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Members of the Texas Annual Conference are invited to congratulate and pray for the two new District Superintendents who recently were named to serve the Central South and West districts of the conference.

Rev. Lawrence L. Young will serve the Central South district and Rev. Joseph W. Fort Jr., will serve the West district. Young most recently served Jones Memorial UMC in the Southwest District. Fort most recently served Kingwood UMC in the Central North district.

The two pastors succeed the Central South district's Rev. Jim Welch, who has been appointed to serve as the senior pastor of Kingwood UMC, and the West district's Rev. Earl Bledsoe, who was elected bishop of the North Texas Conference.

Also new to the cabinet, are Rev. Jerry Pennington of the East District and Rev. William Taylor of the North District.

History of service

Fort is a fourth generation Methodist pastor, whose family members have served in the ministry for more than 100 years continuously.

A graduate of Beaumont High School, Lamar University and Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Fort has served as associate pastor of Fair Haven UMC; founding pastor of Mauriceville First UMC; and senior pastor of Crockett First UMC, League



City UMC and Kingwood UMC.

During his time at First UMC Mauriceville, the church was the fastest growing church in the former Beaumont District. While at League City, the membership grew by 20 percent along with a 40 percent increase in worship attendance.

During his 12-year tenure at Kingwood UMC (1996-2008), the church was active in local and global mission: a gift to Lakeview of \$150,000 was made and the congregation funded the construction of the first Methodist church in Tanzania's capital city of Dar es Salaam. Recently, the church pledged to fund a new church start, with a gift in excess of \$100,000.

Joe is married to Margaret, and the couple is celebrating their 25th anniversary this month. They have four children: Joseph III, Benjamin, David and Leslie.

Community servant

Pastor Lawrence L. Young is a native of Bogalusa, Louisiana, and his parents are Clime and Dorothy Young.



Young is a graduate of Dillard University and Gammon Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta. He also completed extensive study and practice of Pastoral Care and Counseling through the Doctoral Program at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, in Evanston, Ill.

Ordained as a Deacon of the Texas Annual Conference in 1990 and as an elder in 1992, Young was appointed to serve Jones Memorial UMC in 2003. Prior to this, he was the founding pastor of Abundant Life UMC in Lufkin, where he served for 12 years.

Additionally, he serves on the Southwest District Committee of Ordained Ministry; president of Black Methodist for Church Renewal (BMCR) Houston Chapter; Southwest District Youth Camp Coordinator, and is a mentor for new candidates for ministry in the Texas Conference. He has also established the Sunnyside Community Development Corporation, the

Jones Memorial UMC 501C(3), where he serves on the Board of Directors.

Young was also featured in the "Book of Alzheimer's for African-American Churches" as one of the first African-American pastors to help address issues and create awareness on Alzheimer's in the African-American church. Jones Memorial has now established an Alzheimer's support group for their members.

Lawrence is married to Karen, and they have two sons, Blair and Jeremy.



Feeding the lambs

Columbia UMC's *Feed My Lambs* ministry is a huge success in West Columbia, Texas. See entire story and other mission focused articles, including an overview of the 2008 Mission Forum on pages 4-7.

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



The mission of the Texas Annual Conference is *to equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.*

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‘Weaving a web of connections’

Conference hosts workshop on using internet technology for effective ministry

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

From online bible studies offered through the Nu Faith Community new church start to the virtual prayer circle of Chapelwood UMC, Texas Annual Conference churches are employing innovative web-based methods of reaching people for Christ.

In an effort to equip more local churches to engage in similar ministry, the Texas Conference Office of Communications and the national United Methodist Communications office in Nashville, will co-sponsor “Weaving a Web of Connections” on Saturday, September 13.

First United Methodist Church in Lufkin is the host site for the workshop that is designed for anyone who wants to develop or expand a web presence for their local church, district or conference organization.

Why the web?

Most churches know that

they are called to meet people where they are. What many churches don’t know is how many of their potential visitors and members are online.

According to the World Internet Stats July 2008 Report, there are 1.46 billion Internet users.

“Only 1 percent of all church websites are designed to reach seekers or the unchurched ... This makes the Internet a largely untapped ‘mission field’ for communicating the Gospel.”

Cheryl Hemmerle
United Methodist Communications

“There is no other more effective and efficient tool available to the church today that can reach 1.463 billion people simultaneously and continuously than the Internet,” said Cheryl Hemmerle, UMC Technical Training Specialist. “The ‘Weaving a Web of Connections’ one-day training event was developed in response to an overwhelming need for more hands-on training and practical application of Web and Internet technology tools for effective ministry.

“Our goal is to help every local church develop a dynamic Web presence that meets the needs of its target audiences and delivers its key messages, min-

istry and mission with the most cost-effective and relevant digital technology tools.”

WIIFM: (What’s in it for me?)

Through interactive presentations and hands-on demonstrations, workshop participants will explore a variety of options for

Weaving a Web of Connections by using internet technology for effective ministry.

The training sessions include: What Is Web Ministry?; User-Centered Design for Website Development; Welcoming the Seeker through Web Ministry and Maintaining a Dynamic Web Ministry with Tools and Tricks of the Trade.

“A successful workshop means that we have helped the participants to make meaningful connections between ministry and technology and identified at least one new tool or strategy they can implement immediately to begin or improve their Web presence,” Hemmerle said. “We hope people will walk away

with a stronger understanding of how to connect with members, visitors and seekers online and a list of free or low-cost technology tools, solutions and strategies they can use to sustain a relevant and interactive Web ministry.”

Success or fruitfulness will also mean shifting church communications to focus on and reach those who are seeking Christ.

“Only 1 percent of all church websites are designed to reach seekers or the unchurched,” Hemmerle said. “That means that 99 percent are designed for people who already believe or embrace the teachings of a particular religion or spiritual movement. This makes the Internet a largely untapped ‘mission field’ for communicating the Gospel to those who are searching or have yet to hear the Good News of God’s love.”

Register today through the Conference Communications Office or through the national UMC office. To register, visit training.umcom.org and select Weaving a Web of Connections: Texas and enter promotion code WEBTEX08 or call toll-free 1-888-278-4862. Eleanor Colvin, TAC director of communications, can also receive registrations at ecolvin@txcumc.org.

The \$75 registration fee, which covers meals and materials, is being paid for by the annual conference.

Texas Conference expands insurance coverage

Group Health Benefits offers new dental and vision plan

The Texas Annual Conference is offering participants of the group health benefits plan the opportunity to purchase dental coverage and vision care insurance. Participants must enroll by September 15.

The dental plan is an HMO type (DHMO) which requires the selection of a dentist from the list of participating dentists in the plan.

The vision care plan consists of coverage of all routine eye care, including exams, eyeglass-

es (lenses and frames) or contacts.

In the past, the annual conference endorsed dental and vision insurance providers, but the conference was not responsible for drafting or negotiating the policies.

“We’ve received more and more requests for the dental and vision program,” said Lydia Lopez, benefits manager. “So, now, rather than have churches be the responsible party, the coverage will be offered under

group health and the Annual Conference will be the responsible party for drafting policies and collecting payments.”

Insurance practices vary among annual conferences; some offer vision and dental coverage and some do not. This change helps the TAC better serve the health needs of its employees and their families.

“We have gotten good responses from people who are interested in the program, from

young clergy families to retirees,” Lopez said. “There is quite a bit of interest.”

For more information on the benefits that are provided, contact Melonie Joseph in the Conference Benefits office at 713-521-9383 or 1-800-606-0350.

To enroll in the plan or to get more information, visit the website, www.txcumc.org/dentalvision.



A new church that nearly failed finds new life in Living Water

By The General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church

Worship attendance at Living Water United Methodist Church, a new congregation in Pearland, Texas, peaked at 225 in the fall of 2006.

Then it dropped the next week to under 200, and kept dropping week by week until it reached 70.

That was not the way it was suppose to happen! The new church start on the south side of Houston had been widely publicized and praised in the Texas Annual (regional) Conference of the denomination.

“I felt like a failure,” the pastor, Rev. Ed Jones, told the

2008 United Methodist School of Congregational Development, meeting at two sites, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Orlando, Florida, with satellite links for some plenary addresses and worship.

Rev. Jones, speaking from Grand Rapids, said: “We took

Living Water Church developed what it calls GAUGE, which lists five values:

- Grow spiritually
- Authentic relationships must be developed

“I was listening to words on church-growth charts, but not listening daily to the word of God. We were too caught up in building the church and not enough in connecting the disconnected.”

**Rev. Ed Jones
Living Water UMC**



Rev. Ed Jones and wife, Sylvia attending a premiere of the movie, *Why Did I Get Married?* by Tyler Perry. The premiere was used one of the tools used by Rev. Jones to create a couples outreach ministry.

six months to sort things out and now we are in a new day. I realized I was listening to words on church-growth charts but not listening daily to the word of God. We were too caught up in building the church and not enough in connecting the disconnected.”

“We were taking our values from charts when we needed to place our values in human hearts,” said Jones.

The United Methodist Church as a denomination in the United States is not unlike Living Water congregation in the fall of 2006: it is losing participants, and has been since its membership peaked in the 1960s at around 11 million.

Starting new congregations in the U.S. is a current United Methodist priority. As a global denomination, however, its membership is growing in Africa and Asia.

The annual School of Congregational Development, focused on the U.S., is jointly sponsored by the General Boards of Discipleship and Global Ministries. Five of the ministry study tracks this year deal with starting new congregations.

- Use gifts for ministry
- Give cheerfully
- Extend a hand

It also has a strategy taken from chapter 5 of the Gospel of Luke. The passage tells the story of how Jesus noticed two empty boats and fishermen washing their nets on the lakeshore of Gennesaret. Jesus boarded Simon’s boat and eventually asked him to put out into deeper water for a large catch of fish.

The Living Water strategy understands that we begin at the shoreline in our faith venture and gradually move out, until we are “living deep” in the Spirit, empowered “to serve living water to a thirsty world as we grow toward our full potential to share the love of Christ with others.”

Jones advised persons who want to start new churches to engage the disconnected, especially disconnected families, and to “preach Jesus.”

He said that Living Water Church uses cultural resources, including popular movies, to



Rev. Ed Jones, pastor of Living Water United Methodist Church in Pearland, TX, addressed the Grand Rapids campus of the 2008 School of Congregational Development.

Image by: Chris Heckert

Source: Evangelization and Church Growth

engage people, to get their attention, and move them out from the shoreline to deeper waters.

“If you trust God, God can trust you,” said the pastor, and that relationship with God makes it possible to share the love of God with the broken, wounded people of the world.

Jones, a former firefighter, did his theological studies at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, and Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.

He credits his wife, Sylvia, a dentist, and his three children, with providing a domestic connectedness that permits the stability needed for ministry.



Columbia UMC offers the love of Christ through successful outreach ministry



By **Thelma Jones**
Editor, **Cross Connection**

The vision of the Texas Annual Conference is to have vibrant, growing churches changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ.

Columbia UMC has not only embraced the vision; this church has taken it several steps further. *Feed My Lambs* is a ministry that provides sack lunches for children in the surrounding community.

"Columbia UMC started this ministry because of a teacher in our congregation who recognized the need that children would have for food during the summer months," says Sue Salter, Director of Program Ministries for the church.

"During the school year, nutritious meals are provided for school age children for breakfast and lunch. However, when the children are out for summer vacation, those healthy meals may also be on vacation," said Salter. The program is based on the scripture in John 21:15, where Jesus tells Peter, "If you love me, feed my sheep."

Feed My Lambs is a ministry that involves the entire community. The program has several partners, which include St. Mary's Episcopal Church, First Baptist of West Columbia, Bethel Presbyterian, and St. John's Altar Guild.

Salter believes that this is a ministry that has a positive

impact on the community because the church is not only meeting the community's physical needs, but their spiritual needs, also. "It brings us face-to-face with other needs and issues that people are facing," she says.

To date, over 185 lunches per day are being delivered. Salter continues, "The success of this ministry is based upon God's will. He wants it to happen and it continues to grow."

Indeed, the *Feed My Lambs* ministry of Columbia UMC lives out the vision of vibrant, growing congregations, changing lives and futures for God's people.



The photos highlight the success of the *Feed My Lambs*' ministry of Columbia UMC. The church initiated the program, expanded it to include the participation of other ministry groups in the area. Over 1,800 lunches are delivered to children monthly.

Mission Forum 2008

Partners In Mission of the Texas Annual Conference will host, the **Mission Forum** of 2008, a complete interactive, "hands on" experience, Saturday, September 6 at Huntsville UMC.

Multiple options will give each participant the opportunity to hear from the Project Coordinators of their choice and learn about mission sites.

Geographic groupings will allow each person to grasp the ministry of missions through the Partners In Mission program of the Texas Annual Conference. You can walk through the world in one day!

Each presentation will be conducted by a Project for Humanity Coordinator responsible for a specific area. Participants will be given vital information on the projects, what the teams will be doing, how to get involved and where to start.

Mike and Libby Flowers, missionaries from Fargo, North

Dakota and Nate Paulk of SIFAT (Servants In Faith And Technology) will be guest presenters.

In addition to the presenters, there will be two workshops. Missions 101 will cover all you need to know about getting your church started in missions through various connectional or partnership programs. Safe Sanctuary Certification will prepare you to be ready to serve on any Mission Project or on a Disaster team.

The Missional Excellence opportunities will include our partner programs such as Nothing But Nets, Big House, UArmy, Mission Milby, Habitat, Committee On Native American Ministries, Early Responders, Prison Ministry and so on. As you walk through the exhibits you will find even more ways to reach out... "**Beyond the Walls**" to become a Missionally Excellent Church.

Schedule

9:00 a.m.	Registration
9:30 a.m.	Opening Keynote Rev. Tommy Lyles
10-10:25 a.m.	Project Presentations
10:30-10:55 a.m.	Project Presentations
11-11:25 a.m.	Project Presentations
11:30-11:55 a.m.	Project Presentations
11-11:55 a.m.	Workshops Mission 101 Safe Sanctuary Certification
12 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch Mission Store and Missional Excellence Opportunities
1-1:25 p.m.	Project Presentations
1:30-1:55 p.m.	Project Presentations
2:00– 2:25 p.m.	Project Presentations
1-:30-2:25 p.m.	Workshops Missions 101 Safe Sanctuary Certification
2:30—3:00 p.m.	Sending Forth





Sabine Pass UMC gets face lift

Three years after Hurricane Rita, mission team restores parsonage

By Janice Williams
Asbury UMC

It's been almost three years since Hurricane Rita slammed into the Texas gulf coast and recovery is still continuing. One of the many projects yet to be finished is the new parsonage for Sabine Pass UMC.

Work began in January 2007 and since then 19 mission teams have traveled to Sabine Pass. Many teams have combined work on the parsonage with work on homes in the community.

Asbury member Albert Janda learned of the need for volunteers to work on the parsonage while attending a Partners In Mission training session in the spring. He quickly put together a team.

The 12-member adult mission team from Asbury UMC spent a week in June floating and taping

dry wall and installing siding on the parsonage porch. Janda felt going to Sabine Pass "was a way to share the love of Christ with a community who had suffered so much damage."

Team member Dixie McAdams agreed that it is important to let the community know that others are willing to come and serve. "I felt the need to go and help those in the community who are trying to restore their lives. I know that I gained far more from the experience than I gave. The people of Sabine Pass have a great attitude. Their faith helped strengthen mine."

A highlight of the week was the community dinner on Wednesday night. Team members had the opportunity to fellowship with the people in the community. "The Wednesday

night community meal was one of the most meaningful parts of the mission trip," reports team member Barbara McFarland. "Getting to meet the people of Sabine Pass was a blessing. Pastor Kitty Key and the community members were so welcoming to our work team. Hearing their stories made me realize how many people are still working to rebuild their homes."

Pastor Key thanked the Asbury team for their help. "Just when the residents get a little down, still waiting on assistance to rebuild, still living in travel trailers...here come the Methodists and hope springs again. We are so thankful for everyone who has shared their gifts and graces, their love and hugs, and their prayers."



Top Photo: Janice Williams perfects her technique of taping drywall. Bottom Photo: (left to right) Janice Williams, Albert Janda, mission team leader and Pastor Kitty Key of Sabine Pass UMC.

Never too young for risk-taking missions

By Rev. Jeff Hastings
First UMC Hallsville

In July 2008, 11-year-old Kendal Crawford saw her dream for missions realized. Months earlier she had heard Rev. Jeff Hastings preach about risk-taking missions and knew she had to do something.

After church she approached the pastor and asked if she could organize a mission project. She told him that she wanted to do something for children and Nothing But Nets, a project she had learned about in Vacation Bible School the previous summer.

These projects were what she thought God was calling her to work for. Receiving her pastor's blessing and encouragement, Kendal began planning. Kendal's church, FUMC Hallsville, began having a *Mission Moment* each month during the worship service to educate people about the great

variety of missions the church supported. She got in touch with Jacki Bickel who was heading up the project and was encouraged to present Nothing But Nets in July.

The risk-taking factor immediately became apparent to her. She had thought she could just write an article in the newsletter and set up a display. Instead, she was being asked to get up in front of the whole congregation and make a presentation.

Kendal said she immediately thought, "Excuse me? Crowds are very scary for me. I can't do that." Then Kendal said she realized that "God has a team and he was putting me on the team in a special position – working to help children. If God called me to do it, he would help me do it, no matter how scary it was."

That thought of being on a team birthed the idea of doing a skit. She planned to dress as a basketball player, bounce and

pass the ball a few times, and then "shoot a basket." Kendal asked her dad, Tony, to be her partner in the skit. When she shot he would exclaim, "Nothing but net!" She would then go on to explain to him about another "Nothing but Nets" and invite him and the whole congregation to help save the life of a child.

On the day Kendal was to actually get up in front of the church, she says she was very scared and was afraid she would mess up in front of everybody. "It is hard to feel God's presence when you are so nervous," Kendal observed. "But I had to do it anyway, because it was what God called me to do. Besides," she added, "Dad was there to calm me down

enough for God to take over."

As a result of Kendal's efforts, \$672.00 was collected that day. What's next? She is

not sure yet, but she knows this, "you are never too young to do risk-taking missions for God."



Kendal Crawford "nets" a donation for the *Nothing But Nets* initiative from church member, Brenda Moore.



U.M. Army comes a-marching into town

Over 90 teenagers and adults recently invaded Henderson County

By Lauren Ricks
Athens Daily Review
(Re-printed With Permission)

The United Methodist Army's mission is to help people in need. Camp director John Beasley said the group, lodging at the First United Methodist Church in Athens, consists of about 50 high school students and 40 adults from multiple United Methodist churches around Texas.

Each camper is responsible for paying a \$200 registration fee, according to Beasley. The U.M. Army has 1,500 work sites in 48 states, with about 4,000 participants every summer, according to a U.M. Army information sheet. "Most of our projects are through referrals from home health services or people in church," Beasley said.

Beasley said the group will do projects such as building wheelchair ramps, cleaning and hauling off junk from yards, painting houses, replacing doors

and patching roofs.

"It is hard work. By the end of it you are worn out," Beasley said. "But you are ready to go back the next year. It's kinda one of those deals that once you go, you want to go back."

"The number of sites we complete isn't important. If we complete one or we complete 100 it doesn't matter," Beasley said. "It's the relationships we build between the kids and the clients. It's the number of lives

easy to be a Christian here," Beasley added. "It's hard to be a Christian at home." He said the students all face the same temptations any other teen-ager faces. He said the camp helps strengthen the weak or new Christians

Wednesday painted an Athens couple's home. The Thompsons, Ardie, 86, and Lois, 83, have lived in the house for 43 years.

"A nurse was coming out helping Ardie because he was so sick," she said. "... The house needed to be painted."

Lois said the nurse told Dr. Richard David and he put their name on a list he was compiling for the U.M. Army. "These people have absolutely worked," she said. "And never in my lifetime has anyone volunteered to help me. I am ecstatic."

"The number of sites we complete isn't important. If we complete one or we complete 100, it doesn't matter. It's the relationships we build between the kids and the clients. It's the number of lives that we touch and share the gospel of Christ with."

John Beasley
U.M. Army Camp Director

Beasley said they have 60 potential sites. They should complete 40 to 50 sites this week.

that we touch and share the gospel of Christ with."

"These are normal kids. It's

by following the example of stronger Christians.

Sixteen-year-old Stephanie Wilson from Humble is a camper with the U.M. Army for the second year. She said she decided to come back because it's a good experience and she wants to help people. "This year I have learned more. You can't judge people by the way they look," she said. "I have gotten closer to God."

Jackie Sanderson, 17, of Neederland, is participating in her first U.M. Army. "I felt like I need to give back," Sanderson said. The crew Sanderson worked with on

She said her husband was released from the hospital three weeks ago. Ardie has Coronary Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, which has made him very weak, Lois said.

"It is overwhelming for someone our age because we are independent," she said.

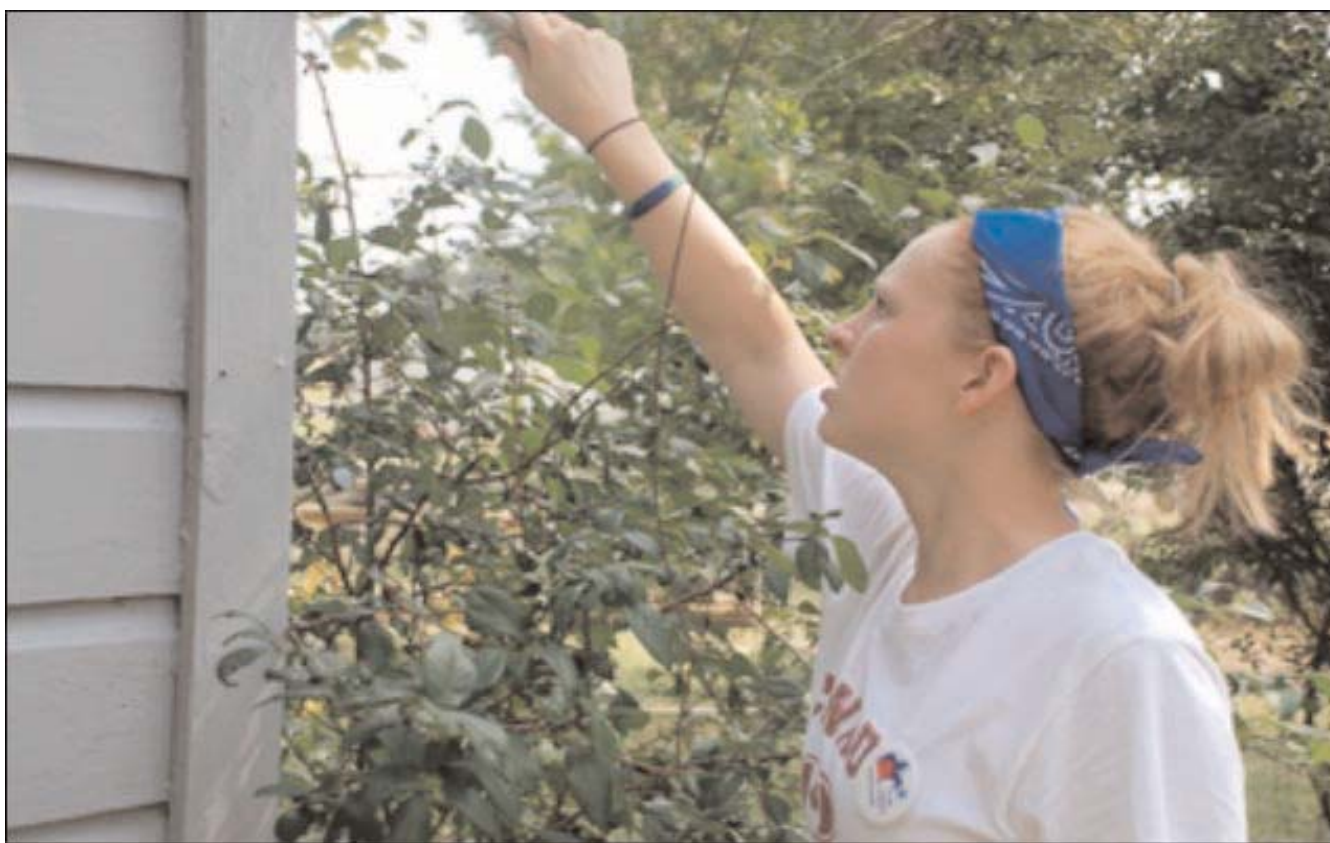
The group at the Thompsons' painted the house and began building a ramp for the front porch.

Group leader Bruce Burton helped the teen-agers with the work. He said this is his eighth year with the U.M. Army. "I keep coming back because of the kids and the look on people's faces when the job is done," Burton said.

Cody Yvarra, another veteran with the U.M. Army, said he enjoys the work, as well. "I've done this once before, and decided to do it again," Yvarra said. "It's a really fun thing to do." He said his favorite part is seeing the clients smiling faces.

"We've enjoyed them being here," Lois said.

For more information on U.M. Army, visit, www.umarmy.org/conference/texas.



Stephanie Wilson, 16, of Humble paints Ardie and Lois Thompson's house on Wednesday afternoon.

(Photo by Lauren Ricks)



Texas gift funds new opportunities to 'Encounter Christ'

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference of
the UMC

A harvest of ministry partnerships and a potential for mission is being reaped throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, as a result of seeds

Strength of the denomination

The 2008 General Conference acknowledged the fruitfulness of Encounter with Christ, and endorsed the future partnerships of American Methodists in the United States and autonomous Methodists in Latin America and the Caribbean.

enhancing the solidarity experienced among Methodists in the Latin America and Caribbean region," said Bishop Elias Galvan in the report of the Study Committee to General Conference. "The program known as Encounter with Christ in Latin America and the Caribbean has succeeded in rais-

throughout the Latin American/Caribbean region," Boots said. "The Texas Conference has given more than \$70,000 to this fund."

Among the most recent gifts from the TAC, was a \$10,000 donation from a clergy spouse that was given at the 2008 ordination ceremony to celebrate the ordination his wife, Rev. Kelly Sullivan of La Porte UMC..

Such gifts are indicative of the strong ties Texas Conference Methodists have to mission in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also is a nod to the potential for growing more mission partnerships in these areas.

"We have people here in the Texas Annual Conference from many – probably all – of the countries we are in ministry with within this region," Boots said. "This all creates a flow of missional energy – a flow of missional commitment, so that we are strengthened."

As an example of the flow of missional energy, Boots noted TAC Missionary Diane Wimberly, who serves Bolivia, and Bolivian native Nataly Negrete, who is now serving the Hispanic ministry of St. Paul's UMC in Houston.

For more information on Encounter with Christ, visit <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/connections/partnerships/encounter>.

“Encounter monies provide support for front edge mission projects in many of the countries where Texas Conference Partners in Mission have been serving.”

Wilson T. Boots
Encounter with Christ

planted in the Texas Annual Conference in 2004.

Encounter with Christ in Latin America and the Caribbean started in 1992 as a missional initiative to raise permanent funds to further and sustain ministry in those regions. The Texas Annual Conference made the project its Advance Special in 2003, and sewed a seed of \$40,000 into the ministry. When establishing the fund, the General Board of Global Ministries stipulated that the fund had to reach \$1 million before money could be disbursed.

Even while spending the summer serving in Bolivia through Encounter, Wilson T. Boots, director of mission interpretation for the ministry, is celebrating the attainment of that fund-raising goal and the recent decisions of the 2008 General Conference that will expand Encounter's reach throughout the world.

"Encounter monies provide support for front edge mission projects in many of the countries where Texas Conference Partners in Mission have been serving," Boots said. "Encounter complements the witness made by Texas Conference persons involved in mission partnership in the Caribbean and Latin America."

A General Conference plenary session formally addressed UM mission involvement with Methodists in these regions for the first time since the 1968 General Conference.

Additionally, delegates approved a petition to establish a Committee on Connectional Program, a body to be constituted by bishops of the UMC with bishops/presidents of the churches of Latin America and the Caribbean, with leadership of CIEMAL (Council of Evangelical Methodist churches of Latin America and the Caribbean) and the MCCA (Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas) as well representatives of the boards and agencies of the UMC.

"For the past two decades, the UMC has been committed to

ing more than \$1.5 million in permanent funds, the interest income from which is now enriching programs and projects of member churches throughout the region."

I was raising a sum in excess of \$1 million that enabled the interest revenue to be activated for mission.

"Some \$300,000 has now been provided from the interest monies of the Encounter Permanent Fund for mission partnership projects with 16 national Methodist churches



Countries encounter Christ

The following countries are engaged in ministry partnerships through Encounter with Christ in Latin America and the Caribbean:

Belize

Bolivia

Chile

Costa Rica

Guatemala

Haiti

Honduras

Jamaica

Mexico

Panama

An archive photo of Wilson Boots and Rev. Richard Laster, when the Texas Annual Conference made its first donation of \$40,000 to Encounter with Christ in 2004.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Mission Opportunities

Urban Mission

Mision Milby Community Development Corporation (a collaborative ministry of Servants of Christ UM Parish) is offering a 2½ day poverty simulation experience called, Urban Mission for youth across the Texas Annual Conference.

This experience exposes youth and their adult leaders to the plight and challenges of the homeless and impoverished populations of the inner city. Melissa Polk of St. Luke's UMC and Rev. Sherrill Corson of Servants of Christ Parish directed the first pilot program held June 2008.

Reservations are being accepted for the year 2009. For more information, contact Rev. Sherrill Corson at 713-454-6416 or sherrill.corson@servantsnow.org.

Fellowship Opportunities

St. Mary's UMC hosts "City-Wide Workshop Choir Concert"

In celebration of its 59th anniversary, St. Mary's UMC in Houston will host a choir concert on August 9, 2008 at the church.

St. Mary's anniversary will be celebrated on Sunday, August 17 at the 10 a.m. worship service and a worship service at 4 p.m. with Pastor Lawrence Young as the guest speaker and the congregation of Jones Memorial UMC as guests.

For more information, contact the church office at 713-747-1150.

United Methodist Men 2008 Fall Conference "Celebrating 100 Years of Men's Ministry"

The men of the Texas Annual Conference are invited to join us on August 23 to celebrate the

100 year anniversary of men's ministry in the United Methodist Church.

The conference will be held at Wesley UMC, 3810 North Major Drive, Beaumont, Texas 77713. This is a one day event starting at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 3:00 p.m. Registration starts at 7:30 a.m.

Our keynote speaker is Bishop Janice Riggle Huie. Breakfast and lunch will be served. Registration cost of \$30.00 includes meals and proceeds that will support the Texas Annual Conference United Methodist Men's missions.

For more information or to register, go to www.TCUMM.org or contact Ricky Tate at 409-246-3708 or rtateumm@yahoo.com.

141st Anniversary of Thomas Chapel UMC

Sunday, August 17, 2008 at 4 p.m., Thomas Chapel UMC will celebrate 141 years of Christian service and ministry to the city of Willis and the surrounding areas.

Rev. Rhanel Johnson will be the guest speaker. Join us and the congregation of St. James UMC, Houston for a time of worship and fellowship. For more information, contact Nancy Jackson at 936-344-6728.

United Methodist Church Night With The Astros

League City UMC will sponsor a night at the Astros baseball game, Friday, September 12, 7:05 p.m. at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas.

As a fundraising event for Lakeview Methodist Conference Center, \$2 from each discounted \$9.50 ticket will benefit the Center. Plan to attend early to watch the League City UMC choir sing the national anthem.

The deadline to order tickets is August 10. Checks should be made payable to League City

UMC. For more information, contact League City UMC at 281-332-1557.

Cruise, Anyone?

Riverside UMC will host a church cruise in 2009 on Carnival Cruise Lines. The 4-day cruise will take place February 26 through March 2, 2009, leaving out of Galveston, Texas.

A deposit of \$50 is required. Contact Verna Kearney at 713-748-5730 for additional details and information.

Learning Opportunities

"Fig Leaves, Families and Pharoahs: Genesis as Gospel"

The Old Testament Book of Genesis, with its themes of creation, sin, covenant, and redemption, forms the "theological bedrock" for the Jewish and Christian faiths, states Dr. William (Billy) Abraham, Albert Cook Outler, Professor of Wesley Studies at the Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

He will examine the book of Genesis as a theologian rather than biblical scholar at Perkins Lay School of Theology at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston, on Saturday, August 16.

Moving from an assessment of the biblical stories as theological propaganda aimed at the paganism of the ancient Near East, this course will then mine the book's riches for understanding God, humankind, and salvation; recapturing the indispensability of the Hebrew Scripture for Christian faith.

The class includes a morning and afternoon session and lunch. Advance registration of \$50 will be accepted until August 11 after which one may register at the door for \$60. A link to the online registration form is available through St. Paul's homepage,

www.stpaulshouston.org.

Marvin UMC to host Pirtle Series

The theme for the 2008 Pirtle Series lectures is, *Who Will Be Saved?* Everyone is invited to come and explore this question and refocus your faith with author and theologian, Bishop Will Willimon of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The lectures are scheduled for August 16-18, 2008. Reservations are needed for meals and child care by August 11. For additional information, contact the church at 903-592-7396 or info@marvinumc.com.

Free Educational Conference for Family Caregivers

It is estimated that one in four families is providing care for an older member. Others also find themselves ill-prepared to provide long-term care for a child or other family member with a chronic illness or disability.

Providing ongoing care often strains family relationships, presents financial challenges, and creates an emotional roller coaster. These and other related topics will be addressed in an educational conference for caregivers on Saturday, August 16, 2008.

This conference is presented by Interfaith CarePartners and St. Luke's United Methodist Church. Underwritten by Bridgeway Charitable Foundation, The Forum at Memorial Woods, and Good Earth Foundation, the conference is free to participants registering in advance.

The conference will be held at St. Luke's United Methodist Church located at 3471 Westheimer at Edloe in the Greenway Plaza area. Coffee and registration begin at 8:30 a.m. and workshops end at 2 p.m.

To register or to request a brochure, please call Interfaith CarePartners, 713-682-5995. Online registration is available at www.stlukesmethodist.org/care-giver.

2008 Greater Houston Leadership Education School

Make plans now to join us on September 20, 2008 when we will present, "Deeply Rooted in Christ" as our 2008 Greater Houston Leadership Education School. GHLES will be held at Memorial Drive United Methodist Church in Houston.

Our special guest, and keynote speaker will be Dr. Elijah Stansell, Treasurer of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Mark your calendars and join us for a spectacular day on September 20, 2008. Go to our website: www.ghles.org to register on-line.

Being One: Marriage Seminars

Being One is a seminar for engaged and newly married couples conducted at St. Paul UMC Houston quarterly.

Topics covered are: the natural stages of married life; how to deal with the inevitable and necessary conflicts that arise between two persons who are close; what is intimacy and how not only to achieve it but to maintain it and how money and sex can be metaphors for how we "talk to each other" in marriage.

Seminar leaders are Dr. Sherry Beeman and Dr. Bill Kerley. Married to each other, each is a former president of the Houston Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. The seminars, offered four times a year are free of charge for couples who have been or who are scheduled to be married at St. Paul's. For others, the fee is \$60. For more information, contact Katherine Jordan at 713-528-0527.