



Cross Connection

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Clergy peer groups set to launch

By The Center for Connectional Resources

Even in a Connectional system, clergy are not always connected. Isolation. Burnout. Fatigue. Congregational dissatisfaction.

Clergy in accountable peer relationships report experiencing less of these things and greater satisfaction in ministry.

In an effort to better support conference clergy and congregations, all clergy — persons under

Covenant Discipleship Clergy Groups

Utilizing David Lowes Watson's Covenant Discipleship Group model, these clergy peer groups will meet in confidential environments to hold one another accountable for performing actions of compassion, justice, devotion and worship. The groups may also meet for spiritual, personal, professional and the-

at mutually agreeable times and places in a confidential environment to share continuing education; reflect on their personal and professional lives; share issues and concerns; and to hold one another accountable for spiritual, personal and professional disciplines.

Clergy interested in participating in these groups must be willing to contribute \$500 each year from personal or continuing education funds. A list of trained facilitators, and demographic groups and participant applications are available online at www.txcumc.org.

“We are the first annual conference to engage this model of disciple making.”

B. T. Williamson

Episcopal appointment — are expected to be a part of a peer group or in a one-to-one accountable relationship.

All clergy entering peer relationships will commit to participate for one year — from June to June. Each year, in early spring, the Center for Clergy Excellence will request feedback from facilitators and participants and give each clergyperson the option to commit for another year or to choose another type of peer relationship.

Seventy-four people have been trained to lead the various groups, which will launch between July and September 2007.

“These people will lead covenant groups that will probably be the mainstay of our clergy accountability model,” said the Rev. B.T. Williamson when presenting this model at the recent Core Leadership Team meeting. “We are the first annual conference to engage this model of disciple making.”

This is not a one-size-fits-all approach to serving hundreds of diverse clergy. The Center for Clergy Excellence has defined five options from which clergy may choose.

ological development.

Each group will have a designated, volunteer clergy facilitator and will choose mutually agreeable times and places to meet regularly. Clergy interested in participating may contact a trained facilitator through the

Existing or Other Groups

In addition to the Covenant Clergy Professional Disciplines Groups created by the Center, clergy may choose to be in other existing or new peer groups. All groups must meet regularly to hold one another accountable; recognize a facilitator and membership list and share a written covenant of confidentiality.



Pastors work together during the clergy group facilitator training.

Center for Clergy Excellence page on the Conference web site at www.txcumc.org.

Professional Disciplines Groups

These demographically specific groups will meet regularly

One-to-One Encouragers

For clergy who prefer to be in a one-to-one relationship instead of a group, the Center is training and supporting Conference “Colleagues.”

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African Children's Choir showers Texas with songs of praise

By Eleanor L. Colvin

Texas Annual Conference, Director of Communications

Music lovers throughout the Texas Annual Conference recently were blessed by the incomparable praise of the African Children's Choir.

The tour of area churches such as St. Paul's UMC in Port Arthur, First UMC in Missouri City, Houston's West University UMC and St. Mark's UMC (Pecore), featured 25 Ugandan children.

Overall, the African Children's Choir is composed of

During one musical break, a singer explained to the audience why they must return home.

“We hear that some of you would like to adopt us,” the child stated. “I'm sorry to say we are not up for adoption ... We must return home, to make our country better.”

The crowd responded with a standing ovation for the future-leaders standing before them.

Pilot. Teacher. Air traffic controller. Hairdresser.



The African Children's Choir sings 'He's Got the Whole World In His Hands.'

singers, ages 7 through 11, from the East African countries of Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda. In addition to singing, they also study while touring the United

Professional singer. Actress. Pastor. Those are just a few of the aspirations of the young singers who introduced themselves at St. Mark's UMC



Choir members lift their hands and voices in praise.

States and United Kingdom, so that they may re-enter school on grade level when they return home.

(Pecore) on Sunday, April 29.

Girls with names like Primrose, Happy and Joy that remind one of the beauty and grace of God, and boys with names like Jesse and Jeremiah that remind one of God's strength and might —

gave worshippers a glimpse of God's glory.

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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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Dreams do come true

Somerville remembers its veterans

By Rev. Sid Akin
First United Methodist Church, Somerville

Somerville needed some kind of marker to remember all the men from Somerville who have died while in uniform during war time. This was a longtime dream for Bill Hodge, a member of First United Methodist Church.

Bill served in World War II and lost a number of friends and neighbors in that war. One friend was killed on board his ship as the Japanese Planes bombed Pearl Harbor on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

In that war, another 16 men from the Somerville area would lose their lives as well.

Prior to World War II, 16 men from Somerville lost their lives in World War I, as well as three others from the area dying in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

The town not having a marker of some kind to remember these brave men was too much for Hodge to bear.

Last year, Hodge enlisted the help of his church, First United Methodist Church, Somerville and community members, Francis



Bill Hodge (left) and Rev. Sidney Akin, Jr. stand at attention as the Somerville High School Band plays the national anthem.

Thomas, past commander of Post 455 and Marion Mays of the American Legion in the dedication of a monument to fallen soldiers from Somerville, Texas.

As the committee began to plan for the program, it was apparent they wanted to involve as many people as possible. They asked the Somerville ISD to be involved by having the history classes write essays about a war or interview a veteran. The committee offered a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond, donated by Citizens State Bank, to two winners.

Other participants were the Caldwell Historical Society for their help as well as the American Legion, VFW, and DAV from Caldwell, Texas. Through their efforts and support, Bill Hodge saw his dream fulfilled as the Veterans Memorial Monument was dedicated in Heritage Square of the Somerville Historical Society.

Approximately 350 people attended this dedication and witnessed the unveiling of the

is now stationed in New Orleans as an instructor at Tulane University.

Using John 15:13 'greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' as the scriptural reference for the celebration, Rev. Akin read the names of the 36 men inscribed on the monument.

Many dignitaries were on hand, including Bob French, anchor for KTBX TV and the VFW Honor Guard who gave a



A photo of the monument honoring veterans from Somerville, Texas.

memorial. The celebration also included the creation of a "Walk of Honor" area, where bricks could be purchased to honor veterans, present and past.

The keynote speaker was a local Somerville student; Major Cesar Rodriguez, who graduated in 1991, and has a distinguished career in the United States Marine Corps. Major Rodriguez

21 gun salute to the affair. The event concluded with two cadets from the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets to play "Echo Taps."

This monument will stand forever in memory of all men and women who serve the country with dignity. It was a day Somerville will remember for a very long time. Dreams do still come true. Just ask Bill Hodge.

Texas Conference men distribute devotional book to military, and invite local church participation

By Rich Peck
United Commission of United Methodist Men

Kenneth Tielke, president of Texas Annual Conference United Methodist Men, is leading an effort to help provide 1 million copies of a historic book of daily devotions to United States troops. To date, 250,000 copies have been sent to deployed troops, training centers and veteran hospitals.

Thus far, Texas Conference men have raised over \$7,300 to distribute copies of the 400-page *Strength for Service to God and Country* book to U.S. troops. Several hundred more copies have been purchased with donations from local church men's groups for distribution to law

enforcement agencies, firemen and mobile emergency medical personnel throughout the Texas Conference.

Tielke credits United Methodist Men Conference Board members for the fund-raising effort. He especially noted the contributions of Southeast District President Ricky Tate, Central North District President Richard Murry, UMM Conference Secretary and East District President Richard Lyne, and UMM Conference Treasurer and Web-master Robert Read.

A United Methodist Communications mailing to all church leaders in the Texas

Conference will encourage them to participate in the fund-raiser.

Strength for Service to God and Country was first published in 1942 just a few months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Distributed in both World War II and the Korean War, the book was nearly forgotten until six years ago when a California Boy Scout saw his dying grandfather reading from a tattered copy.

Eugene Hunsberger told his grandson, Evan, that he carried the book as a Navy ensign during World War II and Korea.

"It always meant a lot to me, so I continue to read from it each day," explained Hunsberger.

Evan was looking for an Eagle Scout project and asked his grandfather if it would be a good idea to republish the historic book for U.S. troops today.

"That's not a good idea," said Hunsberger, "that's a great idea."

Evan contacted the United Methodist Publishing House, which first published and distributed the book.

To help your local church raise funds for this project, contact Tielke at: kenwtielke@aol.com or 281-342-9677.

It's a strike!

Bishop Huie throws first pitch



Bishop Janice Riggle Huie celebrates *Methodist Night* at Minute Maid Park by throwing out the first pitch at the Astros game April 27.

Below, she sends the ball sailing toward Astros' catcher, Matt Albers.



The next deadline for the
Cross Connection newspaper is
May 11, 2007

Lay person donates church to thank God for healing

By Isaac Broune
Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference Communicator

ABIDJAN, Côte d'Ivoire – Bishop Benjamin Boni of the Côte d'Ivoire Episcopal Area

resents. This historic event, started on Saturday, April 21, with the con-



Bishop Benjamin Boni's unveiling of the plaque on which is the name of the church.

recently consecrated the newly-built Beth Shalom United Methodist Church, which was the thanks offering of a lay person who said God's healing enabled him to walk again.

"Beloved, members of the Church of Christ, we rejoice that God has inspired his people to build this sanctuary for the glory of His name," Bishop Boni said. "We are here to consecrate it and dedicate it for the worship of the Almighty God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our desire and prayer is that the Word of God should be preached faithfully from generation to generation, sacraments be celebrated as instituted by the Lord."

With these words, Bishop Benjamin Boni consecrated Beth Shalom United Methodist Church of N'Guessankro (250 km from Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire) in the

separation of a 114 member choir, the induction of 71 recruits into the boys and girls' brigade squad, and the celebration of the



Mr. Gaston Boni Kadio attends the consecration of the choir. In addition to donating the new church, he also donated the choir robes and music equipment.



The Beth Shalom United Methodist Church building.

District of Adzopé. The consecration took place Sunday, April 22, during a special service held in the rural city of 5,000 inhabi-

Annual Thanksgiving Harvest of the local church. The event was attended by more than 10,000 worshippers, who had traveled

from throughout Côte d'Ivoire. Bishop Benjamin Boni presided, with about 20 pastors participating.

Dressed in specially-designed clothing made for the occasion, United Methodists attending the event expressed joy and gratitude for what the Lord has done for them. In his sermon, Rev. Isaac Agre, chairman of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministries, urged members of the community to "treat the temple of God according to His will."

The Beth Shalom UMC has a seating capacity of 2,500. It is fully equipped with modern musical instruments and a brass band. It is one of the largest church buildings in the annual conference, and was built in less than two years by devoted workers who worked day and night.

True thanksgiving

Unlike other churches in con-

struction whose contributions come from various members of the churches, Beth Shalom was a donation from Gaston Kadio to the Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference.

Kadio said two years ago, he fell and was paralyzed. But, today, God has healed him. He is back to work and has seen his health improve, despite the diagnoses from medical doctors that he would remain paralyzed.

Kadio made his donation to honor what God has done for him.

"Mr. Kadio is a gift from God to this region," testified Ambroise Deky, an anchor at

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'New Christian man is emerging in America' says author Derek Maul

By Jeanette Pinkston, Director
Media Relations Office - General Board of Discipleship

Derek Maul has written a book about a new Christian man emerging in America in the 21st century.



GET REAL: A Spiritual Journey for Men shares Maul's deeply held beliefs, Christian values and lessons learned throughout life and in his work with a men's group aptly called, "The Men's Room."

In his book which will be published in May, Maul explains that, "There is a new spiritual man emerging in America."

Maul says of this new spiritual man, "He does not confuse faith with politics; he does not require exclusively sports-based metaphors to gain a spiritual yard or two; he is struggling hard to be authentically Christian and counter-cultural in the workplace; and he understands the language of servant-leadership in the home.

This man is less confrontational than those who seek to effect change via condemnation and acrimony because he is learning to remember that Christ teaches us to overcome evil with good," writes Maul.

Maul's book about men's spirituality is so much more than a book about men's spirituality. The book explores the importance of choosing to follow Jesus Christ and what happens when

"real" men follow a "man's man."

Maul writes, "Jesus was a guy: uncomplicated and direct. When God chose to come to earth in human form he decided to make the journey as a man. That's great news!

You see God understands us. Indeed, he tailored his initial discipleship program with men in mind – flaws and all.

Like us, Jesus was fairly uncomplicated, and it is no coincidence that the gospel tells us repeatedly how children were naturally drawn to the Savior.

His way is the best model we have for what God has in mind for living out our faith as Christian men in a world that has lost its focus."

In chapter one, Maul describes Jesus in this way. "Jesus, you see, was a man; Jesus was a man's man. And that's especially good news for men today."

Realizing that referring to Jesus as a "guy" and a "man's man" might be misconstrued as sexist and chauvinistic, as well as politically incorrect, Maul aptly crafts his message for men and the women who love them.

"Consequently, referring to Jesus as "a man's man" might be considered controversial and dismissed as inappropriate in politically correct company. To be honest, I'm not sure God cares two hoots. We cannot deny that when God chose to take on human flesh he came to earth as a man. That fact adds up to exceptionally good news for us,

because it means that God knows and understands me—as a man. God knows me from the inside out.

He goes on to say, "I want to know God that way. I want to know God man-to-man. I want to know that kind of Jesus. This is the context in which I am striving to live a spiritual life, and this is the context in which I want to understand what it means to be a Christian. Not just a Christian, but a real Christian man."

Maul writes a weekly op-ed column for local editions of the Tampa Tribune. His column is read weekly by 300,000 people.

Maul's commentary and features have appeared in Newsweek, USA Today, The Christian Science Monitor, Presbyterians Today, Guideposts, and many other print and online publications.

Derek is an active teacher in his local church, where he serves in adult Sunday school, small-group ministry, and a men's Bible study/spiritual formation group.

The General Board of Discipleship's mission is to support annual conference and local church leaders for their task of equipping world-changing disciples.

An agency of The United Methodist Church, GBOD is located at 1908 Grand Ave. in Nashville, Tennessee. For more information, call the Media Relations Office toll free at (877) 899-2780, Ext. 7017.

Covenant Glenn connects with community for job fair

Covenant Glenn UMC recently put money in the pockets of area residents. The church's job fair connected local employers and job seekers, which hopefully resulted in a payday for some participants.

Baliia Brazil, a member of Covenant Glenn UMC for 17 years, coordinated the job fair because of the need in Missouri City and Fort Bend County, and the need in the congregation to give back.



Participants make the most of what today's technology has to offer in job searching.

and thought: If they had a few tips, they would have interviewed much better."



Connecting job searchers and community businesses was one of the primary focal points of the job fair.

"We want to do everything we can do to help one family at a time become gainfully employed or earn more money," Brazil said. "I've been in the unemployment market before, so I know what that's like.

"I also work in human resources, and have seen lots of resumes and thought: This could be improved. Or, seen interviews

Participants in the Covenant Glenn fair had opportunities to learn interview and job search skills from the Work Source; fine tune resumes in the computer lab; consult with Dress for Success representatives and put their knowledge to the test with more than 30 onsite recruiters.

African children's choir performance

Continued from page 1

Singing ambassadors

The African Children's Choir is the mouthpiece for Africa's neediest, most vulnerable children. The choir shows the world that its members, like the millions of abandoned and traumatized children in Africa, have beauty, dignity and unlimited ability.

Many of the children have lost one or both parents through the devastation of war, famine and disease. Their voices



Drummers join in the praise celebration.

AIDS orphans. They represent the future of the entire continent, demonstrating the potential to become strong leaders for a better future in their homeland.

The primary goal of the African Children's Choir is to raise awareness of the need of destitute and orphaned children in Africa and

relief and development programs. Once Choir members have completed a concert tour, they will return to their homelands with the support, care and education necessary for bettering their future and that of their brothers and sisters.

There already are testimonies of how the choir is changing the continent. Volunteers lifted up a former member of one of the first touring choirs, who traveled the well-developed road system in the United States and asked why couldn't his country have quality roads? That young man is now a city councilman working

to improve conditions in his homeland.

The African Children's Choir provides a cultural, social and academic education that positions its graduates to secure Africa's future.

To learn more, visit www.africanchildrenschoir.com.

sing out on behalf of Africa's 12 million to raise funds for the choir's

News from the Methodist Hospital System

By Gale Smith,
Media Relations

Dr. Robert Grossman receives highest AANS honor



Dr. Robert Grossman, chair of neurosurgery at The Methodist Hospital and co-founder

and director of the Methodist Neurological Institute (NI), is the recipient of the 2007 Harvey Cushing Medal, the highest honor awarded by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS).

The AANS recognizes Grossman's efforts to advance the field of neurosurgery through his work with the Neurosurgical Research and Education Fund, which helps fund grants for young scientists, as well as his management of the American Board of Neurological Surgery (ABNS). Grossman was a director of the ABNS for six

years, served as chairman of the board from 1989 to 1990, and is currently a member of the Advisory Council of the Board.

Grossman received the Cushing Medal during the AANS 2007 Annual Meeting in April in Washington, D.C.

Grossman has built an international reputation for his contributions to advancing the treatment of head and spinal cord injuries, Parkinson's disease, dystonia and epilepsy. His research has received recognition by the National Head Injury Foundation and the Society of Neurological Surgeons.

He has published numerous basic and clinical scientific articles, as well as numerous textbooks of neuroscience and clinical neurosurgery.

Grossman has held several academic appointments during his career, including U.T.

Southwestern Medical School - Parkland Hospital in Dallas, where he was one of two neurosurgeons who examined President John F. Kennedy after he was shot.

Grossman received his M.D. from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He completed a surgical internship at Strong Memorial Hospital University of Rochester. After serving in the United States Army at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington D.C., he completed his postgraduate training in neurosurgery at the Neurological Institute of New York Presbyterian Hospital-Columbia University.

Awarded annually since 1977, the Harvey Cushing Medal recognizes an AANS member for distinguished service to the field of neurosurgical surgery.

Clergy covenant groups

Continued from page 1

These clergy volunteers will enter into covenant relationships with their sisters and brothers in ministry.

Colleagues will meet with, listen to, and pray for individual clergy and encourage them to practice healthy spiritual, per-

Coaches, mentors and more

Instead of choosing a "Colleague" trained by the Center, Conference clergy may choose to be in a one-to-one, accountable relationship with another counselor, coach, men-



Rev. Carol Bruse and Rev. Mark Young share peer group information during the training session.

sonal and professional disciplines. Encouragement will take place in person, via phone or by e-mail. Interested clergy may contact a Conference Colleague from the list of trained volunteers on the web site at www.txcumc.org.

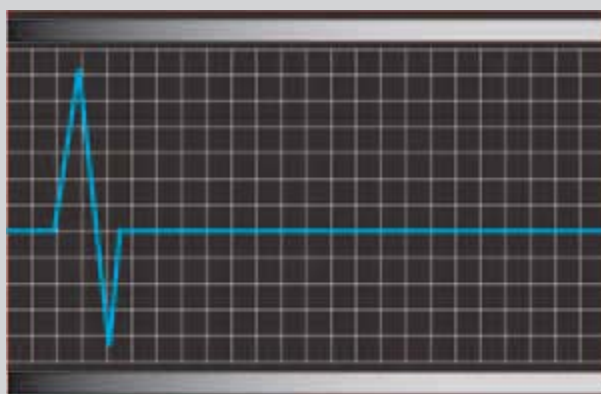
tor, or spiritual director.

Counselors, coaches, mentors and spiritual directors will not need to be approved individually by the Center. However, both persons must sign a covenant of understanding and confidentiality, and must meet regularly.

Methodist receives 'get with the guidelines' achievement award

Patients at the Eddy Scurlock Stroke Center at the Methodist Neurological Institute (NI) have some of the best stroke outcomes in the U.S., according to the American Heart Association's **Get With The GuidelinesSM** (GWTG).

Get with the Guidelines is a web-based quality improvement program for hospitals with stroke programs, set by the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association.



May is national stroke awareness month

Methodist's Eddy Scurlock Stroke Center will receive an award May 9-11, during the 8th Annual American Heart Association Scientific Forum on

Quality of Care and Outcomes Research in Cardiovascular Disease and Science Conference in Washington, D.C.

GWTG, which mirrors the stroke guidelines set by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), gave Methodist high marks in all criteria areas, including smoking cessation.

"Methodist received an A+ on our report card for stroke care.

"That gives us credibility in that we've met and maintained the gold standard of care for stroke patients," said Ann Quinn Todd, nursing director, Eddy Scurlock Stroke Center.

New church donation

Continued from page 3

Radio Moronou, a local community radio station. He acknowledged the numerous actions of Radio in the Moronou region, including the equipment of the local Catholic Church, the construction of a local hospital, and mediation to resolve conflicts in the region.

Evangelization launchpad

Resident pastor, Jonas Zame, said: "The Beth Shalom United Methodist will serve as a launching pad for evangelization in the region. We need to evangelize."

Evangelizing is what Zame has been doing, since being appointed last year to N'Guessankro after his training at Institut Supérieur de Théologie d'Abadjin-Doumé (ISTHA), the pastoral training institute.

"With this new church building and the presence of a permanent resident pastor, the people in the Moronou region will realize that God is nearer to them than ever before," said pastor, Francis Amari.

To understand the potential for evangelization, consider the

history of Christianity in the country. In 1964, all protestant missions in Côte d'Ivoire agreed to evangelize in a specific region. The then Methodist Protestant Church was asked to focus evangelization efforts in the south; the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) worked in the central region, and the Evangelical churches in the north.

Following this agreement, the Methodist Protestant Church gave properties of local churches in the area to CMA. There were difficulties in implementing the agreement, so, it was cancelled in 1970, and the properties were not returned.

Further, the Agni people, which are the major ethnic group of the region, are reputed to be animist. Many families do not attend church services.

"I met an old man of 60 years, who has never heard about Jesus," said pastor Amari. "So, the primary objective we have assigned to ourselves in the region is to evangelize to bring more families to know Christ."

'Town hall' gathering offers snapshot of the church

By Martha W. Aldrich
United Methodist News Service



The vision for The United Methodist Church in the 21st century includes starting 650 new U.S. congregations by 2012, doubling the number of young people serving as pastors and church leaders, and expanding ministries in behalf of the world's impoverished people.

Those were among the highlights from a first-ever teleconference inviting United Methodists worldwide to an April 17 "town hall" meeting with denominational leaders to talk about the church's membership, ministries, missions and challenges for the future.

The teleconference was timed with the release of a report by the United Methodist Council on Finance and Administration, presenting and analyzing local church data about membership, attendance and giving trends. Called "This is Our Story," (<http://www.gcfa.org/PDFs/THISISOURSTORY.pdf>) the report presents The United Methodist Church as "a faithful, generous people in dozens of nations who continue to make a difference in the lives of people around the world," said Sandra Lackore, the council's chief executive.

The church gave almost \$5.9 billion during 2005 — representing an increase in giving for the 15th straight year when adjusted for inflation. U.S. giving included more than \$200 million for disaster relief and \$475 million in additional benevolent giving. U.S. churches reported more than \$4.3 billion given as offerings for local church ministry, operations and benevolences, and an additional \$1 billion raised through capital campaigns and memorials. Spending on benevolent causes has increased more than 36 percent in the last decade, while staff salaries and benefits increased 46 percent and clergy salaries and connectional clergy support increased about 11 percent.

United Methodists in the United States volunteered their time to more than 600,000 leadership positions in church schools, and more than 138,000 reported

lending a hand by working in more than 11,000 Volunteer in Mission groups.

"There is a sense that God is leading The United Methodist Church to do something different," she said, citing the work of the Council of Bishops, the Connectional Table and church boards and agencies to write "a new chapter of our story."

"But the real work of our denomination, and the places where lives are changed, remains in the hands of our churches and the faithful people who call them home. The future of our church depends upon our leadership at all levels capturing this vision and being willing to work hard — each of us — lay and clergy."

Opening the door to conversation

Locklore was joined on the town hall panel by Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, the Rev. Jerome King Del Pino of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the Rev. R. Randy Day of the Board of Global Ministries, the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt of the Board of Discipleship, Jim Winkler of the Board of Church and Society and the Rev. Larry Hollon of United Methodist Communications.

More than 200 callers participated and, at the close of the presentation, some asked questions about issues ranging from starting new churches to preserving the environment.

"We liked it and we learned a lot," said Jo Ann Ramsey, 70, a member of Skycrest United Methodist Church in Clearwater, Fla., who listened in along with several other members of their church growth committee.

"We're mostly an older congregation, and we wanted to learn more about training and new techniques (of church growth)," she said following the teleconference. "You hear a lot of negativity about the decline of The United Methodist Church, so I was glad to hear the positive comments."

The Rev. Jacqui King, pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Port Arthur, Texas, was glad she tuned in as well.

"Although there is great movement in the Texas Conference, it was good to hear about the growth throughout the church on a worldwide scale," King said

after the teleconference. "This use of technology is phenomenal and really helps spread the word in an awesome manner."

Among the issues presented was a proposal by the Connectional Table to emphasize four goals — called the "provocative propositions" — to set the future course of the denomination's work and life. The propos-

"The future of our church depends upon our leadership at all levels capturing this vision and being willing to work hard — each of us — lay and clergy."

Sandra Locklore

als will be presented to the 2008 General Conference, the church's top legislative body, and would emphasize developing new leaders; starting new congregations and strengthening existing ones; ministering to the poor; and addressing global health by fighting poverty and expanding access to health care for all.

"We believe these are vital elements for the transformation of the church," said Huie, president of the Council of Bishops.

Leadership, new churches and missions

Del Pino addressed the church's "leadership crisis" and called this "a crucial moment in history, when seismic demographic, social, cultural and religious shifts are redefining our global reality."

He cited 2005 research showing there were only 850 commissioned and ordained clergy ages 35 or under in the entire United Methodist Church in the United States. "This is only 4.69 percent of current elders and reflects a decline from 15.05 percent of the elders serving in 1985," he said.

"The church must build a streamlined structure for the development of young leaders that will result in doubling the number of young people in positions of leadership as pastors and specialized clergy and lay ministries."

Reminding listeners that "church planting is a biblical mandate," Greenwaldt said the church must invest its leadership and financial resources to start more new churches. Currently,

the denomination starts an average of 90 a year in the United States.

She highlighted a new initiative that aims to train 1,000 new church planters to start 650 U.S. churches by 2012. The initiative also aims to train bishops and district superintendents in strategic church planting and to develop a "rich database, a library of best practices" to help them in their decisions.

Day, who oversees global missions, reported the church has mission personnel and projects in more than 125 countries.

"We are a growing church in Africa, parts of Asia and Eastern Europe," Day said. "I believe that this growth is helping the entire denomination to reconnect with our roots in the theology of (Methodism founder) John

for changes in public policy.

"It is unlike any initiative attempted before in that it seeks to engage congregations at the grassroots, annual conferences and the general agencies to address the diseases of poverty with the full resources and skills of the global United Methodist community," Hollon said. "It will require deep and meaningful collaboration as well as long-term commitment."

Winkler, who heads the church's social advocacy agency, reminded the church that "ours is an active faith" that must address issues of justice, peace and poverty.

"Our ministry with the poor goes beyond feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and clothing the naked. It requires challenging the principalities and powers that profit from the misery of so many," Winkler said.

Organizers said the town hall meeting offered a new forum for presenting a snapshot of the denomination and sparking



Emily Reece (left) hosts "town hall" teleconference for The United Methodist Church as Sandra Locklore waits to present a report on denominational membership, attendance and giving trends.

A UMNS photo by
Mike DeBose

Wesley, who taught that personal holiness, the private side of faith, is never complete unless it is also expressed in social holiness, including social ministries and mission."

'An active faith'

Hollon reported on the proposed Initiative on Global Health to address the diseases of poverty and significantly reduce the incidence of malaria and HIV/AIDS. It will include leveraging funding and creating new partnerships to increase health ministry, communicate about health and advocate

greater dialogue in an informative and interesting way.

"The willingness of our leaders to be transparent in this forum and to be open to questions from any source is very positive," said Hollon, who oversees the church's communications agency. "Our church leaders are to be recognized for their openness."

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Community prays for Virginia Tech

UH Students and Bethany UMC find solace in prayer and a show of solidarity

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications

If we are inspired to be better than we would have been, then that's the best way to honor the lives of those lost at Virginia Tech.

Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick, Director of the University of Houston Wesley Foundation, offered those words of encouragement to University of Houston students and staff that honored Virginia Tech's fallen during a candlelight vigil.

"If we could, we would wrap our arms around them," Anzick said. "We can't. So, we send our words of love and support."

Kristal Medina, a junior biology major at the University of Houston, was among more than 200 students participating in the vigil.

"I'm here to let the families

know that even on the opposite side of the country, people are still concerned and love them," Medina said. "No matter where we are in the world – it affects us all."

Medina said she and her friends are worried about security, but they are even more concerned about the inability of some youth and young adults to cope with the stress facing them.

"Hopefully, something good comes out of this tragedy – gun control laws changing, access to help... We're mostly talking about change."

Campus minister Susan Lemmon of the Every Nation non-denominational/inter-denominational ministry program encouraged everyone to find small ways to make a difference.

"If you're like me, you can walk around this campus and not make eye contact," Lemmon said. "We tend to be so individualistic. It's no surprise that someone can walk around nine months and be a loner."

"If you're asking what can I do ... just go about your life on this campus differently."

Local church extends love and compassion

Bethany United Methodist Church held a peace and healing worship service for Virginia Tech University.

Items used in the service along with a tape of the service and a letter from Rev. R. Daniel Jones were sent to Dr. Tom Brown Dean of Students at Virginia Tech.



Photos (from clockwise): Students sign a foot long banner to send to Virginia Tech.

Above: Kristal Medina writes a message of hope.

Left: Students find comfort in prayer and one another.

Far Left: Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick lights and distributes candles to vigil participants.

Above Left: Rev. R. Daniel Jones led peace and healing service at Bethany UMC.

Center: Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick prays.



2007 Annual Conference Update

Lay delegate meeting starts early and includes first vote

Dear Lay Members,

In a few weeks we will gather in The Woodlands for Annual Conference. Our theme for 2007 is Passionate Worship. As always, the Conference Planning Team has been working throughout the year to bring us worship that will feed our spirits long after we leave The Woodlands! Our business sessions will have a new look and feel as we begin to live into all of the changes we have adopted over the past two years.

As we move toward a new Quadrennium in the life of the

United Methodist Church, many important decisions will be made during our time together this year. We will all need to study diligently before we arrive at Annual Conference so that we make informed decisions. You should have already received your Pre-Conference Journal. Please take the time to study this, and, if possible, attend your District Meeting.

There are several important changes which will impact all of us that you need to be aware of as you finalize your plans. First, Annual Conference will be officially opened by Bishop Huie on

Sunday evening at the Memorial Service.

Second, the Lay Member Assembly will convene at 9 a.m. on Monday, May 28. One of the first items on our agenda will be the first round of voting for Lay Delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference. Bishop Huie plans to attend to not only greet us, but also to officiate over the ballot. Tellers will be trained before our meeting and the voting bar will have already been established.

Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. Monday morning for those of you who will not arrive

in time to register on Sunday.

In your Pre-Conference Journal packet, you will have received a Profile Book, which gives you some information about each Lay Member who has already decided to run for one of the Lay Delegate positions. Please take a few minutes to read through these short profiles in preparation for the voting.

As we begin this process, please remember that we are approaching these elections with our shared love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and as we were admonished by Paul, by

“speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

I am looking forward with a sense of great excitement to seeing each of you! I pray for your safe travels, peaceful journeys and God’s richest blessings on all of you as we prepare for our time together.

Grace & Peace,
Leah Taylor
Conference Lay Leader

SCHEDULED MEETINGS

GROUP	DATE	TIME	LOCATION OF ROOM
Cabinet Meeting Room	Sunday - Thursday	As Needed	Galaway Conference Room
Celebration Women’s Ministry	Sunday - Thursday	All Day	Robb Chapel
CORE Leadership Team	Sunday - Thursday	As Needed	Rehearsal - A
DOVE System	Sunday - Thursday	All Day	The Woodlands UMC - D205
UMW - Program Committee	Sunday, May 27	1 p.m.	The Woodlands UMC - D207
BOM Executive Committee	Sunday, May 27	3:30 p.m.	The Woodlands UMC - Jones Library
TAC Worship Planning Team	Sunday, May 27	4 p.m.	The Woodlands UMC - Music Library
Conference Office	Monday - Thursday	All Day	The Woodlands UMC - Lenox Parlor
TAC Worship Planning Team	Monday - Thursday	All Day	The Woodlands UMC Music Library
BOM Candidates Gathering	Monday, May 28	7:30 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - Robb Chapel
Higher Education and Campus Ministry	Monday, May 28	7:30 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - D208
Election Tellers	Monday, May 28	7:30 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - Aldersgate Hall
Equitable Compensation	Monday, May 28	7:30 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - D209
Cemetery Trustees	Monday, May 28	8 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - D211
Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns	Monday, May 28	8 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - D207
TAC Secretaries and Associates	Monday, May 28	8 a.m.	The Woodlands UMC - The Balcony Office
Lay Member Assembly	Monday, May 28	9 a.m.	Marriott Waterway Hotel
BOM Candidates Gathering	Monday, May 28	1 p.m.	The Woodlands UMC - Sanctuary
Order of Saint Luke	Monday, May 28	9 p.m.	The Woodlands UMC - Chrysostom Chapel
Gulfside Reunion Meeting	Tuesday, May 29	5:30 p.m.	The Woodlands UMC - The Loft