



Cross Connection

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

Label Area

Two Sections, Section A

076000 Volume 155

Number 22

October 3, 2008

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Methodists need help to rebuild after Ike

**By Kathy Gilbert
United Methodist News Service**

Jerry Harrington has lived on the Gulf Coast of Texas all of his life, but Hurricane Ike finally convinced him to leave.

"This is the worst I have ever seen, I'm not going to build it back," he said as he walked around the rubble of his home left behind by the Sept. 13 storm. "I'm all right without my house, but I just can't stand losing all my mementos."

Harrington is one of about 500 residents of this scenic coastal town who have returned to find their communities wrecked and their lives changed forever.

The monster storm damaged more than 100 United Methodist churches and parsonages in the denomination's Texas Annual (regional) Conference. About a million people are without electricity and other utilities, and it may be a month or longer before power is restored.

"Some officials are saying Ike will be the largest natural

comfort and assessing what is needed to rebuild. Representatives of the United Methodist Committee on Relief have also toured the devastation.

The bishop has issued a church-wide call for help, asking that a special offering be collected for hurricane recovery work in Texas, Louisiana, Haiti and other parts of the United States. The donations are being managed through The Advance, the denominational giving program for missions and relief.

In a Sept. 22 letter to her colleagues on the Council of Bishops, Huie said that while the cost of rebuilding from



Jerry Harrington, whose home on the Gulf Coast of Texas was destroyed by Hurricane Ike, says he doesn't plan to rebuild.

UMNS photos by Mike DuBose

"We have learned a great deal in the last three years (since Hurricane Rita) . . . we have learned that volunteer hours double every dollar given to recovery. We know that the early response of the UMC invites other groups to engage with us and stay committed to long-term recovery. Whatever you give in time and money is multiplied many times over."

**Bishop Janice Riggle Huie
Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church**

disaster in Texas history, and most of it occurred within the bounds of the Texas Annual Conference," said Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, who oversees more than 700 United Methodist churches in southeast Texas.

Huie and church leaders have traveled daily to churches and communities affected by the hurricane, offering prayers and

2005's Hurricane Rita was \$5 million, "Ike's challenge will far exceed Rita. . . . I am asking for your help."

Sifting through the rubble

Church leaders in Texas have provided pastoral support as they assess damages to both church property and the commu-

nities served by those congregations.

Visiting the Bolivar Peninsula on Sept. 24 was the Rev. Richard A. Burnham, superintendent of the church's

Southeast District, east of Houston. Walking through the ruined parsonage of the Rev. Jeff and Sandy Craft in Crystal Beach, the emotional toll wore on him.

"I see something Sandy would want," Burnham said, picking through the ruins. He gathered a few pieces of unbro-

ken china, a waterlogged photo album and a framed pair of baby shoes, wrapping them gently in a collapsed living room curtain.

"I am just so very, very sad for Jeff and Sandy," Burnham said. "Jeff has lost everything . . . his community and his church."

Next door to the parsonage, Bay Vue United Methodist Church was just as wrecked. Three inches of mud filled the sanctuary and fellowship hall, and Burnham was unsure whether the structure can be saved.

"This was a very community-minded congregation," he said. "They have a history of tithing 10 percent to the community from the tithes they receive."

Bay Vue, Sabine Pass and Seabrook were the hardest hit churches in the conference, according to Huie.

The pastor of the Sabine Pass congregation, which is on the Gulf Coast near Port Arthur,

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



Seeing the Presence of God

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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The Cross Connection is the official publication of the Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.



During this week we have been blessed with the presence of communications staff from both the United Methodist Committee On Relief and United Methodist Communications. On Sunday, I traveled with Susan Meister (UMCOR) and on Tuesday I traveled with Kathy Gilbert and Mike DuBose (UMCOM).

We want United Methodists around the world to know the extent of Ike's disaster, the great response of our congregations and our need for a generous response. You can read their stories and see their pictures on our web site or on theirs.

Every day I'm seeing signs of God's mercy and goodness as people work together to help neighbors they knew and neighbors that live many miles away. Yesterday, I was with Don Brown, pastor of Grace UMC in

Manvel. Grace is not a big church in the number of members, but it has an incredibly generous heart. These folks operate a weekly food pantry, which regularly serves about 125 families. Thanks to the generosity of the Houston Food Bank, United Methodists as far away as Austin, and hundreds of other people, Grace served just over 13,000 people in the week after the storm.

When I asked Don how they did it, he told me the story of Jesus and the loaves and fishes. As we visited with some of their volunteers, they used language like "miracle" and "it was a God-thing."

The practice of operating a food pantry week after week can easily feel more like hard work than some grand example of "risk-taking mission and service." However, that practice

gave these dear Methodists the eyes to see the "least of these" in their community. They saw them as friends who needed their help, and Christ multiplied their generosity many times over to serve far more people than they could ever imagine. Truly, the presence of God was in that place.

At Bayou Vista (just north of Galveston on IH 45) we connected with a group of hot, tired, dirty, mosquito-bitten United Methodists helping folks muck out their homes. The trash was stacked so high that the street was passable only one car at a time. Led by Mrs. Lee Thornton, these volunteers came from as far north as Longview.

Lee told us that yesterday they had worked at the home of an elderly man with cancer. As is their custom when they complete a house, they join together

to pray for the blessing of that home. As they held hands to pray, they looked up and saw the elderly man sitting on the deck in his wheelchair. He had his arms outstretched, blessing them.

Over the years, people have asked me, "What does Jesus look like?" This week — for at least a moment — Jesus looked like a bunch of hot, tired, dirty, mosquito-bitten United Methodists helping folks muck out their homes.

Thanks to all of you for the generous ways in which you are helping folks recover from Ike's destruction. May God bless each of you and give you peace.

Grace and peace,
Janice Riggle Huie



Top Left: Sabine Pass UMC after the destruction left by Hurricane Ike.

Top Right: Piles of debris in front of the parsonage in Bridge City, Texas.

Bottom: Bridge City begins the monumental task of clean up after Hurricane Ike.



Grace UMC Manvel miraculously feeds and serves more than 13,000

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

Like the multitude of fish that overflowed the disciples' nets when they launched out into the deep at Jesus' command, a similar miracle manifested through Grace UMC Manvel as they set out to meet the needs of Hurricane Ike's victims.

What started out as church members cooking a hot meal for a hurting community, ended up with Grace's members in partnership with people from as far away as Utah and Delaware to serve more than 13,000 South Texans.

For two days following the storm, hundreds of people enjoyed a sit-down, home-cooked dinner at Grace UMC. Then, the meals were multiplied.

An 18-wheeler stocked with ice arrived from Delaware. Flood buckets came from Utah. And, palette-after-palette of non-perishable food was shipped in from across the country. All of it was distributed as quickly as it arrived.

More than 2,100 cars passed through the church's drive-through distribution center for two days. Volunteers polled the drivers; asking how many people were in their household and in what zip code they live.

Responses ranged from 4-person households to 24-person households. And, drivers were from Angleton, Arcola, Freeport, Fresno, Santa Fe, Surfside, Bolivar Peninsula and beyond.

Manvel Mayor Delores Martin rejoiced in the fact that the ministry reached people far beyond her city's limits.

"We don't discriminate. You need help; we'll give it to you," she said. "That's what we're all about."

And the people truly needed help, since the FEMA point of distribution did not open at Manvel High School until the Grace drive through had already been running for two days. The mayor, who is not a member of the United Methodist Church, worked alongside Methodists, Baptists and people with no church home at the relief station to provide the essentials in her community.

"No, this isn't my church," she said, "but I work where I'm needed."

Among the patiently-waiting drivers lining the highway adjacent to the church was Georgia Gaines of Alvin.

"God sent me this way yesterday," she said, which is how she saw the sign promoting the food and ice giveaways. "It is a great blessing for God to touch someone's heart to touch us in a time of distress. It means he has not forsaken us."



Volunteers load bags of ice into the car of Georgia Gaines of Alvin. Truckloads of supplies were distributed during a two-day "drive through" at Grace UMC Manvel.

Miracles abound conference wide

Texas Conference churches are exercising Risk-Taking Mission and Service, Extravagant Generosity and Radical Hospitality that is resulting in miracles.

An interesting thing happened today. I am in Texarkana with a small meeting of clergy – 10 or so. We finished and I asked where they wanted to eat. Several named places and then Alex Lupo at First UMC Atlanta said, "Let's find the cheapest place and send the rest of the money for flood buckets." Danny Wayman, Williams Memorial Texarkana then said, "I have leftovers at

the church from a meal last night. Let's eat there for free and take up a collection." Quickly, \$112 appeared on the table and Tommy Earl Burton, Reeves Chapel near Pittsburg, Texas, took the money and promised to make at least two more buckets when his church meets Wednesday to assemble their flood buckets. Every bit counts.

Bill Taylor
North District Superintendent

We had 19 people (members and some regular attendees) from Waskom who worked at the shelter at the Scottsville Camp and Conference Center.

We had 101 evacuees from Orange at the shelter for Hurricane Ike. We worked from Thursday, Sept. 11 until Sept. 22. Most of the members were out there multiple times. One of our members ran the shelter and was there from 12-18 hours every day.

I am very proud of the response of our small church to serve the Lord by helping the evacuees while they were sheltered!

Harold M. Coburn, Pastor
First UMC Waskom

*How is your church caring for those affected by Hurricane Ike?
Email ecolvin@txcumc.org.*

Methodists need help to rebuild after Ike

Continued from page 1



Bishop Janice Riggle Huie and the Rev. Donald Waddleton assess storm damage and recovery needs September 24 in Surfside Beach.

UMNS photos by Mike DuBose

still managed to get a laugh from Burnham, however, when she left a message on his cell phone.

"The back of the sanctuary is blown out, all the pews are gone, the education building has been knocked over. ... That's all the good news I have for right now," the Rev. Kitty Key told Burnham.

Urgent plea

In her letter to the bishops, Huie said the need to help rebuild homes, churches and parsonages is among her greatest concerns. Others include families and churches with little or no flood insurance; families who have run out of money for food, gas and necessities due to evacuation orders; and providing salaries for the next three or four months to pastors whose congregations evacuated and whose communities have dispersed-particularly on the Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston Island and Sabine Pass.

"We have learned a great deal in the last three years (since Hurricane Rita)," she wrote.

"For example, we have learned that volunteer hours double every dollar given to recovery. We know that the early response of the UMC

invites other groups to engage with us and stay committed to long-term recovery. Whatever you give in time and money is multiplied many times over."

Noting that "news of Ike's impact has already disappeared from the national media," she urged United Methodists to stay informed through reports from the conference and from church news and relief organizations.

People are encouraged to continue to give extravagantly. All Ike Recovery contributions given directly to the Texas Annual Conference will stay in the Texas Annual Conference.

Make checks payable to the Texas Annual Conference, write Fund #534 IKE-TAC in the memo line and mail to: Texas Conference Treasurer, 5215 Main Street, Houston, Texas, 77002 or send to the lockbox in Dallas: Texas Conference UMC-Dept 0447, P.O. Box 120447, Dallas, Texas 75312-0447.

To give donations through UMCOR Advance No. 3019695, "Hurricanes 2008," Mail checks to UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087, and write the Advance number and name on the memo line of the check.



A portrait of devastation re



Top: Mold grows on waterlogged pews at Seabrook UMC. A hymnal lies where it was deposited by floodwaters.

Bottom: Southeast District Superintendent Rev. Richard Burnham picks his way through the ruined sanctuary at Bay Vue UMC in Crystal Beach.

Top: A Memorial Drive UMC volunteer removes the flood-soaked contents of a home in Bridge City.

Bottom: A discarded Santa Claus doll tops a pile of storm debris in Bayou Vista.



endered by Hurricane Ike



First Row: Left - The remains of a battered beach-front building show the effects of Hurricane Ike along Seawall Boulevard in Galveston, Texas. **Right** - Seabrook UMC members have been delivering flood buckets to the community, even as they deal with their own church damage.

Second Row: Left - Storm debris, flattened buildings and downed power lines dot the Boliver Peninsula. **Middle** - Surfboards from a nearby rental business protrude from the windows of the storm-wrecked sanctuary of Bay Vue UMC. **Right** - Volunteers clean an Ike-stained floor.

Third Row: Right - League City UMC is one of three conference staging areas for receiving and distributing flood buckets. Flood buckets can also be delivered to First UMC Vidor and LaPorte UMC.





Faith UMC Dickinson hosts free school clothes shopping spree

By Dina Griffin
Faith UMC Dickinson

In the spirit of ‘extravagant generosity,’ over 80 families showed up at Faith United Methodist Church, Dickinson, Texas, for the church’s *Free School Clothes Shopping Spree*. This is the third year the event has been held and it was just as successful as the first two events.

faith works when undertaking risk-taking missions.”

The event meets a need that exists in the community and surrounding area. Several years ago, when discussing prospective ministries, the church evaluated the demographics of its community which consists of many moderate to low income and single-parent families. There was also a growing population of immigrants with

boarding communities,” stated the pastor. “People from throughout Galveston County and Houston showed up. We knew that we had to extend ‘radical hospitality’ by welcoming any and all who came, and we did so.”

The church’s budget and donations help to support the expense of purchasing the clothes. “But more than that, God’s grace has abounded”,

The goal of the ministry is to show God’s love to all in the community and to encourage the children to stay in school, while helping parents meet the recurring need to purchase school clothes.

Rev. Lorraine Brown
Faith UMC

The church was bustling with activity as the mothers, even some fathers, and children moved from station to station retrieving the desired size and colors of shirts, pants, shorts, windbreakers, socks and undergarments.

“It was truly a blessing to be able to serve all those who came,” stated Faith’s pastor, Rev. E. Lorraine Brown. “Faith is a small church and this effort truly involves some risks. Being able to sustain this ministry each year is a testimony of how

school-age children making their homes in the area. The church wanted to start a ministry that could have a far-reaching impact, but remain within budget. The goal of the ministry would be to show God’s love to all in the community and to encourage the children to stay in school, while helping parents meet the recurring need to purchase school clothes.

“In the first year, when we distributed the fliers announcing the event, they ended up in

says Rev. Brown. “We have been blessed beyond expectations, as we shopped for deals and people’s hearts have been primed by God.”

Many of those who come to Faith’s Free Shopping Spree express how much this ministry helps them. But, the greatest blessing of all, according to Faith members who staff the event, is the smiles on the children faces as they carry out their brand new school clothes.

Native Americans ask —“Who do you say that I am?”

By Glenna Kyker Brayton
Co-chair, Committee on
Native American Ministries

Last year, Rev. Bernadine Dowdy wanted to show Third Sunday Native American Fellowship attendees how to cook a wild onion dinner, but couldn’t get on the plane with the onions, “they were so strong.” A full-time pastor of two Creek congregations in Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, Rev. Dowdy was the August preacher at the Houston area fellowship.

She wore a Choctaw-style dress in tribal colors of purple and gold. All the diamond patterns on the traditional dress and apron were hand-stitched

Rev. Dowdy quoted an unnamed source as saying Christianity is one generation away from extinction. “It saddens me to know my Choctaw [language] is on its way to extinction. But in heaven, being Choctaw won’t matter in the arms of Jesus.”

“We have endured and persevered. We [Choctaws] have never been ‘tipi and buckskin people’; we’re cloth people. We were not raised in arenas or ceremonial grounds. We worked hard to be what the government wanted so we could be successful and be left alone.” She asked, “Who are you? Do others try to tell you who you are? Be who you are while putting your hope and

“This generation has realized that if we become the same as everyone else, we lose who we are—and we need to know who we are. We need to tell our stories.”

Rev. Bernadine Dowdy
Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference

by an old friend and mentor. Her beautiful beaded collar and medallions were also hand-made by friends.

Rev. Dowdy based her sermon on Matthew 16:15: “But who do you say that I am?” Jesus asked his disciples that question, but as Native Americans, we must ask ourselves the same thing from a different point of view and with a much different purpose.

The generation prior to Rev. Dowdy’s didn’t teach children their Native language, making them speak only English so they could fit in better with the government’s “ideal Indian.” But “this generation has realized that if we become the same as everyone else, we lose who we are—and we need to know who we are. We need to tell our stories.”

trust in God! Put all those things—racism and feelings of inferiority—behind us. Remember them, but don’t let them hold us back from being like Jesus. If I preach about the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ, this won’t happen again.”

“Some folks in leadership positions think Native Americans can’t make our own decisions,” Rev. Dowdy continued. “Jesus lives in our hearts tonight. We are Peter and He’s building His church on this rock. Stand on the promises of God—that this fellowship will take hold and grow, reaching out to Native Americans in [Houston]. Be proud of who you are—because you are made in His image. Know who you are and whose you are.”





Amerson brothers sign new book; lead Upper Room Chapel

By Jeannette Pinkston
General Board of Discipleship
Director
Media Relations

The Revs. Melvin and James Amerson, clergy brothers from Texas, have at least two things in common: they are from the same family of origin and they are passionate about giving. So



much so they have co-authored a new book on stewardship called "Celebrating the Offering" (Discipleship Resources, 2007).

Discipleship Resources, one of two publishing units of the General Board of Discipleship, invited the brothers to Nashville for "An Evening with the Authors" at Scarritt-Bennett Center.

Come Sunday morning, the brothers believe worshipers should be as excited about giv-

ing the offering as they are about other aspects of worship, such as singing and preaching.

Speaking to a gathering of local pastors and laity, the Amersons said that the reality we find in most churches is a tendency to disconnect giving from the act of worship.

"Celebrating the Offering" (<http://www.gbod.org/stewardship>) emphasizes that the offering is a part of the worship experience, though frequently it appears to be disengaged from the rest of the service and happens without much forethought.

"In my two decades of ministry, I have come to realize that any time the preacher or minister begins to preach on stewardship, the natural response of the people in the pews is to fold their arms and close their ears," says the Rev. James Amerson, senior minister of Lolita and Point Comfort United Methodist churches in the Southwest Texas Conference.

The offering is not only a time to worship the Lord through the presentation of the

offerings."

Planning is essential in making the offering an integral part

izing the spirit of generosity in their churches.

In addition to sections that help children and youth celebrate the offering, prayers and litanies are included in the resource, which is designed for both clergy and laity.

The brothers read

from "Celebrating the Offering," and this was followed by a Q & A on stewardship and a book signing.

"Pastors and worship leaders must be more intentional about re-connecting the offering as part of the worship experience."

Rev. Melvin Amerson

Stewardship Consultant, Texas Methodist Foundation

believers' tithes and offerings, but it is also a time to recognize how blessed we are.

The Rev. George Donigian, editor of Discipleship Resources, says, "Celebrating the Offering" is important because many churches fail to think about how they invite people to give their offerings and it often comes across as if the church is putting forth a commercial instead of really celebrating the grace of God and what is really represented in

of worship.

"Pastors and worship leaders must be more intentional about re-connecting the offering as part of the worship experience," said the Rev. Melvin Amerson, stewardship consultant for the Texas Methodist Foundation.

"Through planning and education, worshipers will begin to feel and see the offering as a time of celebration," he said.

Pastors and worship leaders can use "Celebrating the Offering" as a means of revital-

GBOD'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, Tenn. For more information, visit www.gbod.org, or call the Media Relations Office toll free at (877) 899-2780, Ext. 7017.



Young Peoples Ministries to host leadership events

By Jeanette Pinkston
General Board Of Discipleship
Director
Media Relations

The General Board of Discipleship's Young People's Ministries Division will offer two additional leadership development training events this year for adults who work in ministry with young people.

The first event will be held November 15-16, 2008 at the Methodist Theological School in Delaware, Ohio, while the second workshop is slated for Federal United Methodist Church in Auburn, Washington, on December 6, 2008. Saturday sessions will run 9:00 a.m. -

5:30 p.m.

Called "The 'SOURCE,'" it (www.gbod.org/thesource) is designed to enhance spiritual growth and explore new resources for ministries with youth and young adults.

"The 'SOURCE is an opportunity to gather with other adult workers in ministry with young people to network, gain inspiration, share resources and worship," says Bill Lazor, director of Young Adult and Single Adult Ministries and one of the workshop leaders.

The Ohio gathering includes an optional half-day "Living Waters" retreat, Sunday from 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon, to allow

participants to dig deeper and reflect more broadly on their personal spiritual journey.

The 'SOURCE is a resource for ministry, a source of training, which connects participants with "The Source" who is God in Christ.

Young People's Ministries previously hosted five leadership development sessions, one in each jurisdiction. The Ohio and Washington events have been added by request.

According to Julie O'Neal, a manager with Young Peoples Ministries, "The 'SOURCE 2008 provides a context to learn about leadership and how to examine our own styles of lead-

ership in our settings with youth and young adults."

"In small and large group experiences, participants will interact with GBOD staff in Young People's Ministries and colleagues in settings near them. Whether you work with youth, young adults or both," says O'Neal, "The 'SOURCE is not to be missed!"

GBOD staffers will facilitate the sessions, which include: worship, a plenary on "Leadership: The Big Picture," snapshot sessions and closing worship.

The Saturday session costs \$25 and includes lunch; the half-day retreat on Sunday is

\$10 (lunch not included). To register and find hotel options, visit www.gbod.org/thesource or contact Micki McCorkle, mmccorkle@gbod.org, 615-340-1797; or Sarah Smith, ssmith@gbod.org, 615-340-1780.

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Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Fellowship Opportunities

Choral Evensong Service Moved to October 12

St. Paul's Choir will sing a Choral Evensong service at 4 p.m. Sunday, October 12, in the Sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

The service of Evensong, also known as evening prayer, is remarkable both for the centuries-old liturgical tradition it represents and for the atmosphere of contemplative devotion that enables it to remain deeply meaningful for worshippers today.

The service will be followed with a quarter peal by the change ringing bells.

St. Paul's UMC is located at 5501 Main Street.

130 Years of Ministry Anniversary Celebration for Elkhart First UMC

The Elkhart First UMC will host a celebration for its 130 years of ministry on Sunday, October 19 at the church, 202 E Parker Street.

The schedule for the day is as follows: 10 a.m. - a time of fellowship and refreshments; 11 a.m. worship; noon- lunch; 1- 2 p.m. reflection and sharing. All previous church members and pastors are special guests. Everyone is invited to come and share in this joyous time.

RSVP to the church (903-764-2347 or email: elkhartumc@valornet.com) by October 12. For questions or more information, please call or email Rev. Lynn Willhite, 903-764-2347 or elkhartumc@valornet.com.

Men's Day Worship Service Celebration At Trinity UMC

Sunday, October 26 at 10 a.m., the theme for the event is, *Trinity Men: God's Disciples Rising Up To Serve Mankind.*

The guest speaker will be

Roland S. Martin, a nationally award-winning and multifaceted journalist. His career includes being a nationally syndicated columnist, a commentator for TV One Cable Network, a CNN commentator and host of the *Roland S. Martin* radio talk show on WVON-AM/1690.

For more information, contact the church at 713-528-2356.

Foundry UMC – Holiday Market and Tea Room

The Foundry United Methodist Church will host over 100 vendors at its annual Judy Dierker Holiday Market on Saturday, October 18, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Find terrific values on a wide array of goods such as hand-crafted items, Christmas specialties, gourmet baked goods, toys, clothing, jewelry and more.

Also, shop at the Foundry General Store where every cent you spend benefits local and foreign missions. And, when you're hungry, be sure to stop by our Texas Tea Room, open 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Admission to the market is free; purchase tea room tickets at the event for \$10 each (all proceeds benefiting missions). For more information, call 713-937-9388 or see www.foundryfamily.org.

Trinity East UMC Celebrates a Century of Ministry

Trinity East UMC, 2418 McGowen, Houston, Texas will celebrate its 100th year of Christian service with a gala banquet, Saturday, November 8, 2008, 6 p.m., at the Hilton University of Houston Hotel and its anniversary worship celebration on Sunday, November 9, 2008, 10:30 am.

The guest speaker for both occasions is Dr. Luther Felder.

Everyone is invited to share this experience.

For banquet ticket reservations and other information, please

contact Ms. Juanita Jackson, 713-743-5385 or jjackson3014@sbcglobal.net.

Learning Opportunities

"The Historical" Jesus Study Series at St. Paul's UMC

Who was this human being named Jesus who walked about Galilee in the first century, the person who showed what God is like and what a human life full of God is like?

This question will be examined by William M. Linden in the Candlelighters adult Sunday School class at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. The eight-part series runs from October 5 to December 7 at 9:45 a.m. in S-109, first floor of the Sanctuary building.

Linden holds a postgraduate Diploma in Theology from Oxford University and is board chair of Houston's Foundation for Contemporary Theology. He also is an associate member of the Westar Institute, which sponsors the Jesus Seminar, the leaders in academic historical Jesus research.

Particular emphasis in this series will be placed on the Jewish context of first-century Israel, Jesus' treatment of women as equal with men in ministry, and his opposition to the patriarchal system of his day.

Participants will be introduced to a new way to read the Bible and to think about God — not as the God with rules, guilt, and punishment, but as a God of Justice, compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance.

For more about the class, contact Rev. Shelli Williams at swilliams@stpaulshouston.org or 713-528-0527

Hispanic Heritage Month

The United Methodist Church has numerous sources and resources to use in the celebra-

tion of Hispanic Heritage Month which ends October 15, 2008.

For non-Hispanics and Latino congregations and for those who do not normally speak Spanish, there are an abundance of prayers, hymns, songs, services, articles, books and more.

The following web page lists dozens of items available in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, *The Faith We Sing*, *The Book of Worship*, and many other sources, as well as numerous free web downloads. Check out <http://www.gbod/worship/his-pres.html>.

Gammon Theological Seminary 125th Founder's Day and Thirkeld-Jones Lectures

Remembering Who We Are: Seeking New Pathways is the theme for this event. Bishop Violet Fisher is the guest speaker for the Founder's Day service, Tuesday, October 7 and Bishop Gregory Palmer is the guest speaker for the lectures, Wednesday and Thursday, October 7-8.

The location for the event is, Gammon Theological Seminary, 653 Beckwith Street, SW, Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, contact the seminary office at 404-581-0310.

Estate Planning Workshop at St. Paul's UMC

St. Paul's Methodist Foundation of Houston is sponsoring an estate planning workshop on Thursday, October 9, at 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

The workshop will be presented by Kyle Frazier, an attorney at Frazier & Frazier where he practices tax, estate planning, probate, business, and real estate law.

This workshop will include a review of various legal aspects of estate planning, including

wills, trusts, insurance, and living wills. Frazier also will discuss how differently certain estate planning instruments are handled in the settlement of an estate.

For more information about the workshop or the Foundation, contact Rev. Shelli Williams at swilliams@stpaulshouston.org or 713-528-0527. Register through the announcement on the church's homepage, www.stpaulshouston.org.

Christian Educators Fellowship and Preaching from the Center National Conferences

These conferences will be held October 23-27 in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and the Albuquerque Convention Center.

Featured keynote speaker will be well-known environmental writer, Bill McKibben. Over 100 workshops will be offered and other event highlights include Bible studies led by Osvaldo Vena, Associate Professor of New Testament at Garrett Theological Seminary, daily worship and tours in the Albuquerque *Discovery Center* with dozens of vendors and pre-conference learning options.

For more information and to register, contact Ellen Thompson, Director of Christian Educators Fellowship, P. O. Box 24930, Nashville, Tennessee 37202, or 866-629-3113.

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