



# Cross Connection

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

## Methodists called to advocate for immigrants through prayer



**By Eleanor L. Colvin  
Texas Conference  
Communications**

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition, a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform, is inviting United Methodists to participate in Prayer, Renewal and Action on Immigration. This is a national effort to organize prayer vigils coinciding with the first recess of this session of Congress, February 13-22, when members will be home in their districts.

### Why host a vigil?

Hosting prayer vigils around

the country will give people of faith an opportunity to reflect on the deep scriptural, spiritual roots of our work to support immigrants in this country, highlight the moral aspects of the immigration issue and remember the real-life consequences of policies on immigrant families.

It will show representatives in Congress that humane immigration reform is a top priority for people of faith, and demonstrate a growing movement in support of immigration reform.

“For people of faith, prayer is advocacy,” said Rev. Cynthia Harvey, director of the Center for Missional Excellence in the Texas Annual Conference.

“General Conference has given

us a framework in the resolution called ‘Welcoming the Migrant to the United States.’ For United Methodists this is one way, we can advocate for change to keep immigrant families together and to return to our deep roots of scripture and our moral obligation on the issue of immigration.”

Everyone can be a part of this nation-wide effort — from the smallest community of faith to large suburban congregations or city-wide coalitions. Check out the following ways of participating:

Plan a public prayer vigil coordinated with other places of worship. This type of vigil could include your member of

Congress.

Plan a public prayer vigil for your community of faith, and if your congregation is already engaged in direct services related to immigrants and immigration, consider inviting an immigrant to share his or her story as part of the event.

Add a focus on immigration reform to an existing/on-going community event or activity— voter registration drive, community meal, ESL classes, and/or discussion for your worshipping community.

Encourage your clergy or lay leaders to offer a sermon, litany or other major focus on immi-

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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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# St. Luke's UMC co-hosts 2009 Caregivers Conference

## Equipping caregivers for their critical role

By Sally Penning  
Communications Ministry  
St. Luke's UMC Houston

"Hosting a free one-day conference on March 7 is one way to give back to those who give to others 365 days a year," says Dr. Earl Schelp, President of Interfaith CarePartners, the organization co-hosting the conference with St. Luke's UMC.

Caregivers experience a physical, financial and emotional toll in providing ongoing care to loved ones of all ages. They often have to quit their jobs and struggle with medical debt and insurance nightmares. What's a caregiver to do?

The Caregivers Conference will provide insight, support and resources for caregivers in the

Houston region. The conference includes 20 workshops on topics ranging from elder law, organizing the paperwork flood and managing medications to the roller coaster of emotions, financial challenges and how to manage new relationships, in addition to many other related needs.

According to a new report by the AARP Public Policy Institute, 34 million Americans provide more than 20 hours of unpaid care per week, making informal caregiving a cornerstone of U.S. health and long-term care. The report estimates the value of family caregiving now exceeds the \$311 billion spent nationally in 2007 for Medicaid.

The event begins at 8:30 a.m. and includes a complimentary lunch with registration, and exhibitors with targeted information and resources. Dr. Schelp will deliver the opening keynote address titled, "Forgiveness in Caregiving."

To further support caregivers, St. Luke's hosts an ongoing support group called "Common Ground: Caregivers Conversations" on the first Tuesday of each month from 10:30 a.m.- noon at St. Luke's Center for Counseling and Life Enrichment across from the church. Information about this group, which is open to all, is available by calling the Center at 713-402-5046.

To register by mail, fax or



phone, contact Interfaith CarePartners, 701 N. Post Oak Road, Suite 330, Houston, Texas 77024; (fax) 713-682-0639, (phone) 713-682-5995.

Online registration is available at

[www.stlukesmethodist.org](http://www.stlukesmethodist.org).

St. Luke's is located at the corner of Westheimer (3471) and Edloe in the River Oaks area.

# Inauguration inspires hope, awe for United Methodists

A UMNS Report

By Linda Green, Linda Bloom and Kathy Gilbert\*

United Methodists were among the throngs of people who descended upon the nation's capital to witness the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the



Bishop Gregory Palmer

United States of America. When Obama placed his hand on the 148-year-old Lincoln Bible and said, "I do solemnly swear," he became the first African American to ascend to the highest office in the land and added another layer to the foundation laid by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Michelle Gilstrap, 17, came to Washington with a group from Cascade United Methodist Church, Atlanta. She told her mother that she wanted to attend the inauguration because "Barack Obama is the George

Washington of our generation."

The significance of the day leaves Bishop Gregory Palmer "breathless and feeling like I'm walking on air."

"It is unbelievable that this is happening, and I am so grateful to be a witness to it," said

Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops. "The barrier of race has been removed from the highest office in the land." He urged prayers for the president and Congress as they face the challenges ahead.

Obama's inauguration carried a collective significance for

people of all races, but its significance was also different for each individual in attendance and watching worldwide.

"This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed—why men and women and children of every race and every faith can

**"But like our forefathers and ancestors in the faith and in the country who were able to make it [working together] happen, we have that same spirit . . . and if we work together, we too can move forward in our country's future together."**

Rev. Robert Besser  
Wesley UMC Beaumont

join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father, less than 60 years ago, might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath," Obama said.

Sandra Pipkin, a member of Riverside UMC in Houston, Texas attended the inauguration with a group from her church. "Getting an opportunity to witness history in the making was indeed spiritual and exhilarating," she said.

"Upon entering the Mall, I was

separated from my group; but never had any fear or anxiety because I was surrounded by

1.8 million other supporters of the dream for the future that we all share for our country and each other. Just watching the Jumbo-tron and seeing all who had come to witness one of the most memorable moments in history, sent chills up and down my spine. I am so proud of our country! God is indeed in charge!"

The Rev. Kelvin Sauls, a staff member of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries in New York, found the inauguration to "be an awesome and powerful experience." He recalled a line from the movie "Amistad," a 1997 film depicting a mutiny aboard a slave ship that came to



Rev. Robert Besser

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# Volunteerism labor of love for Vaughan

By Robin Y. Richardson,  
Marshall News Messenger

In the '80s, she worked as a hospice volunteer, assigned to assist and comfort every AIDS stricken patient in Greenville, S.C.

In 1986, she helped organize the first volunteer fire department in a rural community

**“I know I can’t do physically a lot what I used to do, but I can still do a lot and, wherever my heart calls and my faith supports, that’s kind of the direction I move in.”**

Marty Vaughan  
Waskom UMC Lay Leader

while in South Carolina.

In the late '90s, she became Waskom Volunteer Fire Department's first certified female firefighter, battling blazes whenever needed.

In the 60s, she became a Red Cross volunteer, lending a hand to those in need.

To Marty Vaughan, a Waskom volunteer firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician, volunteering her service is a labor of love. It is something that was instilled in her as a young girl growing up in a home of the Methodist faith where humanitarianism and philanthropy weren't constrained with political or racial boundaries.

“I was not really aware of the discrimination because I was raised in a home where it was who you were that mattered and it didn't matter what the color of your skin was.

“And, we were raised in a home where both of my parents were involved in things,” she added.

Her mother was PTA president and her father was on the school board. Her father's political preference depended on whatever candidate he supported at the time.

“One year, mother was campaigning for the Republicans and dad was for the Democrats,” she said, laughing.

“So, I was raised in a home where there was free thinking and you saw your parents involved.

“Whatever we wanted to do, mother and dad would encourage (us). So, when you're raised in that kind of home and you're raised in a denomination like the Methodist church where John Wesley, the founder of the

her faith.

The trip was the first time a church had ever been involved with “Nothing But Nets” program and it was the first integrated health campaign in Cote d'Ivoire.

“It was a privilege and honor to be able to work with the numerous volunteers from the Methodist Church there in

Cote d'Ivoire that had been trained to help at these decentralized sites as well as people from the health ministries who coordinated the whole thing in Cote d'Ivoire,” said Ms. Vaughan, who is also lay leader of her

church.

The program was provided through a partnership with the Cote d'Ivoire health ministries, the Measles Initiative, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and other entities. Nets were issued for children because malaria kills a child in Africa every 30 seconds, according to the Web site, [www.nothingbutnets.net](http://www.nothingbutnets.net).

In addition to the nets, children were provided measles immunizations, pills to deworm them and vitamin A pills to help prevent blindness. The five-day journey left Ms. Vaughan speechless.

“I still can't find the words to describe it,” she said, sharing how hundreds of people stood in line anxiously waiting on their nets.

Although her sister was concerned about her physically being able to go, Ms. Vaughan was willing because she felt she was equipped to endure harsh conditions in order to help save a life.

“Growing up in the country, you had to learn to kind of improvise and the same is true with fire and EMS because you don't always have what you need and you just always have to apply what you know to help.”

denomination, said, ‘Do all you can by all the means you can with all the people you can as long as you ever can’ all of these factors (have an influence).

“I know I can't do physically a lot what I used to do,” the 64-year-old insisted, “but I can still do a lot and, wherever my heart calls and my faith supports, that's kind of the direction I move in.”

## Mission Work

In November, Ms. Vaughan's heart and faith led her to a journey to Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa, with 35 fellow members of the Texas annual conference of the Methodist Church to fight malaria through the “Nothing But Nets” program by providing insecticide-treated nets to more than 700,000 children ages 5 and younger.

“I'm a member of the United Methodist Church here in Waskom. We're very mission oriented and community service oriented,” she said, noting the congregation supports various charities in the community.

“I guess it's a commitment to being a brother to your sister or a sister to your neighbor and your neighbor is not just the person next door in your community or necessarily your country,” Ms. Vaughan said of

## February is American Heart Month Emotions affect cardiac health

Provided By  
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Love, compassion, joy - - some of our most profound emotions are felt deep within our hearts. At the same time, some negative emotions can have a lasting physical effect on the heart as well.

Recent research shows a clear link between heart disease and certain stress-related emotions.

are, in themselves, not a big deal; in fact, they're part of being human, and they help us become aware of important issues that need to be addressed.

When toxic emotions aren't managed well and keep arising regularly in our day-to-day lives, over time they can have a harmful effect on the heart.

“Because negative emotions and heart disease are

**“Sometimes we may be effective in denying our emotions to ourselves, but we can't fool our bodies. Being aware of your emotions is a step toward wisdom.”**

Dr. Christine Maguth Nezu

“What science is finding is what our grandmothers knew all along: You really can die of a broken heart,” says Christine Maguth Nezu, Ph.D., co-author of *The Emotional Wellness Way to Cardiac Health: How Letting Go of Depression, Anxiety and Anger Can Heal Your Heart*.

Dr. Nezu explains that unrelenting depression can not only worsen existing heart disease, it also can increase the risk for the disease in otherwise healthy people.

The same is true of persistent anxiety and “toxic anger.” Research suggests when these emotions aren't managed well, over time they may raise blood pressure, block arteries, weaken the immune system, cause abnormal heart rhythms, or even lead to sudden cardiac death.

## Normal vs. Toxic

We all get angry or sad now and then. Occasional bouts of negative emotion

linked, and heart disease is the number one killer of Americans, why not take the opportunity to manage your emotions more effectively?” Dr. Nezu asks. She points to a large and growing body of scientific evidence related to anger, anxiety and depression.

## The findings are in

In the six months after a heart attack, being depressed can increase the risk for sudden cardiac-related death by more than 400 percent in one study of 222 heart patients.

According to another study conducted by nearly 40,000 health professionals, the higher a person's level of anxiety, the higher the risk that he or she will experience sudden cardiac death.

It has also been noted in a study of 2,000 men; those with high levels of hostility had more than twice the risk for death from cardiovascular disease than the men with low hostility scores.

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**Mrs. Eddie Taylor and Mrs. Sylvia Portier braved the cold and the crowds in Washington D.C. in order to attend the Presidential Inauguration. The ladies are members of Riverside UMC in Houston, Texas.**

## A hallelujah good time in 2009

**By Margaret Williams  
Riverside UMC**

A group from Riverside UMC in Houston, Texas went to Washington, D. C. to celebrate and witness the Inauguration of the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack Obama.

Some members went by plane, most by bus and others travelled with Gibbs Travel Agency, creating a very diverse group. This adventurous body of people consisted of young, old, male, female, choir members, ushers, greeters, lay leaders and Rev. Marilyn White, pastor of Riverside UMC.

The bus left Houston on January 18 at 6 a.m. Group Leader, Gail Sanford, welcomed everyone and gave updated information about the trip which included the addition of a Sunday morning worship service to take place after picking up other passengers in Beaumont, Texas.

The Beaumont/Orange

group joined the others on the bus at 8:40 a.m. As the bus began to roll, so did the good times. Natalie White was the song leader and Margaret Williams read Psalms 91. Rev. White delivered a message based on a scripture from Genesis 28 entitled, 'Dare to Dream.' Her powerful message was followed by an invitation to accept Christ which revealed that everyone on the bus were believers (Hallelujah time).

While traveling through Montgomery, Alabama, we had an 'Obama' rally for FM 97 News Radio. The radio personnel asked to interview the oldest person on the bus. Since no one would admit to being the oldest, Roy Robinson, a member of Riverside did the interview. Our bus arrived safely at the Ramada Inn in Carlisle, Pennsylvania at 10:45 a.m. Monday morning.

We were on our way to the Inauguration by 3 a.m. Tuesday morning. We arrived at the

shuttle drop off at 6:30 a.m. and joined a host of others in route to the Mall. Before huge Jumbo-trons there were plenty of shouts, dances, prayers, tears of joy and plenty of flag waving. Reporters were everywhere. One person in our group was interviewed by Gina Gaston from ABC Houston, Channel 13 News.

"It was by the Grace of God that I was able to attend this historical event. The Inauguration of President Barack H. Obama – to see people of all ethnic groups in the freezing cold laughing, talking and walking as if somehow it would keep us warm," said Mary Seymore. "They were wearing all types of coats, caps, and Obama paraphernalia; to see fathers and mothers with their children were such a site to see. . . . I was fortunate to see one of our church members, Dr. Everett Penn on Monday. I stood in the crowd crying with others crying around me and thinking, this has to be an act of

## JUSTPEACE

### Preparing churches to receive returning military personnel

JUSTPEACE, a facility that focuses on mediation and conflict transformation, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Discipleship will co-sponsor the annual 2009 Gathering event April 1-2, 2009 at the Upper Room Denman Building of the United Methodist Center, 1908 Grand Avenue in Nashville, Tennessee.

This year's event will focus on Trauma Healing – Preparing Churches to Receive Returning Military Personnel. Our speakers will include Shelly Rambo and Laura Bender. Ms. Rambo is Assistant Professor of Theology at Boston University School of Theology. Ms. Bender is a chaplain with the U.S. Navy. She is a United Methodist minister, who is currently the command chaplain on the USS New York.

Participants will receive a draft of materials to be provided to local church leaders to assist them in a healing ministry with returning veterans, with an eye toward the needs of veterans and our ability to address these needs. We will also have a chance to add our suggestions for improving these materials. The Gathering is open to all.

You can [register online](#) or send an e-mail to the JUSTPEACE office at [justpeace@justpeaceumc.org](mailto:justpeace@justpeaceumc.org).

The participation fee for this year's Gathering is \$100.

Participants are responsible for their own [travel and lodging arrangements](#). For assistance, please contact the JUSTPEACE office. Please make your check payable to JUSTPEACE and send it to our office at 100 Maryland Ave NE, Washington DC 20002.

God, and I am so grateful that he let so many of us witness this event in person."

At the end of the ceremony, there were many stories to be told about the experience. However, the main story of the day was the swearing in of the first African American President of the United States of America. "The wonderful experience of attending President Obama's inauguration is an ever-lasting blessing for which I am so very grateful," said Barbara Henderson. "Even among the huge crowd, it felt like we all belonged to a (an) ONENESS! The sparkle in the eyes of total strangers helped to warm the cold weather. Our immediate crew of family and friends (20 of us) included four generations. We had a couple of minor hurdles to cross and we did so victoriously; God does provide!"

The temperature was so frigid, some of us could not feel our feet; but we had

happy voices and happy hearts full of memories of the part we played in history.

Rev. Marilyn White shared her thoughts about the event: "Our bus trip to the Inauguration was truly a blessing from God. It reminded me of the first church in Acts who fellowshiped, prayed, broke bread together and had all things in common. Our bus was filled with a diverse group but we had good fellowship, prayed and praised God, and broke bread together. Standing in the Washington Mall with two million other people on inauguration day just continued the vision. As I looked around, there were many diverse people, all ages, all races, yet, we were able to fellowship together, praise God and lift up prayers for our new President. Thanks be to God for the new thing He is doing in our time."



# 'Learning to Sing in a Strange Land'

New book offers help and insight for those in prison and those who support them

By Anne Adams  
St. Luke's UMC

Writing from both personal experience and from a heart touched and strengthened by God's loving presence, Rev. Wesley Stevens shares his sudden entry into a struggling and painful environment in his recent book "Learning to Sing in a Strange Land: When a Loved One Goes to Prison."

In his book Mr. Stevens tells the story of his daughter's imprisonment, describes the Texas prison system and with scriptural and spiritual insights, relates how he and his family coped and learned through the experience.

"This book is about prison, a place once just as foreign to us as Babylon was to the people of



Rev. Wesley Stevens holds a copy of his book, *Learning to Sing in a Strange Land: When a Loved One Goes to Prison*.

Israel who were carried away from their homeland as captives," Rev. Stevens said, "It is about the heartbreak of our

daughter, Carolyn, being sent to prison and a solidarity of family support based on a love that would not let our loved one go. It is about learning to sing in a strange land."

The book developed out of his concern to share what he'd learned: "I started writing, first of all, as an impulse of release that I employ when something grabs hold of me so, that I cannot get it out of my mind. I had no expectation of being published. However, through contacts with those whose ministries included the writing of books, I gradually became convinced that writing something about prison might help many of those touched by the negative influence of incarceration."

The book is directed to those who have a loved one in prison, but also to those who do not, and for those, Mr. Stevens has a special purpose. "I hope that many who read the book will change the way they think about those in prison and those who need help who are being released from prison. I hope they will realize how many in prison are like the young woman or man who grew up next door who needs the kind of love that reconnects the broken chords of their lives so that once again they will vibrate with love, joy and peace."

A member of the Texas Annual Conference, Rev. Stevens served as Administrator of the retirement community Holly Hall from 1971 until his retirement in 1998. He and his

wife Marilyn attend St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas. His daughter Carolyn was released in 2004 and is currently employed by a well established Houston non-profit organization.

The book is available for order at the publisher's website [wipfandstock.com](http://wipfandstock.com), from Amazon.com, and from Cokesbury Book Store.

Mr. Stevens expressed his hope for the book and the reader: "I hope they are reminded sufficiently of God's songs and singing so that if he or she must ever contend with the power of the prison to limit human life, this important resource of faith expression will not be lacking. I hope the reader takes away an impulse to "praise God from whom all blessings flow."

## Methodists advocate for immigrants through prayer

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Elvira Arellano received sanctuary at Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago from August 15, 2006, to August 16, 2007. She was arrested and deported to Mexico August 19 after leaving the church to speak out on immigration reform, leaving behind her 8-year-old son, Saul, who was born in the United States and is a U.S. citizen.

A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey

gration in worship.

Include a prayer petition concerning immigration reform within worship.

Whatever form your event takes, your prayers will be joined with other people of faith around the country praying for protection for immigrants, empowerment of people of faith to speak out more boldly for immigrants, and moral courage for Members of Congress to

show leadership in enacting humane immigration reform.

**Register events**

Visit <http://interfaithimmigration.org> to register a vigil on the Interfaith Immigration Event Calendar.

The calendar can also be used to find out other events in an area. Registering is important, because it helps the coalition connect people and empower other immigrant advocates to get involved.

Even a small event, multiplied around the country, will send a powerful message to representatives in Congress that immigration reform is a moral issue that is important to people of faith and conscience.

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition has also provided a checklist to help organizers plan and publicize events. A sample vigil program and other resources can be down-

loaded from the coalition web site at [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org) or from <http://www.txcumc.org/vigilresources>.

The call to prayer is not for United Methodists alone. Harvey noted that a recent coalition conference call promoting the event included "every faith community from Oregon to Virginia."

Among those hoping to raise awareness across denominations were Catholic Charities, Episcopalians, the Jewish community, Church World Service, Presbyterians and more.

"Hosting a vigil," Harvey said, "is a way to unify faith communities in this effort to show Congress that this is a top priority for people of faith and that this [prayer] is what people of faith do."



# Volunteerism labor of love for Vaughan

*Continued from page 3*

She said her 13 years of experience as an employee at the YWCA in Greenville also prepared her to withstand dire conditions.

“Part of the time I was with the YWCA, I directed a camp, which was out in the boon-docks, so, there again we had to learn to make do in a very simple kind of environment.”

Most of all, Ms. Vaughan said her religious faith has always compelled her to do whatever she felt called to do whether or not it was popular.

That was the case for her when she became involved in fire service in the 80s as well as during her 10-year tenure as director of a halfway house program for offenders in Greenville and her involvement with the AID Upstate program, assisting AIDS victims.

“In ’86, I got involved in the fire service for the first time, helping getting involved in organizing a fire department,” she said. “It was not typical for women to get involved, but I didn’t do it to make a point; I did it because it was an opportunity to serve.”

## Following the Road Less Traveled

As a director of a halfway

house, she recalls how society would snub convicts, wanting to deprive them of rehabilitation service. She also remembers how people feared those living with HIV and AIDS, refusing to touch them or consume the same air they breathed.

“There was so much finger-pointing back then and stigmatism back then,” Ms. Vaughan said. “It was very difficult to get a foothold in doors to provide education in a way that allowed people to express their fears and accept fears and then also share facts about HIV transmission.”

Still, she looked at the situations as someone in need of a helping hand, which she was willing to give.

“These are things I felt kind of called to get involved with,” she said. “I mean it’s blessed my life so.”

And through Red Cross, she became the first trainer in South Carolina to educate others about the disease.

“I had to go to Washington, D.C., and be trained and then come back to South Carolina and train instructors so they can start teaching in their local communities,” she said.

She even befriended a hos-

pice client during his final stages of the disease, spending an hour with him at the hospital, moisturizing his dry skin with lotion.



**Marty Vaughan, a volunteer firefighter at Waskom Volunteer Fire Department, was the first certified female firefighter at the department.**

*Photo by Courtney Case/Marshall News*

“You read in the Bible where Jesus washed the feet of his disciples,” Ms. Vaughan said. “When I would go see him at the hospital, his skin was real dry. I would get some lotion and put it on his feet and

hands.

“I would think as I’m doing that, ‘This is what we need to be able to do for one another in times when something like that is called for — to reach out and be with people where they are even though it is very painful.’”

When the young man died, she was the only one — besides the volunteer minister and funeral officials — who attended his grave site service.

“I just started crying and I couldn’t stop the tears,” she said, getting emotional at the thought. “I just could not believe that nobody came to his funeral. Nobody deserves that.”

Some of Ms. Vaughan’s other humanitarian efforts include directing shelters in Scottsville for evacuees during Hurricanes Ike and Gustav and volunteering with crisis response teams that provide support to victims of crisis.

“They respond when there’s a major event that happens with someone in fire, EMS and law enforcement,” she explained. “We take a team and do a debriefing and try to provide

support for persons who are affected.”

The most devastating incident she remembers is when her team assisted during the 1995 Susan Smith incident in South Carolina. Ms. Smith was sentenced to life in prison for murdering her two sons, ages 3 and 4 months old.

“That was really a very difficult situation and it just solidified the need for me to be involved and other people to be involved in the crises response team.”

Ms. Vaughan compares her spirit of philanthropy to that of Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Elisabeth Kugler Ross, who helped establish hospice as an entity.

“Those people exemplify humanitarian effort and service and peacemaking and reaching out to all people and that’s kind of where my heart and religious faith is.”

*This story was re-printed with permission of the Marshall News Messenger. It is also available online at:*

[http://www.marshallnewsmessenger.com/featr/content/features/stories/2008/012509\\_web\\_volunteer.html](http://www.marshallnewsmessenger.com/featr/content/features/stories/2008/012509_web_volunteer.html).

# February is American Heart Month

## Emotions affect cardiac health

*Continued from page 3*

### Managing Your Emotions

“You cannot get rid of your difficult emotions. But when they’re having a negative impact on your day-to-day life, you can learn to manage them more effectively,” says Dr. Nezu.

Notice which emotions may be ruling your life and take steps to turn the negative feelings to positive ones. For example, learning to forgive is extremely important for someone who has an anger problem.

For sadness or depression,

you can focus on cultivating positive emotions, such as joy and gratitude.

Don’t deny your emotions. “You may pride yourself on never getting rattled, but that doesn’t mean your arousal system isn’t triggered every time someone bugs you,” Dr. Nezu says. “Sometimes we may be effective in denying our emotions to ourselves, but we can’t fool our bodies. Being aware of your emotions is a step toward wisdom.”

Find constructive ways to

express emotions. Instead of seething or fretting, try writing down your feelings or talking about them with someone in a safe environment.

Realize it’s okay to let go of anger. “It’s a myth that letting go of anger makes a person weak or vulnerable to others,” says Dr. Nezu. “In fact, the opposite is true: The more you let go, the less control people have over you because the less they’re able to push your buttons.”

### Other solutions

Effective medications are available to erase symptoms of anxiety or depression while you learn to change toxic thought patterns or behaviors. And don’t rule out an anger-management class.

“People tend to seek help for depression before they do for anger because to an angry person it’s the people ticking them off who seem to need help, not them,” she says.

If you can, solve stressful problems. There may be an

external solution. For example, if morning rush-hour traffic always makes you angry, try getting up earlier to beat the rush.

“Be patient with yourself,” Dr. Nezu says. “Realize that any major life change will take practice and persistence. For more information on heart health care, go to [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

*This article was published by MHN Employer Services Division.*



# Inauguration inspires hope, awe for United Methodists

Continued from page 2



Millions of people converge on the nation's capitol to witness the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States of America.

Connecticut in 1839. After the Supreme Court freed the slaves, the principal character, Cinque, said, "It is for this day that my ancestors lived and died."

## 'Hope over fear'

Obama provided an assessment of the country's standing and his vision for the future.

"Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real," he said, addressing a crowd estimated at more than a million on the National Mall in front of the Capitol. "They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America—they will be met."

The new president also told those assembled on the mall and those gathered around televisions that they had "chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and



Larry Hygh, Jr., a United Methodist from the Los Angeles area, chats with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi at a party at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

UMNS photo by Kurt Neubauer

false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics."

## Everyone working together

The Rev. Robert Besser, pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church in Beaumont, Texas, found Obama's speech and the inauguration "awesome and wonderful." The speech, emphasizing the past, present and future, "was the best part" of the day, he said.

As he watched the inauguration on a Jumbotron screen, Besser paid particular attention to Obama's call to work together without divisiveness and his assertion that there would be sacrifices to get the United States moving in another direction.

"But like our forefathers and ancestors in the faith and in the country who were able to make it happen, we have that same spirit," Besser said, "and if we work together, we too can move forward in our country's future together."

As the great-great-grandson of a slave and a Native American, Larry Hygh Jr., a United Methodist communicator from the Los Angeles area, called the inauguration "a great time for me personally." Hygh had preached the night before at Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church in Washington, and challenged his listeners "to go forth and

change our communities."

Hygh heard the new president's address through loudspeakers as he stood along the Inaugural Parade route on Pennsylvania Avenue. He caught a glimpse of the motorcade as it headed toward the Capitol from the White House and hoped to see President Obama later during the parade.

"I am feeling this overwhelming joy at our first African-American president being inaugurated," he said. "Hopefully, it will not be business as usual. Hopefully, we will get some change for our country."

Sampson also noted the responsibility for change belongs to all Americans. Citizens should not just sit in front of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue during Obama's first 100 days "as if he's Santa Claus in the White House preparing little gifts for us. The question is, for the 100 days, what are we going to do?"

Sampson said he is challenging everyone to be involved. One hundred churches can open tutoring programs, 100 lawyers can help people facing foreclosure and 100 painters, carpenters and plumbers can fix up homes in 100 communities. "We've got an opportunity while he's doing his 100 days for us to do our 100 days," he added.

The Rev. Albert Sampson, pastor of Fernwood United Methodist Church in Chicago, has been among the masses on the National Mall before. He attended the 1963 rally where King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech and was a speaker at the Million Man March in 1995. This time, he had a ticket to what he believes has to be the biggest event so far, both in terms of the number of people present and the diversity of races and cultures represented.

Sampson, who was ordained by King as a Baptist minister before becoming United Methodist, called President Obama's address "an interna-

tional message" with a personal touch. "His words were packaged to go around the world like a boomerang," he said.

The idea that America will extend its hand if others unclench their fists was a powerful notion to this advocate of nonviolence. "According to God, you'll get more when you open your hand than you will with your fist closed," Sampson said. "We've got to find other strategies for handling our differences. That's one of the key things he was saying."

The Rev. Larry Pickens, pastor of Northbrook (Ill.) United Methodist Church, and his wife Debra were among the ticket-holders seated in front of the podium area during the inauguration. Afterward, they went to Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, where meals were being served to the community. The occasion gave Pickens "a renewed sense of not only the power of this nation, but the ability this nation has to do right."

## Recalling past, moving forward

The vastness and depth of the crowd prohibited Chicagoan Vidette Bullock Mixon and her family from reaching their ticketed seats on the mall, and they watched the inauguration on television. Bullock Mixon, a staff member of the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits, said the conclusion of the celebration with the Rev. Joseph Lowery's benediction "seemed a fitting way to tie the whole program together."

As she witnessed the United Methodist pastor and civil rights worker give the benediction, she remembered her late father and the work he did with civil rights and as a member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal. "President Barack Obama stands on the shoulders of individuals like the Rev. Joseph Lowery," she said. She also noted that Lowery took great pains to communicate "we've come a long way, but we have a long way to go."

Lowery, in his benediction said, Obama comes into office at

a low moment in the national, global and fiscal climate in the country. Obama voiced a similar assessment in his speech, saying, "every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms."

Bullock Mixon celebrated the people who came from all over the world to witness the historic event. "The magnitude of the people who braved the cold and stood out was phenomenal," she said. "The tenacity and determination of the people speaks well of the support President Barack Obama can count on when he says, 'I'm counting on you, the citizens of the United States, to make this work.'"

## 'Once in a lifetime'

Herman L. Fraser, 60, member of Abyssinia Baptist, Harlem, N.Y., brought an ecumenical group to Washington for the inauguration. They arrived at Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington at 5:30 a.m. Jan. 20 and made it their home for the day.

Fraser said he "just wanted to be in Washington, D.C., today." He knew he "could not get near Barack Obama but just wanted to be in the same place. It was a once in a lifetime experience. I do not think we could have found a church as warm as this one. They just welcomed us in."

Juanita Omilami, 23, Atlanta, came with the group from Cascade United Methodist Church but is a member of Abundant Life, a nondenominational church. "As soon as I heard that Obama was president-elect, I knew I had to get to D.C." She said it was a "very surreal experience, and I couldn't believe it was happening—the expressions of the crowd and the sea of the people and the beautiful words that Barack spoke."

\*Green and Gilbert are United Methodist News Service news writers based in Nashville, Tennessee. Bloom is a UMNS news writer based in New York.



## Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

### Fellowship Opportunities

#### Free Concert at Jones Memorial UMC

Sunday, February 15, at 3:30 p.m. Jones Memorial mass choir and guest soloist, Barbara Tucker will be in concert in honor of Black History month.

For more information, contact Brenda Conway at 713-733-4630 or <http://jonesmumchurch.org>. Jones Memorial is located at 2504 Almeda Genoa Rd., Houston, Texas 77047.

#### St. Luke's UMC Hosts Spiritual Retreat

We may live in an I-Pod world, but events, feelings, questions and the nature of the people and society that lived nearly 300 years ago, in the time of John and Charles Wesley, are just as real today as they were then.

*The Experience of God: A Wesleyan Spiritual Retreat* is scheduled for February 20-21 at St. Luke's UMC in Houston, Texas. The event, led by Rev. Tom Albin, Dean of the Upper Room Chapel, promises to be thought provoking and enlightening.

In addition to offering prayer, meditation and learning opportunities, the upcoming retreat will incorporate music and drama in the program. Actors will bring excerpts from the Wesleyan letters to life in a dramatic element created by movie director producer Steve McCurdy.

This is an event open to all ages. Registration (\$25) includes lunch on Saturday. Register on line at [www.stlukesmethodist.org](http://www.stlukesmethodist.org) or contact the Adult Ministries office at 713-402-5139.

#### Trinity UMC Celebrates Founder's Day 2009

"Trinity, 144 Years: Inspired To Dream and United To Serve," is the theme for the Founders Day

celebration of Trinity UMC in Houston, Texas.

There will be a Black History Gala Dinner and silent auction on February 28, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1700 Smith Street. The cost is \$35 per person.

Sunday, March 1, Dr. Walter H. McKelvey, President of Gammon Theological Seminary will be the guest speaker at the 10 a.m. worship service. Trinity UMC is located at 2600 Holman Street, Houston, Texas. For more information, contact Georgia Nolan at 713-738-2130.

#### Women's Lenten Retreat at St. Paul's UMC

Add peace, well-being, and understanding of the Lenten season by participating in an overnight Lenten retreat in the Sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church. The retreat for women only will include time for prayer and meditation with the Labyrinth. It begins at 7 p.m. Friday, February 27, and concludes at 2 p.m. Saturday, February 28.

The fee is \$50/person and includes breakfast and lunch. To register, call 713-528-0527 or e-mail [info@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:info@stpaulshouston.org), noting if you have special dietary requirements.

At 5501 Main, St. Paul's is on the corner of Main and Binz/Bissonnet. Free parking is available in two lots behind the church on Fannin Street.

### Learning Opportunities

#### A New Church for a New Day 42nd Annual Meeting for BMCR – February 25-27

The meeting will focus on congregational development. The program will focus on new church development, congregational transformation and revitalization, and sharing ministry models that reach new people for Jesus Christ.

Through plenary sessions and learning labs, the fact that there are different challenges for different churches will be examined and the reality that historical Black congregations are being closed and/or merging with other churches. Many existing congregations lack the human and financial resources to develop and maintain effective ministries in the communities. For additional information, go to [www.bmcumc.org](http://www.bmcumc.org).

#### South District Leadership Training and Conference

The South District will offer local church training opportunities Saturday, February 28, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at First UMC in Pearland, Texas.

Workshops will cover the following topics: planning outreach in the local church, apportionments, measuring fruitfulness in the local church, SPRC, effective evangelism, leadership in the local church, campus ministry and lay leader training and discussion. Participants can select two workshops. Cokesbury will be on site with leadership materials available for purchase. The election of District officers will also take place.

#### St. Peter's UMC To Host Program on Israel and Palestine

Janet Lahr Lewis, a missionary with the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, serves as a liaison between ecumenical groups and Israel and Palestine. She will present a program on Monday, March 2, 2009, 7pm. at St. Peter's United Methodist Church, 20775 Kingsland Blvd, Katy, TX talking about her missionary experiences and the reality of the situation in this war-torn land.

In light of the current situation there, this will be a good opportunity for people in the United States to learn more about the

history of the Palestine/Israeli conflict and the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Janet says, "Christ calls us all to be ministers of justice. Through my work with the Palestinian community, I will be able to answer this call by working for a just and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians, so that reconciliation and healing can occur."

#### Pet Therapy Workshop

Paws 4 Love/hphp is hosting a Pet therapy (Delta Society Pet Partners) workshop March 7 in the Liberty, Texas area.

The workshop entitled, "Pet Therapy 101" is designed to introduce handlers to Delta Society Pet Partner program and to the programs offered by Paws 4 Love/hphp, a Delta Society affiliate.

The workshop begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 1 p.m. The \$50 registration fee includes the Delta Society Student Home Study manual and shipping. For those who are ready to be evaluated with their pet, team evaluations will be held that afternoon. Evaluation fee is \$25 pass or fail.

For more information and registration, please contact me by e-mail or by phone or visit the website at [www.paws4lovehphp.com](http://www.paws4lovehphp.com).

#### Mt. Sequoyah Offers Three Conferences in 2009

Coming early in 2009, Mt. Sequoyah will host the following events:

Addiction Ministry Responders Conference, February 23-25 – A conference for all church leadership to help shape the church's response to substance abuse problems within their communities and congregations.

Small Church Leadership Institute, March 9-13 – A con-

ference to equip laity and clergy with the knowledge and skills for leading their small attendance church into the future.

Caring for Creation Conference, March 27-29 – A conference designed to educate, network and inspire faith communities to initiate, develop and sustain stewardship programs that will protect and celebrate God's creation.

### Time Is Running Out Reserve Your Display Space

The dates of Conference are May 24-27, 2009.

The deadline for reservations for Texas Annual Conference participants is March 15, 2009. Space is limited - all display tables are on a first-come, first-serve basis.

After March 15, reservations of any and all tables left will be open to the public.

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

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