



Cross Connection

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Conference length to change in 2008

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

In the spirit of the Texas Annual Conference key drivers of excellence and accountability, the annual business meeting of the conference will now be shortened by one day.

Annual Conference 2008 will be held at The Woodlands UMC May 25-28, 2008. Sunday evening's Memorial Service will mark the beginning of the conference, and the event will conclude on Wednesday at noon.

The Annual Conference Planning Team proposed this change based on survey responses of past attendees and general

date, for the 2007 event totaled more than \$229,000 – more than \$60,000 over budget.

Conference Treasurer Dr. Elijah Stansell Jr., projects that shortening annual conference by one day will save the conference at least 10 percent of its total expenditures.

“There are several reasons to shorten annual conference – the most common is because we want to demonstrate proficient stewardship or great stewardship of annual conference resources,” Stansell said.

The change is a wise move –

“Around the connection, annual conferences are shortening their annual conferences,” he said, “to focus on the primary purposes of bringing delegates together – to worship, to make decisions on behalf of the local churches of the annual conference.”

Bigger blessings

Conference Lay Leader Leah Taylor noted that shortening the length of annual conference could bless more than the church's budget.

“I really am very excited for the laity that we are going to do this,” Taylor said. “I think it's going to give us the opportunity to have a whole new age group of people to participate in annual conference. People who are reluctant to take four days off work, may take off for two days ... It was clear with the amount of time spent voting this year that we could accomplish the business of annual conference in a day less.”

And just what is the value in attracting a younger demographic to the annual business meeting?

“One of the things we see in all the statistics we look at is the aging of the church,” said Taylor. “We see it in the clergy and the active members of the church. Part of the reason is because older members are reluctant to turn leadership over to younger folks and mentor them in those roles.”

“Turning over leadership responsibilities to people still active in the workplace – that's much more central in growing the church ... more so even, than lowering the age of clergy. If we can't get them hands-on leadership experience, then we aren't going to be successful in bringing them and their families into the church ... this is a way for us to change lives, to transform lives for Jesus Christ.”

“I believe that the changes we are making in conference, including length and format, can help us re-focus our conference on mission and worship. I believe Wesley and Asbury would applaud.”

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie

stewardship concerns. The Core Leadership Team approved the proposal at its August meeting.

“Good stewardship of both conference and local church resources has invited us to take a second look at the way we do conference,” said Bishop Janice Riggle Huie. “I'm grateful to the Annual Conference planning committee for its thoughtful recommendation. I believe that the changes we are making in conference, including length and format, can help us re-focus our conference on mission and worship. I believe Wesley and Asbury would applaud.”

Beyond the budget

The 2007 budget for the annual conference gathering was \$167,000. This amount covers everything from facilities and worship expenses to gifts for those being ordained to childcare and shuttle bus service. Expenses incurred by the conference, to

not only for fiscal reasons.

“Even more importantly, we want to honor the laity, by respecting their time commitment to both the church and to the sacred duties of church, work and family. We respect that they have sacrificed and are willing to make this commitment.”

In addition to bringing spending in alignment with the budget, the savings are expected to be passed along to local churches, pastors and delegates, who would save money, by cutting meals and lodging for one day. In 2007, 829 clergy and 598 laity registered for annual conference and most paid an average hotel room rate of \$100. Conceivably, if each registrant saved \$100 on one day's lodging, that savings alone would total more than \$142,000.

The Treasurer added that this change in the Texas Annual Conference mirrors that among conferences nationwide.

Cote d'Ivoire partners visit Texas in September

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

A seven-member delegation from Cote d'Ivoire, Africa, is visiting the Texas Annual Conference September 6-11 to expand the vision for the landmark partnership between the United Methodist Church in Texas and Cote d'Ivoire.

The delegation will participate in a Mission Fair at Lakewood UMC; attend at a Houston Dynamo soccer game; tour The Methodist Hospital and

in Cote d'Ivoire.

The delegation will worship at area United Methodist churches, including A&M UMC in College Station and, in Houston, Chapelwood UMC, Lakewood UMC, Memorial Drive UMC, St. Luke's UMC, St. Paul's UMC and Windsor Village UMC.

Another component of the partners' visit will allow the delegation to share information on



Sam Koffi, Assistant to the Bishop of Cote d'Ivoire visited Annual Conference 2007 with gifts for the Texas delegation that traveled to Africa in March.

possibly meet with the Texas Methodist Foundation to expand the capacity of the current women's micro-finance project

church growth and evangelism with the Texas Conference cabinet. The Methodist church in

Continued on page 5



Texas Conference youth flex their muscles after 12-hour Nothing But Nets shoot. See story on pages 4 and 5.



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.

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

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The Gathering

A retreat uniquely designed for connection and renewal

By **Thelma Jones, Editor**
Cross Connection - The Texas Annual Conference

The Gathering. Something about the title brings to mind visions of people coming together for a specific purpose or goal.

For clergy in the Texas Annual Conference, this is a true description of an annual occurrence. The Gathering, however,

Excellence, Fruitfulness and Accountability along with some of the Conference's core beliefs – Passionate Worship, Faith-forming Relationships, and Connectional Ministry.

Rev. David Meeker-Williams, coordinator of The

“The Gathering fills my need for covenant relationship. It is the common denominator for all of the church's orders and this year, with its theme, it furthers the Bishop's goal for passionate worship.”

Rev. David Meeker-Williams

is much more than people coming together in a specific location. It is an event that fulfills a mandate found in the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* regarding clergy and covenant relationships.

Close interaction among clergy members of the Conference is one way to maintain the unique connection of the United Methodist Church. Dr. Elijah Stansell, the Conference Treasurer has attended the event many times. “I am a strong supporter of the idea of building covenant and connectional relationships,” he said. Attendance at such occasions is critical to the relationship building process. The Gathering provides the opportunity to come together and dialogue with each other.”

It is an ideal setting to put into practice the key drivers of the Conference – Spirit Led,

Gathering says, “We've chosen our Conference theme, *Passionate Worship* as the emphasis. Dr. Marcia McFee who designs and leads worship for local, regional and national gatherings and Christian comedian Kenn Kington are the event's special guests.

“The Gathering fills my need for covenant relationship,” said Meeker-Williams. “It is the common denominator for all of the church's orders and this year, with its theme, it furthers the Bishop's goal for passionate worship.”

The Gathering will take place September 26-27, 2007 from noon to noon at Lakeview Conference Retreat Center. For information on registration, go to the Conference web site, www.txcumc.org and click on “The Gathering.”

Christian comedian Kenn Kington coming to the Gathering

By **Rev. Steve Woody**
Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church



Kenn Kington

whose focus is the family. Kenn has a passion to reach the unchurched for Jesus Christ and has discovered that comedy is a great way to make a connection.

Can you use comedy to reach out to the unchurched?

Kenn is a Christian comedian on XM Radio

Invite100 is a program designed to breakdown barriers in the community the church is trying to reach. The mission of Invite100 is to lead people to Christ through an encouraging method of outreach.

Kenn has found that this method often causes an “Invitation explosion” in the church. Kenn helps to train lay persons how to reach out to their unchurched friends and neighbors by first establishing trust and building relationships. Comedy

is then used as a means for dispelling the myths unchurched persons have of the faith and then connecting them, in a non-threatening way with “churched” persons.

The Radical Hospitality and Evangelistic Ministries Team of the Texas Annual Conference are sponsoring Kenn Kington at the Clergy Gathering on September 25. Kenn will give an overview of Invite 100 and will perform one of his stand-up routines later that evening.

Being One

New approach to a healthy marriage and ministry

By **Thelma Jones, Editor**
Cross Connection - The Texas Annual Conference

Did you know that one-third of clergy report that they think being in ministry is a hazard to their family?

Did you know that one of the top two ways that pastors prefer to cope with stress in their ministry is by leaning on their relationship with their spouse?

Did you know that more than half of pastors seen as exemplary among their peers said that their marriage was the most important factor in maintaining their emotional and spiritual health? If you have thought about these and similar questions, the seminar entitled, *Being One* offers answers and solutions for clergy and their spouses.

Being One offers the opportunity for couples to spend some intentional time with one another, away from a ministry setting. Ministry can be very rewarding, but it can also be exhausting. The work can feel as if it is never finished and the hours can be long and unpredictable. Families can become stressed because clergy are stressed.

Pastors and their families are expected to fulfill professional responsibilities as a family and adhere to a culture and code of life that may be foreign to those outside the profession.

“Sometimes these responsibilities can bring on isolation, high levels of stress and even divorce,” says Rev. Peter Cammarano, senior pastor of First UMC, Brazoria. “This seminar will give couples a chance to talk and get basic

information on accepting a call into the ministry profession. It allows you to take the temperature of your relationship; to evaluate and answer the question, ‘How are we doing?’”

Discussions will center on complex issues such as intimacy, money, communication and shared responsibilities. Dr. Bill Kerley, a United Methodist Elder in the Texas Conference is well equipped to be one of the seminar leaders, the other leader being his wife, Dr. Sherry Beeman. Both are former presidents of the Houston Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

“Marriage touches everything, even the pastor's ministry,” says Cammarano. “My wife and I use therapy. Why not engage the help of a professional in something as important as your marriage and your ministry?”

The one day seminar will be offered twice, one location being in Tyler on Saturday, September 29, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Marvin UMC. The registration deadline for this seminar is September 24, 2007. The next seminar will be held in Houston on Saturday, October 6, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at St. Paul's UMC. The registration deadline is October 1, 2007. The cost is \$20 per couple and childcare is provided for both events.

For more information, contact Rev. Peter Cammarano at 979-236-3407 or Peter_Cammarano@hotmail.com.

Making Connections

Workshops designed to connect local churches with conference service center

Formerly known as the *Service Center Tour*, **Making Connections** is an event where 16 Conference leaders will offer 17 informative workshops in six locations to answer your questions, hear your concerns, help your church connect with Conference ministries, and support you and your church's ministry. Here's a list of workshops being offered September 30 - October 14.

Pastors and personnel in leadership positions within the church are invited. Here's a list of the workshops being offered.

Basic Workshops-Appropriate for Everyone



Church Missional Outreach - Jacquelyn Banman, Associate Director, Center for Missional Excellence Learn how the four Conference Centers work together for Missional Outreach. Share how your church is increasing hands-on mission projects.



Clergy Compensation - Rev. B. T. Williamson, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence
Gain a deeper understanding of setting clergy compensation and salary benefits. Experience a hands-on demonstration of the web-based compensation tools.



Church Building Projects - Rev. C. J. Taylor, President/CEO United Methodist Foundation; Rev. Steve Turner, Development Officer and Betty Millard, Loan Officer
Assess your church's building needs; consider fund raising, capital funds campaigns, and loans.



Church Communications - Eleanor Colvin, Director of Conference Communications
Identify Conference tools which can help tell your congregation's story. Express how the Conference Communications Office can better serve your needs.



Basic Clergy Payroll - Jana Smalley, Conference Accountant, Center for Connectional Resources
Discover the process of building and issuing clergy payroll. Discuss setting salaries, W-4s, I-9s, housing allowances and accountable reimbursement.



Church Growth - Dr. Karen Dorris, Director, Center for Congregational Excellence
Hear about characteristics of growing churches. Discover how your church can create ministries that lead to growth.



Decisions about Advance Directives - Cindy Vanover, Project Director, Spiritual Care and Values Integration, The Methodist Hospital System
Consider your values concerning health, wholeness, and end of life issues. Discern how to ensure that the intentions of your loved ones are heard at the end of life.



Caring for Clergy - Rev. Carol Bruse, Associate Director, Center for Clergy Excellence
Recognize how clergy are supported through peer groups and continuing education. Preview the new two-page annual clergy assessment form.

Intermediate Workshops – More “in-depth” information



Apportionment and Vital Signs - Dr. Elijah Stansell, Director, Center for Connectional Resources
Clarify the significance of apportionments and reporting vital signs. Envision your church's role in the mission of our annual conference and denomination.



Church Conflict and Grievances - Rev. B. T. Williamson, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence
Explore a biblical model for resolving conflict and achieving reconciliation. Discuss appropriate Christian responses to people who have grievances.



Benefits Overview - Lydia Lopez, Benefits Administrator, Center for Clergy Excellence
View 2008 Conference pensions and group health benefits. Identify all the benefits forms you need, why you need them and when they are due.



Church Risks - Peggy Miller, Accounting/Remittance Analyst, Center for Connectional Resources
Learn about the many risks churches face and how your church can minimize its risk. Assess your church's internal controls, policies, procedures and hiring practices.



Clergy Payroll - Jana Smalley, Conference Accountant, Center for Connectional Resources
Accelerate your understanding of clergy payroll, benefits and necessary tax returns. Consider cafeteria plans; review 941, W-2, 1099 and 990T forms.



New Conference Structure - Rev. Rick Goodrich, Assistant to the Bishop and Director, Center for Missional Excellence
Understand how the new Conference Model for Ministry can be integrated. Discuss how we can realize our new vision, mission, key drivers and core values.



More Options for Clergy and Lay Employees - Ted Carlson, President/Managing Principal, Carlson's Consulting
Consider Section 125 plans, high deductible plans and HSAs. Share your feedback concerning a possible future Employee Assistance Plan.



New Conference Technology - Ivan Krowl, Information Technology Manager, Center for Connectional Resources
Gain information about vital signs, salary sheets, report day, and candidacy records. Hear about long range plans for Conference technology and Web based solutions.



Recruiting Young Clergy - Rev. Carol Bruse, Associate Director, Center for Clergy Excellence
Imagine the future of our Conference without young clergy. Share ways your church can help encourage young people to consider a Christian vocation.

Local churches score big for Nothing But Nets

Churches throughout the Texas Annual Conference have found a myriad of ways to embrace one mission project that will stop the spread of Malaria in Africa. To date, 115 churches have raised more than \$198,000. The projects and examples shared below can be implemented in churches of all sizes and in all locations.

Red Bayou UMC and Daniel's Chapel UMC

Red Bayou and Daniel's Chapel Churches have already taken a communion offering for Nothing But Nets. These two churches have around 15 and

highlighted most fully was that every 30 seconds a child would die from malaria.

In the context of her presentation she then pulled out a container filled with small white golf ball-sized wiffle balls and asked people in the congregation to guess how many balls she held. After a few guesses, she proclaimed that there were 240 balls inside the container, one for every child who would die this morning during Sunday School and this worship service.

Then, she poured them out on the floor. As they scattered one person told me they thought it was like small skeletons hit-

Nothing But Nets is one of the greatest visions of the 21st century. It ranks with the Lions Club effort to eliminate childhood blindness and the Rotary Club vision to eradicate polio. The disappearance of malaria from the African continent will be remembered as one of the greatest missions in history.

*Rev. Darwood K. Galaway
Sunset UMC, Pasadena*

25 in attendance. On the first Sunday in August we received enough money for 30 nets from the two churches. Tell the preachers "Just Do It!"

Rev. John R. Barfield

First UMC Bay City

This past summer the VBS director at First UMC Bay City decided to make our mission focus the Nothing But Nets Campaign. During the course of the week which we spent in connection with Saint Paul's UMC and St. Mark's Episcopal Church here in Bay City we were able to raise \$1,243.04.

The Sunday following the week we also made Nothing But Nets our Communion offering and raised an additional \$998.25. I would like to share the most profound moment of these experiences in the context of our worship service.

Just prior to the sermon I asked Pat, our Missions coordinator from VBS, to come and share a creative visual that God laid on her heart to present the Nothing But Nets Campaign to our congregation. She stood before those gathered and outlined some of the more pertinent facts about the situation in Africa. The fact which she

ting the floor. As the profound silence filled the room she then took my five year old son by the hand and stood him right in front of herself. She said, "As you look at Timothy realize that we are talking about children just like him that are dying each and every day. Won't you join me to stop this disease?" It was a moment I will never forget and neither will this community of faith.

Rev. Chris Harrison

First UMC Groves

First UMC-Groves, in the Southwest District, had a "Nickels for Nets" service project with Vacation Bible School. The children heard daily about the needs of kids in Africa just like them. The offering raised enough money for 35 nets and may have weighed 100 pounds! A slide show was presented by our parish nurse on the following Sunday at fellowship time, where the adults were challenged to match the generosity of the VBS kids. Another 25 nets were purchased. "Nothing but Nets" also will be offered as our advent offering.

Rev. Alan Van Hooser

St. Mark's UMC Baytown

Nets for Nets at St. Mark's UMC in Baytown brought out a crowd of onlookers to see the youth take on the old-timers in basketball. The action was exciting, the nets were swaying, the crowd was enthusiastic, and the coaching by Youth Director Stacy Buntin and Rev. Mike Proctor was superb. Participants from age four to more than 60 years old exemplified sportsmanship of the Christian kind with every dribble and toss of the ball. This youth sponsored Nothing but Nets event raised \$2,657.



Bellville UMC

Our Vacation Bible School chose as its mission opportunity to support the "Nothing But Nets" program. The children were challenged to raise \$500. By Wednesday evening we had that already raised.

We raised the bar, so that if they raised \$800 then they would be able to throw "water balloons" at our Pastor Robert Stutes, Associate Pastor Jennifer Jackson and the two summer interns Jeremy Wester and Preston Morgan. Not only did we reach \$800 but our Vacation Bible School raised \$870 towards the "Nothing But Nets" program. The four of them were wrapped in a "net" and the children had a lot of fun throwing water balloons at the pastoral staff.

Beginning this summer we started "dollar bills for nets." All loose \$1 bills in the Sunday offering go for Nothing But Nets. I believe it is well over \$1,000 to date.

Murvaul UMC

Murvaul United Methodist Church, a small rural church outside Carthage, Texas, designated the communion rail offering from July 1 to go toward Nothing But Nets.



Above: A Sunset UMC youth aims at more than a basket - eradicating malaria is the goal.

Below: St. Mark's Baytown UMC youth challenged the "old-timers" in basketball.

Opposite Page Bottom Left: Sunset UMC youth shoot hoops at a recent lock-in.

campaign

The 42 member church had 30 people in attendance that Sunday, and the collection for the Nothing But Nets campaign was \$300. This means that a net was purchased representing every single person in attendance that day, equivalent to 100 percent participation! One eight-year-old girl even gave her allowance of \$5 and asked her parents to lend her \$5 so that she could purchase a net. (Which, they did, of course.)

Rev. Doug Wintermute

Sunset UMC, Pasadena

Sunset United Methodist Church has taken the Nothing But Nets challenge seriously. Rev. Darwood Galaway writes regular articles on the importance of this ministry, and, in every meeting, the Committee on Missions discusses additional ways to increase contributions.

We have collected money through special sales, Vacation Bible School offerings, and special donations from individuals. In November, we will have our "Cookies for Nets" in which 350 batches of cookies will be baked and sold by the dozen – just in time for the holidays. To date,

we have raised almost \$4,000.

At their "Nothing But Nets" lock-in our youth received pledges for over \$1,000. Although their skills may not have met the "nothing but net" slogan, our junior and senior high students and their sponsors shot hoops for 12 consecutive hours limping away with sore arms, tired legs, and that special feeling that comes from making a difference in the lives of others.

Rev. Galaway often emphasizes the importance of the initiative: "'Nothing But Nets' is one of the greatest visions of the 21st century. It ranks with the Lions Club effort to eliminate childhood blindness and the Rotary Club vision to eradicate polio. The disappearance of malaria from the African continent will be remembered as one of the greatest missions in history."

Nancy Hinshaw, Lay Member

How is your church supporting Nothing But Nets? Send ideas, stories or photos to thelmaj@methodists.net.



Bellville youth soak their net-covered pastoral staff, which included Senior Pastor Robert Stutes, Associate Pastor Jennifer Jackson and Pastoral Interns, Jeremy Wester and Preston Morgan.

Cote d'Ivoire partners visit Texas in September

Continued from page 1

Cote d'Ivoire has grown despite the political and social unrest that began in 2001 and now is ending. Evangelization, outreach and engaging worshippers of all ages are strengths of the church in Cote d'Ivoire, which positions its leaders to mentor Texas churches that are in a state of decline or maintenance.

The visiting delegation consists of: Samuel Koffi, assistant to the Bishop and team leader; Abraham Arpellet, national director of music for Cote d'Ivoire's 25,000 choir members;

Beatrice Nandjui, chairperson of the health committee of the Conference Board of Church and Society; Josephine Nkoumo, National President of the Women's Fellowship; Akpa Akpes Corentin, Director of the Conference Board of Finance and Administration; Edouard

Okoue, Vice President of the Conference Board of Finance and Administration; and Rev. Isaac Bodje, Conference

radio stations for evangelization

- Improve health care through partnerships of The



Bishop Janice Riggle Huie and Sam Koffi, Assistant to the Bishop Benjamin Boni of Cote d'Ivoire at Annual Conference 2007.

Secretary and former District Superintendent.

In March, during the visit of the Texas delegation to West Africa, leaders of both churches agreed to work on the following:

- Fight malaria through the Nothing But Nets initiative.
- Establish two community

Methodist Hospitals in Houston and Dabou

- Support and development of ISHTA
- Support feeding programs at Methodist primary schools
- Support construction of Methodist schools.



Neighbors in Action

School to receive technology funds through First UMC Houston ministry

By Diane O'Brien
Executive Director
Neighbors In Action

The Joan Capps Foundation has awarded Neighbors in Action \$25,000 to fund technology and software at Port Houston Elementary.

Because of the generosity of the Joan Capps Foundation, Port Houston Elementary will be better prepared to meet the needs of every child. This grant levels the academic playing field for those who do not have access to one on one tutoring.

The grant was awarded for Plato Early Reading Software and Tutorvista software. The Plato Early Reading Software will ensure that all students are fluent and comprehending readers by the time they leave the 2nd grade. This not only helps students in learning language and literacy,

but helps to provide the foundation of success in all other core content areas such as math, social studies, and science.

The software, Tutorvista will

cepts and/or skills.

Tutorvista will help to ensure that all students are on track to achieving their mastery learning goals. This will be extremely helpful in providing assistance to students who need serious intervention and help in their academic studies.

Neighbors in Action, First Methodist Houston, and Port Houston Elementary are grateful to the Joan Capps Foundation for their generosity. To show our appreciation we are asking those involved in Neighbors in Action or PORT to send a

letter of appreciation to the foundation. Please mail the letter to Diane O'Brien c/o Joan Capps Foundation 1320 Main St. Houston, TX 77002. We will send all of the thank you letters at one time.



Happy faces all around. Kids at Port Houston Elementary School enjoy recess time.

help students who need serious academic intervention to achieve grade level success. Through Tutorvista, students receive one-to-one tutor help via the computer. In this way, students are enhancing computer skills by learning about specific science, math, reading, or language con-

Port Arthur First UMC Marking 110 years of ministry

By Jane Covington
Communications Chairperson
First UMC Port Arthur

Before there was a town, there was a Methodist Church. Early settlers of what would become Port Arthur were largely from the Midwest lured to the Gulf Coast by free trips and fast-talking salesmen. Many were Methodists. Thomas Wilson, a local preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a carpenter, began holding religious services in hotels and homes.

Wilson urged his followers to form a church and in January 1897 a group of Methodists met at the Sabine Hotel at which time they requested a charter from the Texas Secretary of State. That request was granted Aug. 25, a year before Port Arthur was chartered.

Materials and work were quickly solicited and a church was erected before the year was out. The fledging congregation was accepted into the Gulf Mission Conference 1898.

In December of 1912 the conference met in Port Arthur at which time legendary John W. "Bet-a-Million" Gates challenged both the conference and his church to raise \$50,000 each for a college and a new church building which he would match.

The college is now Lamar State College.

Due to separation of church and state issues in the 1970s, the church is no longer located on same campus as the college. First Church, now located at 3131 South Park Drive, will be celebrating its many years of Christian service to the community throughout September.

A series of "Meet the Methodists" programs are scheduled from 5:30 to 7 pm Sept. 9, 16 and 23. Refreshments and an "Our Church in Action" exhibit will follow each session.

Speakers and their topics are: Rev. Florence Morson, associate pastor of First UMC of Beaumont, "Beliefs"; Rev. Byron Jarratt, retired Methodist pastor, "Roots"; and Rev. Richard Burnham, Southeast Texas District Superintendent, "Mission Outreach".

A special worship service is planned for 10:30 am Sunday, Sept. 30, followed by dinner. Morning services throughout the month, skits relating to historic events will be presented with a historical figure scheduled to appear at the Sept. 30 service.

'Thank you' Somerville ISD

Local church shows radical hospitality

By Thelma Jones, Editor
Cross Connection - The Texas Annual Conference

Honoring the teachers and staff of Somerville Independent School District with a luncheon is something done annually by the UMM and UMW of First UMC Somerville. Viewed as one of their hands on mission and community projects, the church embraces the slogan, 'Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.'

"We feel it a privilege to be able to feed these members of the ISD and show them our love and support, as well as our prayers for a successful year in our community," said Rev. Sidney Akin, Jr., senior pastor of First UMC Somerville. "A world of thanks for all you do."

Approximately 100 people attended the event. Charles Camarillo, Superintendent of the school district was recognized for his help in the community,

specifically a project memorializing veterans from Somerville

who gave their lives in the service of their country.



Teachers from the Somerville Independent School District enjoy the feast prepared by United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women of First UMC Somerville. The luncheon is an event that brings church and community together.

Group Health Benefits considers new health care program

The Texas Annual Conference, is partnering with UniCare to replace the current Medicare, Boon Chapman and ScriptCare plan with a single coverage provided by UniCare under Medicare mandates.

One of the many advantages the new plan offers is having a single organization pay for drug prescriptions and medical bills.

Listening Posts

Rev. B. T. Williamson, Director of The Center for Clergy Excellence, Lydia Lopez, Benefits Administrator and a Consultant from UniCare will host a series of meetings that will offer additional information about the new program.

Dates and locations for the meetings are:

September 10 - 4 p.m.
College Station, Christ UMC
Fellowship Hall in the Annex Building

September 19 - 2 p.m.
Houston, St. Paul's UMC
Fondren Hall

September 23 - 3 p.m.
Lufkin, First UMC
The Youth and Worship Center

September 24 - 10 a.m.
Tyler, Marvin UMC
Herd Auditorium

A presentation by a UniCare representative will be offered at the retiree retreat October 3, 2007 at Lakeview Conference Retreat Center.

“Through the eyes of a first time guest....”

By Jan Floro
Tomball United Methodist Church

September brings an emphasis on “getting back to church” with the national Igniting Ministry commercials, congregational Open Houses, and the opportunity to reevaluate and fine tune our welcoming ministry skills.

Ken Odom recalls and describes the very first time their family experienced the Tomball UMC church campus and congregation through the “eyes of a first time guest.” He says, “We had driven by Tomball UMC many times and always admired the grounds and commented on the church’s great appearance from the street.”

The Odom family was looking for a church that was large enough to have significant ministerial offerings and a vibrant youth department, but yet small enough that they could really get connected and involved. They had tried several churches of various denominations in the com-

munity and had just about given up on finding a church in the area, and then they came to Tomball UMC.

As first time guests, they easily found the guest parking area, were greeted by door

‘... this was the very first church that had followed up with a phone call by a church member – and it made a difference.’

greeters and taken to the Guest Center where a host met them, gave them information about the church, and introduced them to several of the church staff, including the youth director.

They were given a tour of the campus and were able to gather information about the vision and plans of the youth department. Upon entering the sanctuary for worship, a friend from the community spotted the Odom family and came over and asked if their families could sit together.

Ken also vividly remembers receiving a Sunday evening phone call from a member of the church simply thanking them for being in worship and asking if they had any specific questions about the ministry of the church.

He emphasized that this was the very first church that had followed up with a phone call by a church member – and it made a difference.

The Odom family returned to worship the next week and were greeted with the same genuine welcome.

It wasn’t the convenient location of the church or even the wonderful offering of varied styles of worship that brought the Odom family back to Tomball UMC for a second visit – it was definitely the intentional welcoming ministry and follow-up.

Ken says, “We might still be looking for a church home were it not for the wonderful welcome we received when we first attended Tomball UMC.”

‘Church intersections’

Conflicts can create opportunities for hospitality and discipleship

By Dean McIntyre
General Board of Discipleship

The Rev. Kevin Armstrong, senior pastor of North United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, recently spoke to the General Board of Discipleship’s board of directors at the August 2007 meeting in Nashville. He spoke about conflict in the church that result when opposites meet in disagreement.

Conflict can result from many opposites meeting in church life, but some of them include: conservative/liberal, homosexual/heterosexual, joy/lament, contemporary/traditional, young/old, black/white, urban/rural, large/small, clergy/laity, citizen/immigrant, rich/poor, inner city/suburb, judgment/grace, head/heart, and so many others.

Surely we have all experienced this in our churches. People are thrown together and forced to interact out of their opposition, their division. As musicians and worship leaders, think of the many occasions for this:

- “Awesome God” or “Come, Thou Almighty King”
- “Holy, Holy, Holy” or “Santo, Santo, Santo”
- Applause or no applause
- Seeker worship or believer worship
- Film clips or imaginative preaching
- Organ or guitar
- Robes or no robes
- Choir or praise team
- Hymnals or screens
- Kneeling at the rail or intinction.

Armstrong compellingly made the point that we do not have to allow ourselves and our people to continue in disagreement and conflict. We must help people to see that so many of these oppositions are “false opposites”; that is, they do not have to inevitably lead to conflict.

Our job is to see and to help our people see these false oppositions as crossroads or intersections. What we view as opposites in conflict may be turned into diversity and richness that can simultaneously inhabit the same intersection.

Just as a north-south road and an east-west road meet together in an intersection and all of a sudden offer us four directional choices rather than two, so can we transform our conflicts and tensions into opportunities for enriching church life and Christian discipleship. We must look for opportunities of transformation and discipleship in the intersections of church life.

Armstrong said, “The intersection of preservation and hospitality is the scene of many bloody battles in the church.” We’ve all been on those battlefields. Some of us have led them, and some of us have been bloodied. We’ve waged preservation versus hospitality battles over architecture, language, liturgy, worship practice, and certainly music.

What would it be like if we committed to and prayed for God’s direction in making our churches and sanctuaries the very point of intersection, and if we lived our lives and practiced our craft in that intersection — in the sanctuary, in the choir room, in the Sunday school classroom, in the church meeting, in the pastor’s office and our own offices, as well as our homes? The intersection is our opportunity for holy interaction, God’s grace, and mercy received and offered.

Make a drawing of your church building, then mark with an “X” the locations that you can help to make intersections for your congregation’s faith journey. When the city does it with highways, they bring in road graders, trucks, and road construction people. How do we do it in the church?

Dean McIntyre (dmccintyre@gbod.org) is the Director of Music Resources for The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship. Copyright © 2007 The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, PO Box 340003, Nashville TN 37203-0003. Worship website: www.umcworship.org. Used by permission.

Late Bishop honored with global education scholarship

By Linda Green
United Methodist News Service

A United Methodist bishop who worked for people around the world to have access to higher education and seminary degrees has been honored with a scholarship fund for that purpose.

The Benjamin R. Oliphint Scholarship Fund of The Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership

Bishop Oliphint had a deep and abiding faith in God and understood that God loves all people and firmly believed the change for education opened doors for many young people.

Development was created Aug. 25 by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry to memorialize the late bishop’s “outstanding contributions in fulfillment of the education mission of The United Methodist Church.”

Oliphint, who died July 7, believed that education was the vehicle to transform people, society and the world, said board members during their August meeting. The late bishop helped to found and develop Africa University in Zimbabwe to give young people in Africa access to

Methodist higher education. In retirement, he supported the university and, along with Bishop Herbert Skeete, led the Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development to

enhance education worldwide. “Bishop Oliphint had a deep and abiding faith in God and understood that God loves all people and firmly believed the change for education opened doors for many young people,” according to the resolution to create the scholarship fund.

Global education
The Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development promises to dramatically strengthen the role of 775 Methodist-affiliated secondary schools, colleges, universities

and theological schools in 69 countries as vehicles for developing dynamic leadership, said the Rev. Jerome King Del Pino, the board’s top executive.

A four-year, \$4 million initiative, the Global Education Fund will pay for technical assistance to Methodist-affiliated schools, colleges, universities and theological schools working to design leadership

development programs to address local needs for clergy or lay leaders. Each of five regions – Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the United States – will raise or pool money and disburse the funds to approved programs.

The fund provides technical assistance, on-site mentoring to assist in program development and implementation, and scholarship support for students. It initially launched as an unfunded mandate of the 2004 General Conference, the denomination’s top legislative body.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Transformed By Grace

Sixth Grade Retreat (Formerly - Winter Carnival)

Oct. 5-7, 2007 (Note New Date This Year)

Lakeview Conference Center
Go to www.cypress-umc.org for forms and information.

Adult worksheet password: bible.

Contact Jerome Brimmage
jbbrimmage@cypress-umc.org or 281-469-0730 for questions.

Registration Dates:

Early Bird - Postmarked September 10, 1007 - \$110.

Late - Postmarked September 17, 2007 - \$135.

Procrastination Registration - Postmarked - September 24 or after - \$175.

Pre-Retirement Seminar

November 14 & 15, 2007
Lakeview Conference Center

Have you ever wondered about your social security, pensions, finances and insurance after retirement? This is the seminar to get these answers.

If you are within 10 years of retirement you need to attend this very important seminar.

Check in time begins at 10:00 am on Wednesday, November 14 and the seminar concludes with the noon lunch on Thursday, November 15.

For registration forms, contact Marty Gordon at 713/521-9383 x322, (Fax) 713/523-9173, (email) martyg@methodists.net.

Checks should be made payable to the Texas Annual Conference and sent to the Conference Board of Pensions, 5215 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77002; attn: Marty Gordon.. Registration deadline is October 1, 2007.

No Man Left Behind Conference

The weekend of September 27-29, Kingwood UMC will host the **No Man Left Behind** conference.

The three day conference is a regional event being held to train pastors, and men's ministry leaders. The conference will focus

on how to create, capture, and sustain momentum among men.

The United Methodist Men have partnered with Man in the Mirror to provide leadership training for the United Methodist Church. Due to this partnership, a discounted rate is being offered.

If you are interested in Men's Ministry and would like to attend the conference, go to the Man in the Mirror Website at <http://register.maninthemirror.org/SearchResults.asp?Cat=60>, or contact Rev. Patrick Evans. 281-358-2137

Healing The Brokenness *Shaping Communities of Peace and Reconciliation in Christ*

Healing the Brokenness is a workshop designed to assist laity and clergy of the local church community in continuing the dialogue and difficult work of naming, addressing, and healing the personal, social, and structural divisions that affect us as the people of God, including across racial and economic barriers. The workshop will be led by Emmanuel Kataongole and Chris Rice, co-directors of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School. The cost for the workshop is \$10. Lunch and materials will be provided.

For registration, Contact Rev. Diane McGehee at 713-666-2167 or pmcgehee@smu.edu with your name, address, phone number and home church.

Make checks payable to BUMC and mailed to the attention of Rev. McGehee, Bellaire UMC, 4417 Blvd., Bellaire, Texas 77401. Mark your registration "*Healing the Brokenness Workshop*." Registration deadline is September 14, 2007.

Navigating The Single Life *Jurisdictional Singles Retreat at Mount Sequoyah*

Have you heard of GPS - "global positioning systems." What about the **ultimate** directional system? It's something called the "GOD positioning system."

November 2-4, 2007 is the date for the retreat to be held at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and

Conference Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The cost is \$80 per person. Contact Sheri Kelley at 713-468-8356, ext. 119 or sherikelley@mdumc.org. See workshop listing and schedule online at www.sequoyahsingles.org.

An Evening of Grace

Foundry UMC Performance Series continues with *An Evening of Grace* on Sunday, September 9 at 6 p.m.

The performance will trace the emotional background of the hymn, Amazing Grace and its author, John Newton in a presentation featuring the Foundry choir, singers, actors and instruments.

Admission is free, but an offering will be taken in support of Foundry's drama ministry.

Official Texas Historical Marker Dedication And Centennial Celebration

The Brookeland United Methodist Church, located at 1117 Old Highway 8 North will celebrate over 160 years of Methodism taught in the Brookeland, Sabine County, Texas area on Saturday, September 15 at 2 p.m..

Join in this important historical event in the life of the Brookeland UMC and the Brookeland community. Music will be provided by the Rayburn Country Dulcimers.

First UMC, Missouri City **Saturday, September 15 (9 am - 3:30 pm)**

It's About Friendship - Women's Retreat - The United Methodist Women of our church have organized the third annual women's retreat focusing on friendship. The keynote speaker is Joy Carol, award-winning author of *The Fabric of Friendship*.

Registration is \$30 and includes breakfast, lunch, a tote bag, goodies and any craft supplies used. To register, contact First United Methodist Church Missouri City at 281-499-3502.

Perkins Course of Study

Extension school announces plans for 2007 fall semester

The Perkins School of Theology Course of Study Extension School is taking applications for the fall semester of 2007. Classes began on September 8.

The student body of part-time local pastors continues to grow both in the number of students and course offerings. This semester, students will be able to select from one of the four courses representing first, third and fourth year curriculums.

Course offerings will be COS 111, *Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible* taught by Dr. Jim Killen, retired member of the Texas Annual Conference; COS 114, *Pastoral Leadership &*

Administration taught by Rev. Jim Crawford, retired member of the Texas Annual Conference and Associate Dr. of the Course of Study at Lon Morris; COS 311, *New Testament I*, taught by Dr. Starr Bowen, Professor in the Spanish speaking section of the regional Course of Study at Perkins and COS 413, *Worship and Sacraments*.

Application forms may be secured by writing Dr. Jimmie Reese at 1803 Turney Circle, Jacksonville, Texas 75766 or by e-mail at jareese@aol.com. The school has now completed four years averaging 50 students a semester.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Larry Roberman-Texas Conference, Richard Gillet-Texas Conference, Dean Register-Louisiana Conference, Sandra Jackson-Texas Conference, Mary Tennon-Texas Conference and Jim Pickens-Texas Conference. Not pictured from the Texas Conference are Joe Beran, Wade Harman and Bill Peterson.

These students received the Academic Achievement Award for completion of either the first year, second year or first and second year courses.

Women Who Run with Wolves

By Donna V. Adair, Director of Communications
St. Paul UMC, Houston

St. Paul's United Methodist Church is hosting a women's retreat at the Cenacle Retreat Center October 5-7, and registration is encouraged by mid-September.

It will be based on the book, *Women Who Run with Wolves* by Clarissa Estes. The focus will be on two stories from the book: "Sealskin, Soulskin," and "The Handless Maiden," the latter a metaphor for the whole of a woman's life journey.

The group will explore the stories of their own lives through film, reflection, sharing, journaling, expressive art, dance, and however else the

spirit moves them.

The presenter will be Sister Lois Dideon, R.C., who has graduate degrees in theology and psychotherapy. She has worked in religious formation and spiritual renewal for many years.

This retreat is open to all women. The cost is \$180 and includes private rooms and five meals; scholarships are available.

For more information or to register for this retreat, contact Rev. Gail Williford at gailwilliford@stpaulshosuton.org or 713-528-0527.