



Cross Connection

a Texas Annual Conference publication
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The United Methodist Reporter

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Two Sections, Section A \$7.000 Volume 157 Number 5 September 8, 2006

Service Center tours, off to a good start

By Eleanor Colvin, Director of Communications



Service Center leaders R. Y. Williamson, Karen Dorris, Elijah Stansell and Rick Goodrich kick off tours.

Clergy and lay volunteers and local church staff members. They all came seeking different information and insights. Yet, they were united by the common thread of willingness to prayerfully learn and serve God in new ways.

Nearly 1,000 United Methodists turned out for the

recent Service Center Tour, which was held August 26-31 in five Texas Conference cities — Beaumont, Bryan, Friendswood, Houston, Longview and Nacogdoches.

"I am so thankful to be a United Methodist," said Rose Briggs of Georgetown (UMC) in the Northeast District. "I... I don't want to see the church die out."

"I'm hopeful tonight, and I'm thankful that my mother taught me the United Methodist way."

Briggs was among more than 150 gathered in Longview to learn everything from the latest plans for implementing the new ministry model to the many health and pension benefits and investment opportunities in the UMC to financial guidelines for the local church.

The Service Center tour was an expansion of last year's Office of Ministerial Services benefits tour, which the Rev. B. Y. Williamson, who is now director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, led. With so much happening to advance the conference toward its vision of "vibrant, growing congregations transforming lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ" a tour seemed like the most effective way to

Methodist minister is part of an interfaith visit to Turkey

Donna Adair, Director of Communications
St. Paul's UMC

On Sunday, September 10, Dr. Jim Blankston will share

with the community his observations from an interfaith visit to Turkey. Blankston is a senior minister of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, and this summer he visited Turkey by invitation of the Institute of



Dr. Roy Walter, Mohammed Cetin and Dr. Jim Blankston visit the ancient land of

Mohammed Cetin, director of the Institute, hosted the group.

During the spring, Blankston was part of a similar group that visited Israel under the auspices of the Anti-Defamation League's Coalition for Mutual Respect.

Blankston's talk, which will be accompanied by slides, will follow a 5 p.m. snack supper that will kick off this season's regular Sunday night activities called SNAC — Sunday Night's A Church. Activities for children through fifth grade and childcare will be provided.

At 5501 Main Street, St. Paul's Church is on the corner of Main and Bine/Bissonnet.

United Methodist related school featured in syndicated show



United Methodist affiliated Wiley College is believed for many reasons, including a Cappella Choir Throughout September, Wiley College is the featured school on the nationally syndicated radio Joyner Morning Show from program. Joyner encourages listeners and alumni to finan-

cially support historically black colleges and universities, by selecting one school each month to receive intercessory donations and matching funds from his foundation. Mail donations to: The Tom Joyner Foundation, PO Box 630495, Irving, TX 75063. Or, donate online at www.blackmen-

Equipping Laypersons for Pastoral Caregiving



Dr. Ronald Sunderland

An in-depth training program for qualified lay persons interested in hospital ministry is being offered by the Department of Spiritual Care and Education of The Methodist Hospital System.

Supported through the generosity of the Hamill Foundation of Houston, The Lay Ministry Institute brings the finest resources to this education's top opportunity. The Rev. Ronald H. Sunderland, Ed.D.,

a nationally recognized leader in lay ministry training, is the primary faculty person for the Institute. Dr. Sunderland combines a wealth of examples of laypersons' ministry with his direct supervision to assist women and men in further developing their skills.

Other seasoned chaplains from the department also comprise the faculty, making presentations on a wide range of topics. The Methodist Hospital, an internationally renowned hospital, provides the Institute with a rich learning environment.

The training period is from October to May. It consists of two weekend sessions (October 20, 21, 28), and one monthly (2 hour) meeting on Saturdays through May. To

maximize their learning, participants prepare written reports on their ministry, receive supervisory comments on those reports, and discuss a variety of pastoral issues. They will conclude the program with increased feelings of self-confidence, greater capacity for empathetic listening, better ability to facilitate a patient conversation, and more effective use of spiritual resources.

Laypersons wanting to contribute to the hospital ministry of their congregation and / or those seeking to join The Wesley Ministry program of The Methodist Hospital System will benefit from The Lay Ministry Institute. Enrollment is limited. For information or an application, please contact Deatrice Fonce at 713-441-6297.

Service Center tours share information across the connection

Continued from page 1



Jana Smalley help unload materials from the Service Center tour bus in Nagardoches.

share information conference.

Continued on page 3

"The four center leaders are here as a way going as accounting back to the conference," said Williamson in opening remarks of the tour. "This is what we've been working on."

Perfect timing

Informal reports — and rumors — preceded the Service Center Tour, so many participants were eager to hear the official reports of conference leaders.

"I had heard the rumor that we spent \$1 million. And, we did. And, here it is," said Paula Ryburn, as she held up the new Church Transformation Handbook that was distributed at the Congregational Excellence seminar. "I can't wait to get home and read this."

Dr. Karen Dorris, director of the Center for Congregational Excellence distributed the books to workshop participants and to all churches and pastors through the charge conference packets.

"We want transformation to be the quality that all our congregations bear," Dorris said. "We've expanded the concept presented at Annual Conference of one pilot churches. We have jumped in with both feet to do a transformation project in 225 churches in the annual conference over a period of three years."

"We did that because we know that if we can get 225 congregations to become healthy, vital, disciple making, growing congregations, then we will have a paradigm shift from business as usual. It will then become the expectation that every congregation is a health and growing."

In addition to church transformation, the Congregational Excellence seminar also

explored options for new church starts and new faith communities.

A key piece of the new church start puzzle will be training. All new church planters will attend some form of leadership institute focused on spiritual discernment and the entrepreneurial skills needed to successfully launch a new faith community. The goal is to ensure that pastors are truly called to plant a church and are equipped to do so.

Rev. Stellan Arrington, who is an associate pastor at Shepherd of the Heart UMC and a student at Perkins Theological Seminary, said church planter training will be a valuable gift to new pastors.

"I'm at a new church start, and a lot of the things the pastor had to learn himself, as an understudy. I'm able to learn from him," Arrington said.

The Texas Conference is dedicated to training every pastor 2 years.

"We're now involved in investing in leadership not land, people not property," Dorris said.

Caring for the leaders

In addition to partnering with other centers to ensure clergy are equipped to make disciples, the Center for Clergy Excellence will focus on the spiritual care and professional development of pastors. Some of the services are already available to clergy, such as sabbatical care, a set number of years of service, marriage enrichment retreats.

Livingston First UMC pastor, the Rev. Mike Mayhugh affirmed the center's plans.

"We do this for 17 years, worked 60 hours a week," Mayhugh said. "I've taken my two weeks vacation, but I've never taken sabbatical ... It wasn't even an option, but now it is."

Rev. B.T. Williamson acknowledged that while sabbaticals were available there were obstacles: "People feared they would lose their appoint-

ment and didn't know how they could leave the church for more than four months."

Now, the conference is training intentional interim Ministers who will preach and offer pastoral care.

"The conference invests in you by paying the interim minister," Williamson said. The local church invests in you by paying your salary and letting you get away. And, we trust you'll come back a changed and better pastor."

Other opportunities were planned for clergy by the Academy Beyond Seminary and an annual itinerancy Event. The academy would coach clergy in the skills and provide practical on-the-job tips that seminary does not provide. The itinerancy event would be designed for pastors entering new appointments and the Staff Pastor Parish Relations com-



Participants listen to one the workshop presentations.

mittee members of the churches or creating new appointments.

Another project is modeled after a program the Louisiana Annual Conference calls Soul Journey. The program encourages those in their fifth or 10th year of ministry to intentionally reflect on the past and future of their ministry.

"In the Louisiana Conference it has really made a tremendous difference in how Jerry make that decision to remain committed in ministry," said Carol Bruse, Associate Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence.

Again, Mayhugh affirmed the value of mentor relationships and ministry assessments.

"Reflecting back on my young life ... I didn't know

enough to ask the questions," Mayhugh said. "Thank God I was in the Tyler District and there was an older minister who just said, 'Mike are you ok?' I said, 'Yeah, I'm just tired.' He said, 'It's your 6th year ... you'll be okay.' I didn't know what I was feeling, but



Dr. Elijah Stansell draws diagram of the new Service Center structure during his workshop Longview.

thank God someone mentioned me through that."

Overall, the Center for Clergy Excellence will care for pastors in every way, including offering services that seem too obvious to be true.

"This may seem like a ridiculous statement, but clergy need opportunities to connect with God," Bruse said. "If a pastor is off praying, people think they're not working. We want them in the office, at the hospital or out preaching. We need to encourage them to just get with God."

Ministry nuts and bolts

While some workshops explored the conference's long term approach to living into this vision and mission, others offered practical tips for church operations. The ABC's of Church Financial Management provided an overview of financial controls churches should implement, instructions regarding audits and a discussion of new tax laws.

"The laws change so much, so I'm here just to be on top of everything that I need to know," said Johnnie McPherson, who serves as the financial secretary at Halvick First UMC in the North District. "Anytime they have events like this it helps."

"Helping you the whole goal of the Service Center tour, and is certainly one of the goals of the Center for Connectional Resources. Conference

Treasurer Dr. Elijah Stansell Jr., also serves as director of the Center for Connectional Resources, and was pleased that his team was able to bring answers to tough financial questions out into the districts. "When you have problems with the finances, it usually

bleeds out into the rest of the church," Stansell said. "We are wanting to connect with the local congregation to do this kind of work."

Rev. Bill Jones, conference pension chairperson, also helped churches understand the new formulas for funding pastors' pensions. And, Jones had some suggestions for pastors.

"Every United Methodist pastor is going to have to find some alternative ways to save money," Jones said. "This pension simply will not do what the old pension did."

"Even though it's not as good as it used to be, it's still as good or better than other industries throughout the world. 2003 changed pensions for everyone — they will never be the same."

Clergy and laity also picked up that same sort of practical advice at the Center for Connectional Resources seminar. "I learned about the conference's electric co-op program, and that I need to look into my church's workman's compensation plan," said Evelynia Barrett Bishop of Wesley-McCabe UMC in Longview, who was recently appointed to the district trustee board. "My motto is you have to go to know."

Bolding on faith

The Service Center tour truly embodied the connection. Local congregations learned what is expected of

Community helps St. Mary's church celebrate 57 years

By Rev. Thomas Walker, Pastor, St. Mary's United Methodist Church and Thelma Jones, Cross Connection



Community resident enjoy a day of fellowship.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie has given us the vision, one for vibrant congregations equipped to change lives and futures for Jesus Christ. On August 12, 2006, St. Mary's United Methodist Church put to use, important components of that vision: radical hospitality, extravagant generosity and faith forming relationships.

St. Mary's celebrated its 57th anniversary by blessing the community with a picnic and it was a tremendous success, serving one of the most under-served and under-supported communities in the city of Houston. The church is fortunate enough to located directly across the street from Yellowstone Park. This beauti-

ful, well shaded community park was the host site for the picnic.

Under the leadership of Pastor Thomas Walker, the vision of St. Mary's is to become a church that serves its community. The picnic was a strong initiative toward realizing our vision. The congregation of St. Mary's rallied behind the vision of the community picnic and began stocking up 3 weeks in advance by supplying hot dogs, beans, chips and drinks.

Kate Mitchell, Church Council Chair said, "We wanted to make sure that we had more than enough to serve those who came. I was looking for God to multiply the food in order to meet the need of the people." Food and money was provided by the congregation, culminating on what was dubbed, Storehouse Sunday. Support however, continued to come in past the date.

The children were treated

to food, drinks and snow cones along with a martini, a chess, golf bags, fun and games; while many of the adults danced to the urban sounds of a local DJ. The high light for the children however, was an opportunity to place a single palm print, with their name and age on a white sheet, which allows the church to pray for them and their families. This sheet has been



Kids enjoy creating hand prints.

placed on the altar in the sanctuary for continuous prayer.

Pastor Walker believes that the church is God's greatest gift to the community. The gift of the picnic was well-received by the people of the community.



Upcoming Events

Celebration 2006 Annual Fall Luncheon

Priscilla Shier, the daughter of Dr. Tony Evans will be the featured guest this year. Priscilla is a bible teacher, author and motivational speaker. Her ministry is focused on the expository teaching of the word of God to women. Her desire is to see women not only know the uncompromising truths of Scripture intellectually, but to experience them practically by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The event takes place Saturday, September 16, 2006 at The Power Center - 12101 South Post Oak Blvd. The program time is 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m.

Cost for individual tickets is \$35 and \$350 for a table of 10. Space is limited, so don't delay. Register online at: www.stmaryshouston.org

or download the flyer and mail it to: Pat Praseol, 16402 Dawnbush Ct., Houston, Texas 77095.

For additional information contact Lynda Zelenka at 713-937-9388, ext. 106 or lynda@stmaryshouston.org.

"Empowering Ministries of Health: Mobilize, Transform, Advocate"

Dr. Gary Gunderson will deliver the keynote address, "Boundary Leaders" at the BIGGM Congregational Health Ministries Conference in Memphis, Oct. 8-11, 2006. His keynote speech will present concepts of boundary leadership and real-life lessons of how boundary leadership can be used to align faith and health assets and enhance the overall health of the community. Visit the BIGGM website at <http://biggm.org> or www.biggm.org for more information.

St. Paul's Choir in Sing Evenings Service September 24

The Choir of St. Paul's United Methodist Church will sing a Service of Choral Evening on the St. Paul's Sanctuary at 4 p.m. Sunday, September 24.

St. Paul's, 5501 Main Street is within one block of both

Museum District Metro Rail stops, and free parking is available in two lots across Fannin Street from the church.

Overcoming Worry, Anger and Self-Doubt

Are you tense? Do you worry about the future? Are you easily angered with family, co-workers, or others? These conditions will be addressed in the discussion called "Overcoming Worry, Anger, and Self-Doubt" by Dr. Carol Kernhaw and Rev. Bill Wade of the Institute for Family Psychology. The event will be from 5 to 7 p.m. in Furdren Hall of St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

This free introductory lecture is a prelude to a weekend event - once called MindHeart Training - experiential workshop that will be conducted also at St. Paul's on October 7-8.

For more information about the free lecture or the workshop, call 713-529-4588 or check www.stmaryshouston.org.

General Board of Church and Society and the Interfaith Pilgrimage of Peace

GBCS is still planning to make the Interfaith Pilgrimage of Peace Trip to the Holy Land Holy People on November 7-16, 2006, from that the ceasefire has been established and it is still "safe" in November. The Society of Biblical Studies assures us that all monies sent in for the trip will be refunded 100% if SBS cancels due to the concern for safety to travel in the area in November.

SBS Director, Peter Minns is in contact with local representatives in the Holy Land who keep him updated as to local safety and recommends we go forth with our plans with these understandings, and agreed to change the registration dates as follows: SBS by August 31st. Full payment by September 1st.

Additional information is available via the links to both the GBCS (General Board of Church & Society) and SBS (Society for Biblical Studies) home pages, www.gbcus.org and www.sbs-usa.org.

CLT offers feedback to leadership

By Rev. Tommy Williams, Pastor, Woodville UMC
Core Leadership Team, Secretary

The Texas Annual Conference Core Leadership Team recently reviewed the plans of the Centers of Excellence at its late August meeting at Conroe First UMC. All CLT meetings open with worship and prayer. Bishop Janice Riggle Huie led devotion at the recent meeting, and focused the group on hope.

Each center director addressed the team with the work done over the past 60 days. They each shared a number of goals for their center.

Rev. Rick Goodrich reported on the work of the Center for Missional Excellence. Highlights of which included a District Superintendent's Manual. This manual will define the new role of the D.S., and provide resources to train and identify clergy who might be suited for the role of superintendent.

The Center for Missional Excellence is developing a conference-wide plan for ethnic ministries that addresses

African-American church development in addition to Hispanic and Asian ministry work.

Also under the missional excellence umbrella is Higher Education and Campus Ministry. It was recommended that campus ministries be strategically linked with local churches and districts.

Dr. Elijah Stansell reported on the work of the Center for Connectional Resources. This center is calling on the CLT to further develop a "Culture of Accountability" document. CLT member Rev. Kenneth Livingston, pastor at First UMC, Wescianna in Houston, suggested that the CLT participate in the evaluation of the center leaders.

Stansell also discussed the reporting system for the "Focus on Fruitfulness." At the next meeting, he will focus his presentation on the function of the measures for fruitfulness and accountability.

Rev. B.T. Williamson reported on the work of the Center

for Clergy Excellence. The center has several teams working in a variety of areas, including clergy covenant groups and people focused on clergy recruitment. The center will focus on the spiritual formation and professional development of clergy, with the aim of equipping clergy to empower congregations.

Dr. Karen Dorris reported from the Center for Congregational Excellence. Her presentation focused on the church revitalization program, which center on 225 congregations in the annual conference for the next three years, and the related church transformation workbooks that are being distributed.

Dorris also reported on camping ministries and the mid-winter retreats coming soon. Some of the camping innovations include one week of camping at the beginning of the summer dedicated to senior high school students throughout the conference and shared curriculum that will be

Katrina - Lest we forget . . .

Posted on the web site of the General Board of Discipleship

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf region of the United States. More than one million people were under evacuation orders, and 1833 people died as a result of the storm. You

praching helps for the General Board of Discipleship worship web site.

The following poem is taken from, 21st Century African Litany Resources: "Toll the Bell." It may be printed.



Victims of Hurricane Katrina seek shelter from flood

are invited to say a prayer for the survivors and to ring a bell (you may substitute another act of worship) in memory of those who perished.

Dr. Safiyah Fouzia is the Director of Invitational Preaching Ministries at the General Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tennessee, and a clergy member of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. Safiyah writes

*Ring the bell,
Ring it loud and hard.
Ring it for those who
Will never escape
The images of some fifth
And hands stretched out for
mercy.*

*Let the bell give voice
to smothered sorrow
And smoldering rage,
Let its piercing sound
Lift those who sit in ashes
And keep company with the
ones
Still waiting at the wall of abandon-
ment.*

*Toll the bell
Ring it loud and hard.
Lift its sounds
Raise stagnation
And four continents
From armchairs of ease.*

*Toll the bell
Let it ring across the land
Long enough to awaken
Memory, our Teacher,
Long enough to castyah
Bondsmen into action,
Long enough to deter the rich
and powerful
From using the sounds of the
world's misery.*

*Toll the bell,
Make it sound.
Ring it long and hard.*

*For those who walk through
the flood
And for those who drowned.*

new churches in the Texas Annual Conference, and receive vital information about the "next steps" for the discernment process for potential new church start pastors. The event will be facilitated by Rev. Don Smith who serves as the Church Planting Strategist for the Texas Annual Conference.

Ever Thought About Giving Birth? What It Takes to "Mother" a New Church
In this workshop, participants will examine the trends of new church development in the United Methodist Church, consider various models of "mother-daughter" new church starts, receive information about the future role of "mothering" new churches in the Texas Annual Conference, and begin to discern the potential role of the participant churches in support-

ing the birth of a new church. This event will be facilitated by Rev. Don Smith, also.

Church Transformation Project

The Center for Congregational Excellence is making a transformation resource available to every congregation in the Texas Annual Conference. "The Church Transformation Workbook" contains a survey that will help each church determine its current status - transforming, maintaining, or declining and workbook information that will help the church begin the journey from decline or maintenance to transformation. The survey results will be part of each congregation's report at 2006 charge conferences.

The pilot church transformation process that involves 9

September 'Open House' Month

Igniting Ministry

United Methodist **Open House Month** reinforces

the promise of open hearts, open minds and doom made by the national television spots airing each September. These television invitations call on us to create a welcoming lifestyle in our churches - not ho-ormis or come-and-go.

A welcoming lifestyle is what we do, what we value and how we act all the time. Like a smile, it can be passed on.

Igniting Ministry is offering tips from United Methodist Churches across the nation that can help your congregation make welcoming a lifestyle to be shared:

Community Worship Services (Four Tuesdays Church, Michigan)

Plan weekly services during the month to reach out to others in the community. In addition to a September 11 memorial, services might be structured around the families and friends of HIV/AIDS patients, children's Sabbath, camp Sunday and a Heritage Day. Send out fliers, invitations and a pastoral letter to the community and advertise the events on the church sign.

Serve the Community Servants (Bell Buckle Church, Tennessee)

Invite the community to an after-church luncheon to honor people that impact the community positively. A meal after September 11 memorial service could recognize the contributions of police officers and firefighters.

Labor Day Services (North Bixbee Lane Church, Texas)

Ask by members to share information about their professions or how they came to the church and offer personal faith stories to acquaint newcomers with members more quickly.

A "New Bread" Ministry

(First Church, Texas) - Follow up on first time guests with gifts of fresh-baked bread.

Place each loaf in a decorative bag with the tag: "Bread is



invention as a symbol of life. The name of [church] Church family gives this loaf in a gesture of hospitality, along with an invitation to share in the life of our congregation as we serve our Lord. The bread of life." Include an information brochure, deliver the bread and offer assistance, answer questions and invite

the guests back.

Front Porch Hospitality (Hilbert Church, Tennessee)

Build an inside "front porch" to use as your welcome area. Add rocking chairs and a sign that says the word and offer refreshments while welcoming guests.

Saturday Night Live (Wesley Church, Tennessee)

Stage a comedy dinner show using church talent. Include a tour of the facilities and make use of newscasters are introduced to at least five other members.

Soul Cafe (Wincrest Church, Ohio)

Who says there's not such thing as a free lunch? Invite guests to a free luncheon after a Sunday morning worship service, with the guarantee that it will take no longer than a meal at a restaurant. "Sak" the gathering with church members who will sit at various tables and interact with guests during the meal.

Hospitality Teams (Church of the Shepherd, St. Charles, Missouri)

Form hospitality teams and encourage team members to choose captains and names for each team (such as Awesome Accommodators, Blue Angels, Holy Helpers or Purple People Greeters). Suggest that they dress in an appropriate color and provide multiple places for people to ask questions about your church.

Open House products are available from the Igniting Ministry web site:

www.ignitingministry.org or by

What's new in the Center for Congregational Development?

Thelma Jones, Editor
Cross Connection

The Center for Congregational Excellence has several major programs and events calendar for the future. Following is a brief description of the events.

Extravagant Generosity

Christophers of Honors Stewardship will lead a workshop discussing annual stewardship efforts, capital campaigns, and how to develop relationships with persons of means who can make significant gifts to ministry development.

Starting a New Church-Is it for us?

In this workshop participants will consider different models of new church starts, examine the characteristics of new church start pastors, discuss the emerging strategies for starting