagues to family movie nights and community cultural events.

Recently, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie issued a “Bishop’s Challenge Gift” in support of

the center. A seed gift of \$20,000 to Bishops from the Texas Methodist Foundation, prompted friends of Wesley to contribute another \$22,000. Bishop Huie challenged members of the TAC to support Wesley’s capital campaign with gifts that meet or exceed the \$42,000 presented at Wesley’s Spirit of Helping Luncheon.

A gift of any amount will enable the center to enrich lives with education and character building opportunities; help families become healthy, happy and prosperous and enable economically stressed families become strong and independent.

Send donations to 1410 Lee Street, Houston, Texas, 77009 or visit www.wesleyhousehouston.org for online giving options.



Communicator Isaac Broune was trained in radio operations this summer in the United States. Broune currently is helping to set up the station in Cote d’Ivoire.

3. UMC Radio Initiative

On Christmas Eve, the people of Cote d’Ivoire will receive a groundbreaking gift from the United Methodist Church. The UMC’s radio station will begin broadcasting in the country which depends heavily on radio to communicate with millions of its citizens who either cannot read or do not have access to electricity and television.

The new radio station will broadcast an array of programs 24 hours a day – including health education on malaria and HIV; public announcements; social issues, warnings for things such as weather and water, family topics and more to serve the community.

“Radio can reach people in remote areas,” said Bishop Benjamin Boni of Cote d’Ivoire in a video promoting the new ministry. “Radio will play a great role.”

The audience is projected to be 1 million listeners in the capital city of Abidjan and 3 million listeners in rural areas. Almost 1 million of the country’s women and children live in abject poverty – which is defined as less than \$1 day. Although the tool will be used to speak to social issues such as poverty; it will also be used to preach and teach the word of God everyday.

The UMC will have a powerful voice in Cote d’Ivoire, and purchasing hand cranked radios is a way to ensure that voice is heard in households without electricity. Radio gives some of the world’s poorest and most isolated people the power to communicate and to become better educated, enabling them to transform their lives.

Hand-cranked radios do not require electricity or batteries to operate and cost approximately \$36. Donations of any amount are appreciated. To learn more about this ministry, visit www.amplifyhope.org or watch the video at www.txcumc.org/radiocotedivoire.

Make checks payable to the Texas Annual Conference and write “CI Radios” in the memo line.

4. Lon Morris College and Wiley College

One is known for its Great Debaters. The other is known for its fine arts and Church Careers programs. Both schools hold a place in Texas Conference and national history. Wiley College was the first black college west of the Mississippi River. Lon Morris College is the oldest 2-year institution in the state, and, according to its web site, is the only surviving pre-Civil War



Rev. Richard Burnham climbs through Hurricane Ike debris at Bay Vue UMC.

institution in East Texas. Both schools have blessed the TAC by educating countless clergy and laity.

Christian values, small classes and a focus on nurturing the whole student are the cornerstones upon which both schools stand. About 400 students call Lon Morris’ Jacksonville campus home, while about 900 students populate the Wiley campus in Marshall. Today, both schools boast diversity that belies the racially-segregated slave society during which they began. Lon Morris and Wiley welcome students from all over the world and prepare them to become servants of the world.

Make donations for scholarships or operations at www.lonmorris.edu or www.wileyc.edu.

5. Hurricane Ike Recovery

It took four years and 8,000 volunteers for the Texas Annual Conference to complete its Hurricane Rita recovery work. With the 2008 Hurricane Ike ranking in as the third costliest and third most destructive storm in U.S. history, it will undoubtedly take the same commitment of time and resources to rebuild Ike’s \$32 billion in damages.

To date, 6,500 volunteers have traveled to the Gulf Coast from all over the United States

and as far away as Alaska. An estimated 1 million FEMA claims resulted from the storm, with 4,000 damaged and uninsured homes on Galveston Island; 100,000 damaged homes in the Greater Houston Area, and places like Bridge City and Bolivar Peninsula being utterly annihilated. Additionally, 100 churches and parsonages in seven of the Texas Annual Conference’s nine districts were affected. To be reminded of the storm’s impact, visit www.txcumc.org/ikevideo.

Make checks payable to the Texas Annual Conference and write Fund# 534 IKE-TAC in the memo line OR sign up a work team by e-mailing vflanagan@txcumc.org.

6. Newgate United Methodist Mission

Newgate United Methodist Mission feeds the hungry – in mind, body and spirit. “Each and every day we provide a hot meal to the poor, homeless and marginalized in Longview, Texas,” said Rev. Jennene Laurinec, executive director. Coffee and donuts are followed by Bible study Monday through Friday. “Then we serve a hot meal at lunch ... For many peo-

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TAC work day mission project a huge success



Top Left Photo: Mrs. Eddie Evans sits in the chair where she first learned about the Texas Annual Conference Disaster Recovery ministry.



Mrs. Eddie Evans was sitting in her favorite chair when she received a call from Neighborhood Centers regarding the damage her South Park home sustained during Hurricane Ike.

That was the beginning of her relationship with United Methodist Centers and the which often partners with community agencies to locate those in need during times of disaster. "A woman from the center came, and then a man named Eddie (Hilliard) showed up,"

she said. "I'm glad I was chosen. I don't even know how I was chosen."

Evans' home was one of two that employees from the United Methodist Service Center recently helped repair during a mission workday. About 20 staff members from all departments spent the day preparing homes for repair by removing damaged walls, floors, door frames and more, in an effort to help people put their lives back together one year after Hurricane Ike.

Mrs. Evans had insurance, and her provider paid out \$3,000, just before dropping her coverage. That money went toward cutting up and removing tree branches from the property, and left next to nothing for actually repairing the rotted wood floors and leaking roof or replacing appliances that sat in 8-10 inches of water.

That's where the TAC Disaster Recovery team stepped in. Evans already has a new roof and other work that, although estimated at about \$5,000, has not cost her anything in supplies or labor. To date, approximately 6,500 volunteers have traveled to the Texas Annual Conference to help Hurricane Ike victims on the road to recovery. The following staff members were honored to add their names to the roster, by spending the day serving a neighbor in need: Jan Bierwirth, Jenna Arnold, Tracey Blackshire, Shirley Broome, Rev. Carol Bruse, Rochelle Ceburan, Lynn Davis, Barb Eoff, Jan Ervin, Rev. Cynthia Harvey, Nancy Hinshaw, Thelma Jones, Ivan Krowl, Brant Mills, Debbie Sutton, Rev. C.J. Taylor, Rev. Clay Whitaker and Rev. B.T. Williamson.



for people like Evans, who still see the remnants of Ike in their homes everyday. "It really was bad," she said. "That water was coming in everywhere - here, there, the front, the back. And, it was slow moving out."

Disaster Recovery team stepped in. Evans already has a new roof and other work that, although estimated at about \$5,000, has not cost her anything in supplies or labor. To date, approximately 6,500 volunteers have traveled to the Texas Annual Conference to help Hurricane Ike victims on the road to recovery. The following staff members were honored to add their names to the roster, by spending the day serving a neighbor in need: Jan Bierwirth, Jenna Arnold, Tracey Blackshire, Shirley Broome, Rev. Carol Bruse, Rochelle Ceburan, Lynn Davis, Barb Eoff, Jan Ervin, Rev. Cynthia Harvey, Nancy Hinshaw, Thelma Jones, Ivan Krowl, Brant Mills, Debbie Sutton, Rev. C.J. Taylor, Rev. Clay Whitaker and Rev. B.T. Williamson.

Bottom Left Photo: Knocking out drywall is right up Cross Connection editor Thelma Jones' alley.



Top Left Photo: Verronda Flanagan takes a break from registering Ike volunteers to knock out drywall.

Top Middle Photo: Nancy Hinshaw was a handy hauler, removing countless loads of debris.

Top Right Photo: Tracey Blackshire of the Fiscal office carefully breaks up damaged wood floors.

Middle Left Photo: Ivan Krowl and Cynthia Harvey team up to tackle bathroom tile demolition.

Middle Photo: Disaster response coordinator Clay Whitaker painstakingly loosens drywall tape in order to salvage some materials.

Bottom Left Photo: B.T. Williamson of the Center for Clergy Excellence prepares a leaking ceiling for repair.

Bottom Right Photo: Fiscal team member Rochelle Ceburan methodically loosens a door frame before removing it.





'12 Ways'... Where your treasure

Continued from page 3

ple, this is the only meal of the day.”

The needs are growing. In November, the center served 4,400 meals, which she said is 60 percent more than last year. Additionally, Newgate Mission is feeding people's minds, with classes that make a difference in their lives, such as recovery groups; renter's rights and responsibilities; computer skills; parenting; creative writing; healthy living; job seeking skills and more.

“We feed people's spirits,” Laurinec said, “celebrating that we are a Christian church.” Weekday morning Bible studies draw 60 to 80 people each day, and about 120 attend Sunday worship, which Newgate's founding Pastor Jerry Turner officiates. And, every day, the staff is available for prayer and pastoral care.

Laurinec said giving a non-traditional gift to a mission like Newgate blesses the giver and the recipient for far more than in that moment: “It is a gift that reaps spiritual benefits and multiplies with the giving. A gift of time or talent is a wonderful antidote to the holiday blues. It is never the wrong size, the wrong color, or unappreciated... The gifts of the spirit are free.”

Moreover, a gift of money goes a long way in a mission, she said, where they can provide a meal for less than \$1. But the best reason to give may be the one Jesus offered: “Whatsoever you do for the least of these, my little ones, you do also for me.”

To volunteer, call 903-757-6146. Make checks payable to Newgate Mission and send to 207 S. Mobberly, Longview, TX, 75602.

7. Adopt-a-Student

A donation of \$50 per month will pay for books, supplies and tuition costs for one Ivorian student to attend a well-equipped school. There are more than 17,000 school-age children in Cote d'Ivoire who need help attaining an education that can

and will transform their lives.

Although many of the schools in Cote d'Ivoire are located in rural and economically depressed areas, the United Methodist Schools have developed a reputation for providing high quality Christian-based education. Established in 1929, the United Methodist School System, now includes 49 elementary schools, seven high schools, one vocational/technical institute and one university. All of which could use support.

The Adopt-a-Student brochure (available at www.txcumc.org/cotedivoireconnections) cites Psalm 82:3 as a call to action: “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.” Adopting an Ivorian student is one way to maintain their right to education.

Donations may be made to the Texas Annual Conference. Write CI Schools – Adopt a Student in the memo line.

8. Wesley Foundation Campus Ministries

From Kilgore to Tyler to Prairie View there are nearly a dozen vital campus ministries in the Texas Annual Conference, all of which would benefit from the sponsorship of local churches. Some churches take turns baking cookies or making meals for weekly on-campus lunches and dinners. Some churches maintain mentor relationships with college students, while others offer the priceless gifts of prayer and financial support.

The Wesley Foundation and campus ministry needs are as diverse as the schools, which are rural and urban, small and large, 2-year and 4-year, commuter and residential. The only way to find out what the students in your area need is to call-e-mail-Facebook-tweet the campus minister. (Don't worry, the youngsters will teach you the value of Facebooking and tweeting when you bring over that first batch of fresh-baked cook-

ies.)

Visit www.txcumc.org/campusministries to find the nearest college ministry to assist. If there are no campus ministries in your area, consider how your church can start ministering to that underserved mission field.

9. From the Ground Up

Creating new places for new people is one of the “Four Focus Areas” of the denomination. In the Texas Conference, this happens in the form of New Church Starts and Church Transformation. While these priority programs are written into the conference budget, help is still needed. “The amount of funding required to launch a new church varies in the range of \$250,000 to \$325,000,” said Dr. Don Waddleton, director of the Center for Congregational Excellence. “The conference apportionments are not adequate to reach a goal of 100 new faith communities in 10 years.”

Why are so many new churches needed anyway? Of the 58 counties that compose the TAC, only one county is projected to decrease in population in the coming years. “Population growth alone creates a need for additional faith communities,” Waddleton said. “And, in all of our communities, we have many – who are unchurched or ‘dechurched’ – whom our present churches are not reaching.”

From the Ground Up is a TAC ministry that helps build new churches and transform existing congregations into vibrant, growing churches. For \$100, you can purchase one share that will be invested in training and coaching new church leaders, providing salary support for new church pastors and under-girding ministry in new locations.

The investment also helps the TAC coach established congregations to ensure each church assesses and improves ministries and furthers their impact on the community through outreach programs.



Above Photo: Improve the quality of education for these Ivorian students with a gift of \$50 per month.

Below Photo: A Longview child has a chance to soar as high as the bubbles she blows because of Asbury House.



is, there your heart will be also

Make checks payable to From the Ground Up, and mail to 5215 Main Street, Houston, Texas, 77002.

10. Covenant Relationship with Missionaries

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. "Where there is a missionary, there is an opportunity for a local church to be in mission in the world, unfettered by geography, distance, language, or culture," wrote Rev. Noel Denison, TAC global ministries secretary in support of congregations establishing covenant relationships with missionaries.

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.

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. "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."

To sponsor a missionary, contact the Conference Secretary of Global Ministries, Rev. Noel Denison, at ndenison@att.net. For a complete list of missionaries and assignments,

visit www.gb-gm-umc.org/work/missionaries.

11. Your Local Church

Although opportunities to give abound throughout the Texas Annual Conference and the world, your local church obviously can use your gifts. Your time, talent and witness are unique offerings that cannot be replicated or supplied by anyone else.

The United Methodist Church membership vows call everyone to "faithfully participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness." It is certainly possible to be financially generous; yet miserly with one's service or witness. Consider the areas where you can increase your multi-faceted giving in the faith community in which you are rooted and growing in Christian service.

12. Prayer

Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering, according to Acts 10. That verse reminds us that God regards and requires our spiritual sacrifices along with our financial sacrifices. Our best gifts – when coupled with prayer – are transformed into God's best gift, because our plans have been humbly submitted to God in prayer.

James 2 tells us that faith without works is dead. By the same token, works without faith – relying solely on our own ability – is equally as fruitless. The most priceless gift you give this holiday season may be prayer – a prayer for your own spiritual generosity; for the ministries of your church, district and conference; and that God's kingdom come, on earth, as it is in heaven. Prayerfully consider what specific ministries you can bless with your time and treasures this year and then generously support the others with fervent prayer.



Top Right Photo: Form a covenant relationship with Mission Intern Joseph Bradley, who was commissioned this fall. A native of White Oak, Bradley serves in Cambodia.

Bottom Right Photo: Adopting a student in Cote d'Ivoire would help upgrade the computer labs in which these teens are learning.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Fellowship Opportunities

Service of the Longest Night at St. Paul's UMC - Houston

St. Paul's UMC will have a Service of the Longest Night at 6 p.m. Monday, December 21, in its chapel.

The Service of the Longest Night is a quiet, meditative worship experience that provides space and time to acknowledge the sadness and concern that may be present even in the midst of the celebration of the season. This service is held on or near the night of the Winter Solstice because, as the longest night of the year, it has the least daylight and the most darkness.

Childcare during the service will be available for those who RSVP two days prior to childcare@stpaulshouston.org.

At 5501 Main Street, St. Paul's UMC is located on the corner of Main and Binz/Bissonnet, across from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Free parking is available in two lots across Fannin Street from the church.

The Advent Conspiracy

The story of Christ's birth is a story of promise, hope, and a revolutionary love. So, what happened? What was once a time to celebrate the birth of a savior has somehow turned into a season of stress, traffic jams, and shopping lists.

When it's all over, many of us are left with presents to return, looming debt that will take months to pay off, and this empty feeling of missed purpose. What if Christmas became a world-changing event again?

Clear Lake UMC will hold Advent celebrations on the following dates: November 29, December 1, Sunday, December 6, Thursday, December 10, Monday, December 12-14, Sunday, December 20, and Thursday, December 24.

Aldersgate UMC Presents, "Four Tickets to Christmas"

This event will be hosted by the choir and drama ministry of Aldersgate UMC on Friday and Saturday, December 11-12 at 7:30 p.m. and on December 13 at 2:30 p.m.

It is a Broadway-style musical that follows the escapades of an out-of-work family performing group who find themselves unexpectedly spending Christmas in a small rural town in Ohio at the turn of the century.

The entire family learns the importance of following God's unique direction for their lives.

It's a "season of beginnings" which includes restoring a relationship with the Savior whose birth is being celebrated.

Admission (donations accepted) is free. Nursery care will be provided.

For more information, contact the church at 409-925-2552.

Learning Opportunities

Jones Memorial UMC Offers G.E.D. Prep Course

Join Jones Memorial UMC in working with Houston Community College to offer a free adult education G.E.D. prep course. It will run January 19 - June 17, 2010.

Classes will be Mondays and Thursdays from 9-12 a.m. Orientation will be held December 11-14 from 9 a.m. until noon. For more information, call HCC at 713-718-5400.

Jones Memorial UMC is located at 2405 Almeda Genoa Rd., Houston, TX 77047.

EYA Internship Program Offered Annually

The Ethnic Young Adults Summer Internship program is designed for young adults between the ages of 18 and 22, representing the five ethnic caucuses of The United Methodist Church.

The dates for the next internship program are May 30 through July 31, 2010. The deadline for all applications is December 15, 2009.

Applicants must have an interest in exploring issues of public policy, social justice advocacy, and social change, as well as a

desire to explore faith and justice issues from a personal, institutional, and societal perspective.

Applicants must be in good academic standing at their college or university if currently enrolled, and demonstrate evidence of their concern for social justice through their extracurricular activity and academic study and have some history of involvement in their church and/or community.

If employed full-time, applicants must show active leadership and participation in their local church and community and an involvement in social justice activities. For more information, visit www.umd-gbcs.org, or contact Rev. Neal Christie, Assistant General Secretary at nchristie@umd-gbcs.org.

Hope for the Holidays Series Dealing with Depression

The holiday season can be a time of joy and cheer, but for many people, it is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past failures and anxiety about an uncertain future.

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Greater Houston (DBSA) will partner with St. Luke's Center for Counseling and Enrichment to present a series of six lectures and Q&A sessions focusing on how to reduce stress through the holiday months.

The dates are December 15 and January 7 and January 12.

These events are free. For more information, contact Amy Birchill at 713-402-5046 or abirchill@stlukes-hou.org.

Mission Opportunities

Early Responder Team (ERT) Training Refresher Course

A refresher course for ERT training will take place December 12 at First UMC, Humble in room 221.

The time will be 8:30 a.m. to noon and the cost is \$10. It covers new manuals, a T-shirt, a photo-ID badge and snacks for the event.

If you have been certified as an Early Responder, please check your badge for the expiration date.

For those whose expiration is December 31, 2009, this shorter "refresher" course will ensure your certification remains in good stead for another three years.

Contact Rev. Clay Whitaker to register or for more information at claytonwhitaker@sbcglobal.net, or 281-452-2861.

Checks should be made payable to the Texas Annual Conference, earmarked 'ERT Refresher Course.'

Send Spotlight submissions to:

thelmaj@methodists.net or call 713-521-9383