



Cross Connection

a Texas Annual Conference publication
an edition of
The United Methodist Reporter

Two Sections, Section A 076000 Volume 153 Number 10 July 14, 2006

Carol Bruse enjoys busy 1st month in clergy excellence

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Cross Connection



The Rev. Carol Bruse is no stranger to the life of an itinerant pastor. Although her current appointment isn't to a local church, she will continue to minister to congregations as she ministers to the pastors that lead them.

Bruse, who was named Associate Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, hit the ground running after annual conference.

"I'm excited that we're finally focusing on clergy excellence," she said. "The Board of Ordained Ministry does an excellent job of ushering ministers through the process. But, we've never had a system in place to recruit, support and train pastors." In addition to serving area churches and pastors, Bruse was selected in July to serve on the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry national advisory team that will explore young leadership development, vocational discernment and clergy recruitment.

In 10 years, Bruse has been blessed to serve a variety of congregations. As pastor of Hillcrest UMC, she experienced the dynamics of a small urban ministry in a changing community. As an associate pastor at Memorial Drive UMC, she contributed to the life of a suburban mega-church. And, most recent-

ly, at Asbury UMC in Pasadena, she ushered that medium-sized church through a transitional period, during which they relocated to new site eight miles away.

"I've had a lot of different experiences in my ministry," Bruse said. "So, I can empathize with a lot of pastors, I understand their challenges." Among those challenges is nav-

will provide an advocate for pastors who often feel they're alone in ministry.

"It's easy to become isolated," Bruse said. "It's not appropriate to tell your troubles to your congregation, and dumping the problems on family can be equally lethal ... I think it's the hardest job on the planet. Pastors need a cheerleader - someone to encourage us."

Our pastors are tired and many, in their minds, are fighting battles between good and evil in their congregations. We can bring them a stone - to have rest and sabbatical. We can hold their arms up.

igating the nuances of ministry that aren't in the textbooks. Bruse knows first hand the difference a good mentor can make in the life of a pastor.

"I feel blessed that I've had excellent mentors," Bruse said. "Still, there were times when I felt isolated and ill-equipped to face the demands of the local church. Seminary just does not prepare us to lead local churches."

The Center for Clergy Excellence will bridge that gap, by continuing to serve and educate pastors long after their formal seminary training ends. In addition to educational support, Bruse is also helping lend direction to the center's pastoral care program. That's significant, because as Bruse stated: "We have lost many good pastors to burnout. They did not have the structure to be supported, encouraged and trained."

To combat that, one of the services available through the Center for Clergy Excellence will be free counseling through the Krist Samaritan Center. That

Calling the called

Another of Bruse's responsibilities is recruiting.

"The entire UMC is in a critical situation," she said. "I'm sure God has not stopped calling young people. We've not had a system in place to encourage those younger kids who've been called to follow God to become pastors."

The center will help pastors and churches to become calling congregations that encourage young people to consider ministry as a vocational option.

One aspect of encouraging a culture of call in the Conference will include connecting with seminaries, colleges, youth ministries and camps to get accurate information in the hands of youth and young adults. In addition, Bruse is hoping to create and utilize a youth-friendly approach to recruiting.

"Sixteen year olds are passionate and impatient," she continued on page 8

Come to the BIG HOUSE

By Kristen Cleveland
Executive Director, BIG HOUSE

On August 12, 2006, BIG HOUSE, a work camp-based ministry will celebrate 10 years of service. BIG HOUSE began in 1996, when three youth groups converged on Athens, Texas, for the very first BIG HOUSE Junior High Mission work camp. With only 25 people, these students and adults scraped and painted Mt. Selman United Methodist Church.

Today, in 2006, there are approximately 1,000 participants, coming from 60 United Methodist congregations all over Texas. This year, there are 10 camps stretching from Portland to Pittsburg, and branching out to the Austin area as well.

Cleveland, Executive Director of Big House. "So, as we celebrate yesterday,

we encourage the youth to not wait till tomorrow, and to make a difference for God in



our world, "Today."

BIG HOUSE would like to invite anyone who has been a part of BIG HOUSE in the past 10 years to come and be a part of a special night. Saturday, August 12, 2006 at the Moody Gardens Convention Center in Galveston, at 7 P.M., the ministry will host a celebration for BIG HOUSE participants.

Everyone is encouraged to come and spend the day in Galveston, perhaps enjoying Schlitterbahn Waterpark that is adjacent to the Moody Gardens Convention Center.

There will be live music by Wayne Kerr, and Dove, the award winning band By the Tree, who is set to release their new album in September. There will also be a special 10 Year Anniversary video, containing pictures of those who attended BIG HOUSE in years past.

To purchase tickets, the cost is \$7 per ticket. Tickets are limited, and will be sold on a first come first serve basis. Contact Kristen Cleveland, BIG HOUSE Executive Director at (281)930-1300 Ext.326, or by email big-house.tx@yahoo.com.

For more information visit the BIG HOUSE web site at www.bighousetx.org.



Students paint a United Methodist Church in Bryan, Texas.

BIG HOUSE works on mostly small churches that are in need of repairs. Sometimes the ministry branches out and does work for some of the aging members of the congregation as well. The youth and adults pay \$90 to come on Thursday and work Friday and Saturday, then depart back to their home church on Sunday after worshipping at their host church.

Christian musician Wayne Kerr wrote and recorded a special song for BIG HOUSE that will be used as their theme song this summer. Wayne graciously agreed to do this task, and we were blessed with an amazing theme song that is titled, "Today," says Kristen

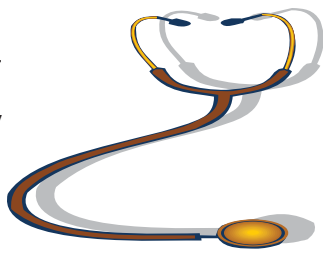
Monthly Reminders for Healthy Living

focus on men's health

Men have some good reasons to start thinking about their health. Statistically men in America die several years younger than women and are at greater risk than women for many major health problems. Men in America are more likely to die of heart disease, strokes, most cancers, accidents, homicides, suicides and are in overall poorer health than women.

Many of these health problems are avoidable by improving diet and exercise habits, but statistically men are less likely to practice healthy lifestyles than women.

There are cultural attitudes about men which increase their health risks. Acting on beliefs that it's more "manly" to tough pain out, act recklessly, stifle all emotions (except anger) and not ask for help are unhealthy—especially when combined with the typical American diet and lack of exercise. Adopting healthy behaviors and taking precautions can help men to live longer and with less complications. Try some of these tips!



Tips for a Healthy Life for Men:

Eat Healthy: What you eat and drink and also what you do not eat and drink can certainly make a difference on your health. Try to get 7-9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Choose whole grains rather than white starches, and avoid foods that are high in saturated fat to reduce your risk for cancer and other chronic conditions

Maintain a Healthy Weight: Obesity is an epidemic in America today and it may be getting worse. People who are overweight and obese are at a greater risk for heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. Eat better, get more exercise, and talk



to your health care provider about a healthy weight for you.

Get Regular Exercise: More than 50% of men and women in America do not get enough exercise. It is recommended that we get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. It does not take a lot of time or money but it does take commitment.

Be Smoke Free: Complications associated with smoking tobacco include lung disease and cancer. Second hand smoke, the smoke you inhale from others, also affects your health. If you smoke, quit today! Helplines, programs, counseling, medications and other forms of support are available to help you quit.

Get Routine Exams and Screenings: Based on your age, health

history and lifestyle, your health care provider can determine how often you need to be screened for certain diseases and conditions. These include high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases, and cancer of the skin, colon, and prostate.

Get Appropriate Vaccinations: Vaccinations are not just for kids. Protect yourself from certain illnesses and diseases by getting the appropriate vaccination if you have a certain job, travel to certain places, have a certain lifestyle, or have certain health conditions.

Manage Stress: Stress from work and other situations can pose as a health threat, so protect your mental and physical health by engaging in activities that help you manage your stress at home and at work.

Assess your stress level and try to balance obligations to your family and your employer.

Be Safe and Protect Yourself: Safety and protecting yourself entails fastening seat belts, applying sunscreen, wearing

helmets, and having smoke detectors for example. It includes everything from washing your hands to watching your relationships. Men at work die most frequently from motor vehicle incidents, machine-related injuries, homicides, and falls. Take steps to protect yourself and others wherever you are.

Be Good to Yourself: Health is not just the absence of disease, it is a lifestyle. It's important to take time and be good to yourself, so get a good amount of sleep, relax after a hard day, and regularly enjoy a hobby. Take steps to balance home, work and play, and make healthy living a part of your life!

Carol Bruse enjoys busy 1st month in clergy excellence - *continued from page 1*

said. "Reading a book and months later being attached to a mentor may not appeal to them. We need to define ways that we as pastors and congregations can – after God does his part – follow up and connect them with other kids,

Seminary just does not prepare us to lead local congregations.

give them online resources, let them know that we really need them."

Like many clergy in the Texas Annual Conference, ministry was not Bruse's first career. She worked as an estimator and contractor, and entered ministry at age 35. "It has not been that long since I was a candidate," she said. "I can empathize with how frustrating and exciting it is to have that calling from God. I still remember all the questions I had and all the support I needed from the wonderful mentors who opened their doors to me."

Among those mentors was B.T. Williamson, Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence,

who was Bruse's pastor at the time she answered the call.

Obstacles and opportunities

Bruse estimates that a fraction of clergy considers the conference office to be their advocate and another fraction considers the office to be irrelevant.

"We won't be able to support and encourage them unless they let us," Bruse said.

"We've not had a system of healing. We're ready to put that system in place ... There's fear out there – I sense it very visibly. There's fear of the unknown, because you don't know what change is going to mean. Overcoming that fear is critical."

To help overcome fear and encourage dialogue, Bruse and Williamson will have listening sessions with the clergy and laity of every district.

To further illustrate the challenges of the center, she turns to Exodus 17, after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and before they reached Mt. Sinai. They, like today's Christian servants, were faced

with war.

"Joshua was sent to choose people to fight, and he would hold the staff over the battleground," Bruse said, adding that when the staff was extended they succeeded, and when the staff was lower, so was the strength of the people. "Aaron and Hur were up there with him, and they went and got a stone and they held his arms up.

"That's how I envision our ministry. Our pastors our tired and many, in their minds, are fighting battles between good and evil in their congregations. We can bring them a stone – to have rest and sabbatical. We can hold their arms up – give them the training and resources to hold their arms up."

When she's not helping to hold up the arms of pastors, Bruse loves to spend time with her family, which includes her husband of 22 years, Mark, who works in marketing for ExxonMobil; Jennifer, who is a junior at Texas Tech, and Stephanie, who is a junior at Deer Park High School. A native of Kingsport, Tenn., she also enjoys the theatre, walking, reading and rock 'n roll.

Discover the power of prayer

By Cindy Masterson
Celebration Conference Board

Celebration Women's Ministry will host, "Equipped to Pray," a Leadership Connection event to be held Saturday August 26, 2006 from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM at First UMC, Longview, Texas.

Workshops on prayer, worship, officer training, and ministry teams will be offered for the members and leadership of local chapters of Celebration.

Barbara Byerly will be our guest speaker. Barbara inspires groups around the world with her teaching on prayer. She has traveled extensively both nationally and internationally in her teaching ministry.

She currently serves on the Executive Board of the National Prayer Committee and the Mission America Facilitation Committee. She has been the Intercessory Prayer Leader for Transform World 2005 in Jakarta, Indonesia, and for the

Lausanne Forum 2004 in Pattaya, Thailand. Barbara was our guest speaker last August at our event in the Houston area. She brings much experience and wisdom to share. You won't want to miss this opportunity!

We invite all women to come, ready to be inspired.

If you are on the leadership team of your Celebration Chapter, this is your chance to fulfill your requirements for continuing Leadership Development. All women are invited to "experience Celebration," benefit from Barbara's teaching on prayer, and learn more about this exciting ministry.

Cost is \$20.00 and includes breakfast and lunch. For information about registration, call Cindy Masterson at 903-794-7746 or email clmasterson@cablone.net.