



Cross Connection

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

Justice for Our Neighbors

TAC names immigration ministry 2011-12 Advance Special

In his first year as a commissioned missionary for the General Board of Global Ministry Joseph Bradley worked with orphans and children living in the streets of Cambodia, while also teaching English at a private Methodist school in Phnom Penh.

Bradley, who is from the Texas Annual Conference, returns stateside for the second year of his ministry placement to serve as a volunteer and communications coordinator with Justice for Our Neighbors, bringing his skills in advocacy honed abroad home to serve immigrant communities in South Michigan.

Justice for Our Neighbors was designated as the 2011-2012 Advance Special for the Texas Annual Conference.

A Conference Advance special is an opportunity given to us by our Discipline paragraph 655 to make a special gift to a project which extends the mission of the church.

What is Justice for Our Neighbors?

The program operates legal clinics, which also provide an opportunity for local congregations to "open their doors" and hospitably welcome newcomers in their midst. JFON provides a place for community gathering and table fellowship, where parishioners and immigrants may come together to seek peace and transformation in a troubled world.

"The very heart of UMCOR's first incarnation in 1940 was refugee ministry. From that day to the present, the faith and compassion of local United Methodist churches has made possible an ongoing ministry to refugees — a warm wel-

come to the people of each era who were forced to flee their homelands," said Rev. Noel Denison, chair of TAC Sending Ministries, at the 2011 annual conference.

"Today, the heart of UMCOR continues to beat for refugees and immigrants. The purpose of UMCOR's JFON is to engage and support local congregations in reaching out to and welcoming immigrants in their community by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services."

These clinics assist low-income immigrants through the achievement of legal status and

the flesh of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, God chose to sojourn in a particular way for the sake of all humankind...and restored the possibility of authentic community in which love and justice reign and peace prevails."

Church based, volunteer led

This UMCOR program connects a national network of church-based, volunteer-led immigration clinics to asylum seekers and immigrants who need help navigating the maze of rules and laws that affect their lives in the United States.

JFON represents the response of the United

United Methodist connectional relationships to bring together resources and commitment from local churches, districts, conferences, and UMCOR.

Trained and resourced by UMCOR's national office, JFON volunteers advocate for just and compassionate immigration laws and public policy, networking with other advocacy groups where possible.

Coordinated by a national staff in Silver Spring, Maryland, the network is comprised of 20 clinic sites in nine annual conferences.

Evolution of advocacy

JFON was created in 1999 to facilitate the immigration ministries of local United Methodist congregations. The program initially was a response to the immigration reform act of 1996. Later, it also focused on the stricter laws passed in the aftermath of 9/11.

JFON continues the long legacy of UMCOR's implementation of the United Methodist Church's resettlement assistance to refugees. The free clinic network extends the support and welcome of the church to marginalized immigrants living in the shadows among us.

Advance Special #901285.

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25:40

educate immigrants and the community of their rights and responsibilities. According to the United Methodist Council of Bishops' Statement on Refugees and Immigration, "these strangers bear to us the Christ. These are they of whom Jesus spoke when he said, "I was a stranger (sojourner) and you welcomed me" Matthew 25:35.

Welcoming sojourners as if receiving Christ is a part of the United Methodist tradition. Doing so becomes a sign of one's faithfulness.

"God comes to us in the form of the vulnerable person who lacks the benefit of status and protection in an alien land," the Bishops stated. "In

Methodist Church and its local congregations to the needs of immigrants seeking to reunify their families, secure immigration status, and enjoy the right to work.

The JFON model embraces the mandate of biblical hospitality. The program relies on



Justice for Our Neighbors offers immigrants free legal assistance.



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Ministries with immigrants and teens earn volunteers Mayoral Proclamations

By Sally Penning
St. Luke's UMC Houston
Communications

At a recent luncheon designed to unify the business, education, religious and government communities in the Gulfton area of Houston, Susan Silvus, Director of Outreach at St. Luke's UMC, and lay leader Alan Nash received proclamations from the Mayor of Houston for their service to the neighborhood.

Six years ago, Alan Nash established Spanish Alpha in the Gulfton area. Alan saw migrant workers gathered daily along Westpark, and invited them to weekly meetings at the Pizza Hut on Chimney Rock and Westpark.

The program, which meets before regular business hours, offers fellowship and an oppor-

tunity for day laborers to learn about or deepen their Christian faith. Attesting to the success of the program are attendance totals ranging from 20 to 110 persons per week, as well as numerous professions of faith. Spanish Alpha also includes ministries in two large Gulfton area apartments where immigrants learn English, study the Bible and encourage one another to live a Christian life.

"Spanish Alpha is an institution now," Nash said. "Our two Spanish ministers Rev. Manuel Montano and Rev. Lucy Rodriguez have developed wonderful, personal relationships with many of these men, who face enormous difficulties in their daily grind to support themselves and their families."

Susan Silvus has been

As our relationship with the area grows, we are committed to finding more opportunities to provide, both, social services and a spiritual presence.

Susan Silvus
Director of Outreach
St. Luke's UMC Houston



St. Luke's UMC Houston members, Susan Silvus and Alan Nash, were honored by the City of Houston for their volunteer efforts.

working in the Gulfton area for eight years and was involved in the Lee High School Collaborative, which responded to an urgent need and brought the Baylor Teen Health Clinic and the YMCA Child Care for parenting teens to the school.

Also under her leadership, St. Luke's partnered with the Mayor's Citizens' Assistance office in a Christmas toy event that benefited 400 children in

the Southwest area. She is also active with the Gulfton Area Service Providers. "St. Luke's merged with Gethsemane United Methodist Church two years ago. As our relationship with the area grows, we are committed to finding more opportunities to provide both social services and a spiritual presence."

Aldersgate UMC Santa Fe supports Methodist Children's Home



Rev. Danny Barrett of Aldersgate UMC Santa Fe recently presented an offering from the congregation to Methodist Children's Home in Waco. Representative, Allison Crawford, was on hand to educate the church on MCH's programs..

The Home's primary means of raising capital is to visit churches, Sunday school classes, and districts in the Annual Conference.

MCH serves 1,400 students through the home and foster parent model homes around the state and parts of New Mexico. Aldersgate UMC presented \$1,276. Additional donations may be sent to MCH through Aldersgate United Methodist Church, P.O. Box "C", Santa Fe, TX 77510 to be forwarded. For more details call 409-925-2552.



‘Transform your church culture’

School of Congregational Development set to equip leaders to revitalize churches and communities

Registration is now open for the School of Congregational Development, which will take place July 27-31 in Dallas. Sponsored by the General Board of Discipleship, Path 1 and the General Board of Global Ministries, the school is designed to strengthen new and existing congregations by equipping their leaders.

What began in the 1980s as a GBOD and GBGM training experience for new church start pastors, has now blossomed to include training for bishops, district superintendents, conference staff, pastors and church teams from existing congregations who desire to learn how to create and develop disciple-growing congregations.

The event is a spiritual experience that renews faith in Jesus Christ and sends people into their communities in mission

and ministry. Plenary sessions and worship experiences unite all participants as a faith community. Plenary sessions include: From Attraction to Invitation; From Maintenance to Movement; From Ourselves to Others; From Giving Up to Going Out.

Bishop Earl Bledsoe of the North Texas Annual Conference will preach the opening worship service, which is themed, “From Crises to Christ Centered.” Rev. Tyrone Gordon, senior pastor of St. Luke “Community” UMC Dallas and author of *F.O.C.U.S.: Living the Lord’s Prayer*, will

preach the closing worship.

Additionally, the SCD intensives, ministry tracks, workshops and experiences at teaching congregations all allow individuals to explore their specific ministry areas.

Intensives are 3½ hour experiences focused on key principles and ideas that can be applied to most ministries. Participants choose one intensive. The four-part ministry track is tailored for conference leaders, new church leaders, racial ethnic ministries and leaders of existing churches. Participants choose one ministry

track.

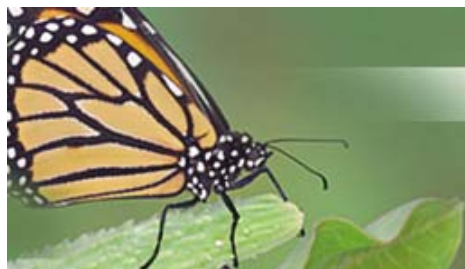
Participants also choose two Saturday workshops, which offer nuts-and-bolts information on critical ministries in the local church. Then, on Sunday, attendees worship with and learn from one of the 12 teaching congregations in the Dallas area. Participants experience firsthand the ministry of a dynamic congregation and learn from the leaders how the ministry has developed.

Registration includes a continental breakfast each day, dinner on Thursday and lunch at the Teaching Church.

Transportation, lodging and all other meals are the responsibility of the participants.

The cost of registration is \$425 by July 1, and \$475 after July 1. A bus pass to a Teaching Church is \$15

All plenary sessions and workshops will be held at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel, 400 North Olive Street, Dallas, Texas, 75201. Reservations: 214-922-8000 or 888-627-8191. Group Rate: \$125 per night plus 15% tax. Please refer to the *School of Congregational Development* when making your reservation.



SCD 2011 · DALLAS, TEXAS

TRANSFORMING YOUR CHURCH CULTURE

JULY 27 – JULY 31, 2011



12 dynamic teaching congregations offer diverse curriculum

A highlight of the School of Congregational Development is the opportunity to worship and learn in congregations that whose fruitfulness can be traced to their Spirit-led pursuit of passionate worship, faith forming relationships, risk-taking mission and service, radical hospitality and more.

Although we walk by faith and not by sight, seeing often is believing. Seeing how God used others to change the world, can often be the witness and inspiration one needs to activate their own faith.

The SCD teaching congregations include:

Korean Central UMC

www.kcumcdallas.org

(website in Korean; can be translated by Google)

Sung Chul Lee and Nakhoon Cho One of the largest UM churches in the Dallas area, this fast growing congregation emphasizes prayer, evangelism, and world missions. With services in both Korean and English, they are planting their first church in near-by Frisco.

Highland Park UMC

www.hpumc.org

Mark Craig and Paul Rasmussen Among the largest congregations in America, this church next to the SMU campus excels in providing a multitude of worship styles and faith communities all within one campus: from high church to traditional to contemporary to gospel and more. In addition, they have embarked upon a multisite strategy, planting campuses throughout the Dallas metroplex.

Munger Place UMC

www.mungerplace.org

Andrew Forrest The first satellite campus of Highland Park, Munger Place was for years one of the premier churches in Dallas. Over the last few decades it had declined to the point of closing, when Highland Park took over the church and completely resurrected it into a fast-growing, culturally-relevant contemporary worship venue bursting with energy and new life.

Casa Linda UMC

www.casalinda.org

James Minor

An Anglo congregation with an African-American pastor, who developed within it one of the most effective Hispanic ministries in Dallas, Casa Linda UMC is truly a multi-ethnic church that serves its neighborhood in mission, service and worship.

Faith UMC Corinth

www.tryfaith.org

John McLarty Faith UMC launched public worship in September 2003 and continues to meet in a high school, while its first building is completed. Faith UMC is known for its outstanding hospitality, excellent music and creative worship style, in addition to its perseverance.

Grace Avenue UMC

www.graceavenue.org

Billy Echols Richter For 12 years, Grace Avenue UMC has been making disciples and making a difference through Jesus Christ in the dynamic, growing community of Frisco and its surrounding areas. In that period, Grace Avenue has grown to over 1,700 members, with a weekly worship attendance of 800 in four different worship experiences.

Grace Avenue is currently planting a new congregation in a mission field northwest of Frisco.

First UMC Dallas

www.fumcdal.org

John Fiedler

The anchor UM church of Dallas, a venerable old church, has shown how traditional worship and ministry with excellence can create vibrant growth and new life. In the hub of a major city, this congregation has more than survived, it has thrived!

St. Luke “Community” UMC

www.slcumc.org

Tyrone Gordon

The largest African-American UMC in Dallas, St. Luke “Community” is nationally known for its music, worship, community involvement and leadership development.

Christ Foundry UMC

Owen Ross

This fast-growing Hispanic congregation ministers to the immigrant community in the Bachman Lake area of Dallas. Currently constructing its first building, Christ Foundry serves the area in

a variety of cutting edge ministries.

Oak Cliff UMC

www.gb-gm-umc.org/oakcliffumc

Edgar Bazan

In its declining years this congregation made the strategic decision to attract a multi-ethnic population, then turn their beautiful facility in a ministry led by a bilingual Hispanic pastor.

Lovers Lane UMC

www.llumc.org

Stan Copeland

In a sprawling campus, with continual new construction, this growing church specializes in ministry with targeted audiences, such as those dealing with addictions, the deaf and immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

South Campus of Saint Luke “Community” UMC

www.slcumc.org

Derek Jacobs

The satellite campus of nationally known St. Luke “Community” UMC, this new worshipping community is now one of the fastest growing African-American churches in Dallas.



'Change, inn

Adam Hamilton lectures offer ideas to

**By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference**

As the keynote speaker of the 2011 Texas Annual Conference, Rev. Adam Hamilton addressed the assembly on topics ranging from qualities of good leaders to building teams of clergy and laity who believe in the church's mission.

"The goal of this is not to do what the Church of the Resurrection is doing," Hamilton said at the start of the last of three lectures, "but to look to see how it might inspire you to do what God is calling you to do."

One thing God calls all to do is to invite others to a life of faith. Hamilton tasked church leaders with providing tools to help members invite others to church and to ensure that there are greeters and signage that help guests feel wel-

come.

Hospitality goes a long way, and could be as simple as allowing another to sit in your tradition pew. At Church of the Resurrection, there are about 18 Christmas Services, beginning several days before the holiday. In order to accommodate the 23,000 people who attended, members were asked to come on "Christmas Eve Eve," he said, or, to worship earlier in the day on "Christmas Eve Eve."

"Thank God the culture still says go to church on Christmas Eve," Hamilton said. "We can bemoan the 'Christmas and Easter Christians,' or we can see this as our opportunity.

"What kind of people give up their seat at preferred worship time?" Hamilton later

asked. "People who believe in the mission...The church is the body of Christ in world... God sends the church; God doesn't often send angels or just drop manna over heaven."

Because God sends the church, community involvement near and far from home has been pivotal in helping people grow in discipleship.

Hours That Changed the World in the fall of 2010.

One way his congregation chose to change the world is to donate its entire Christmas Eve offerings to charity. That year, the offering was \$620,000; previously, it was about \$300,000. Half of the money benefitted children in the Kansas city area and the

when we decided to give it all away," he said. "It's changed our congregation."

What if all 8,000 churches who studied the book donated their Christmas Eve offerings? Hamilton posited that more than \$50 million would be generated to change the world. "The church is not about us. The church was Jesus' idea.

*The church is not about us.
The church was Jesus' idea.
Christ came with a mission,
and it wasn't to make the saved comfortable.
It was to save and redeem the world.*

**Rev. Adam Hamilton
Church of the Resurrection**

Hamilton said more than 8,000 United Methodist Churches used the book 24

other half went to build clean water wells in Malawi, Africa. "Our offering doubled

Christ came with a mission and it wasn't to make the saved comfortable. It was to



Elvis is in the building. Hamilton illustrates the necessity of change by sharing one of his favorite recordings, *Elvis - Aloha, from Hawaii*. He owns the classic recording on 8-track, album, cassette, CD and it's loaded on his iPod. He encouraged the church to learn the art of evolution in order to survive and thrive.



‘Survive or die’ spark new life in churches and leaders

save, redeem the world.”

Public perception

Another goal of the local church should be to meet the unmet needs of the community at-large. A church’s success at doing this can best be measured by people outside the church.

“What are people saying about your congregation?” Hamilton asked. “Five years from now what do you want them to say? ‘Church of the Resurrection...that’s that big church vs. the church that cares for the city,’ or, ‘I know some of the people, they are the real deal – they’re always looking for ways to help and serve people.’”

Offering a “good product” is chief among the ways churches can serve. The worship experience, sermons, learning tools and program for follow-up all are elements of the church’s product.

In addition to inviting peo-

ple to church, the pastor encouraged the church to invite themselves over to the homes of visitors.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” he laughingly said, adding that when Jesus invited himself over to Zaccheus’ home, the tax collector was radically changed and became extravagantly generous – giving away half of his treasures.

In his first years of ministry, Hamilton said he “invited himself over” for front-porch visits with 400 guests. Of that number, 399 allowed him to visit and 398 joined the church.

“People don’t come to faith because of your excellent theological interpretation,” Hamilton said. “Most people come to faith in Christ because someone cared enough to learn their name – you embody the love of Jesus Christ and people.”



Rev. Adam Hamilton examines the qualities of leaders that produce “downward spiral thinking” or compel one to “radiate possibilities.” Attendees brainstormed characteristics of good and bad leaders and shared their lists with those seated nearby.



Above: Rev. Hamilton demonstrates a front porch visit with Christ UMC Sugar Land member Renee Teel. “Inviting himself over” was an integral part of growing his church in the early years. He invited himself over to 400 homes, delivered 399 coffee mugs (to the homes that allowed him to visit). Of those families, 398 joined the church.

A Good Sermon:

1. Teaches: one new thing
2. Inspires: beyond lecturing and preaching; touch someone
3. Calls: people to do something or be better; ask the ‘So what?’ question.
4. Is relevant: uses interesting stories or metaphors; ‘scratches where people itch’
5. Is Biblical

A Good Leader:

1. Lives with Integrity
2. Encourages and Empowers
3. Has appropriate hygiene
4. Passionate
5. Doesn’t take self too seriously
6. Doesn’t give up

More leadership ideas are on page 6.



Do our assumptions still fit?

A question for those leading for the future vs. managing for the present and past

**By Lovett H. Weems, Jr.
Lewis Center for
Church Leadership**

Peter Drucker maintains that organizational problems are not the result of groups doing things poorly or even doing the wrong things.

Organizations fail, he contends, because the assumptions on which the organization was built, and on which it is being run, no longer fit reality.

Could our congregations be taking for granted some things that were safe assumptions in the past, but no longer fit? Consider the following:

People in our communities are religious.

The only religious preference that grew in every U.S. state since 2001 was “no religion.”

There are lots of “young families with children.”

Married couples with children under 18 living at home represented 50 percent of households in the 1950s; today, only 25 percent.

Most adults are married.

Married couples now make up just under 50 percent of adult households in the U.S.

Young adults get married in their twenties and early thirties and return to church.

Married people are more likely to attend church; but of

young adults between 25 and 35, just over half are single.

Making our budget is a sign of vitality.

Perhaps. But some churches have more money because a higher proportion of their membership is over age 50, the group with 70 percent of the wealth in the country.

People find us through the newspaper or Yellow Book.

Increasingly, the first place a person learns about your church is the Internet.

Most people in our community already attend a church.

The percentage of unchurched people has increased in virtually every part of the U.S. in recent

years. And do not be misled by the polls showing that over 40 percent of people worship each week. The actual attendance numbers do not back that up.

Many people have moved away.

This is true in some areas, but churches can be too quick to jump to conclusions. Often the children of church members have moved away; but there are new residents, often less well off, who have moved in. How else does a new church succeed in a building once used by a congregation that died because “all the people have moved away”?

There is one right way to

worship.

A church member told a pastor, “I don’t like guitars in worship.” The pastor replied, “That’s exactly what people said when the organ was introduced.” Many worship practices considered normative today emerged out of a particular era and context that may have changed.

This article is reprinted by permission from Leading Ideas, a free online newsletter of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary and available at www.churchleadership.com.

Start hurricane season with disaster response training



An interior view of St. Paul’s UMC shows the bare support beams, which are still standing following the tornado in Joplin, Missouri. Early Responders train for such a time as this.

A UMNS photo by Fred Koenig.

Even as the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) continues to assist communities across the United States that were struck by this spring’s historic tornadoes, storms, and floods, it is also preparing to meet the challenges of the 2011 hurricane season, which began June 1.

But UMCOR depends on United Methodists throughout the connection to meet the needs of those impacted by disasters around the globe.

If you want to be among those who provide a caring Christian presence in the earliest days after a disaster, then Early Response Team Training is a tool you need.

The next Early Response Team Training in the Texas Annual Conference will be held Saturday, July 9, at Grace Fellowship UMC in Katy. There will be also be re-certification course offered the same day for those who are eligible for it.

Teams explore the many

ways people have been the hands and feet of Christ after disasters, often by simply providing a listening ear. Additionally, ERTs are trained and equipped to enter disaster sites in a self-sustaining manner, with their own transportation, fuel, food, equipment, and lodging.

The training costs \$25 and includes lunch, manual, T-shirt, photo badge. Sign Language interpreters will be provided.

The TAC, in partnership with UMCOR, is also conducting a recertification class for Early Responders using approved UMCOR curriculum, and certified ERT trainers. Early responders representing the Texas Conference must update their certification every three years to be current for service. The re-certification course is \$15 and includes lunch and manual.

Visit www.txcumc.org/taccor for additional information.



Ministry Snapshots

Mission Bend UMC walks 'side by side' with women in crisis and changes lives

By Rev. Hazeline Jackson
Special Contributor

Mission Bend UMC has launched a new initiative to assist women at risk. The ministry is named Side-By-Side, and its mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of women at risk. Side-By-Side is designed to walk with a client until she can gain control of her circumstances, develop a plan to maintain the process and listen to the challenges she may face along the way.

This is to be accomplished by providing and supporting committed volunteers who have a one-on-one relationship with the person at risk. The goal is to assist them in achieving their highest potential through mentoring, referral to community resources, classes on money management, family living, relationships and spiritual

growth and development.

The idea for this ministry stemmed from the need to help people make it beyond their current need and work on establishing a means for long term survival. In other words, we elect to not only put a band-aid on the problem; but to also assist people by developing a plan for independent survival.

The scripture reference for Side-By-Side is Titus 2:3-5: *Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good. So that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.*

The Side-By-Side ministry is currently comprised of six

ladies. An 8-week training manual was developed by a Stephen Minister. The Stephen Minister Trainer, in conjunction with the Associate Pastor, trained the ladies for working one-on-one with the clients; to effectively interview the clients; to identify the clients' needs; make a case for the clients; make recommendations for assistance; develop a plan of action; encourage the client; make referrals; and offer spiritual information.

The pastors make referrals to this ministry as they encounter women who are having difficulty managing their lives. Participants are mostly non-church members from the community; however, services are available to members as well. The pastors utilize their discretion in determining a means for immediate assistance and Side-By-Side interviews the clients to determine if they can effectively assist the client with long-range guidance.

The client is then assigned to a Side-by-Side volunteer, who meets with the client as needed. The objective is to stay in contact with the client to continually encourage them to follow through with registering for resources or continuing their education to hopefully become more employable or assisting the clients in returning their lives to normalcy.

The vision for this ministry is to provide examples from life (work and/or home); assist young women without family support; provide knowledge that will enhance the client's life;



understand how to implement God's mercy and justice at a time such as this; understand the need of the clients and help them see reality, hope and a future.

Some examples of the cases in which Side-By-Side has had the opportunity to enhance lives are:

A single mother of four young children, who escaped an abusive spouse. She is receiving encouragement and guidance from Side-By-Side. She is in school and working to hold it all together as she regroups. She was referred to a counselor who is donating her services.

A 52-year-old widow with a handicapped teenage daughter that is working diligently to survive on \$1,200 per month. She has gained information and assistance with registering for qualified programs. She is also getting encouragement to help her adjust to the death of her spouse.

A 62-year-old handicapped mother of two adult bipolar

children, who live with her in a home that was in the process of being in foreclosure. She needed encouragement to move forward in finding low/no cost medication, accepting the financial situation that she was in, and referrals for legal and monetary assistance.

A grandmother who is raising her grandchild is receiving care and encouragement from Side-By-Side to help them meet their financial challenges, balance emotional stress, learn life skills and develop a survival plan for their future.

Side-By-Side strives to provide knowledge, skill, wisdom and love to those who are temporarily experiencing trauma and walk with them on their journey to wholeness. God is the center of this ministry and everything that is suggested must line up with the word of God. May God be glorified in all that is done through Side-By-Side.

Scriptural Inspiration for Side by Side

*Older women, likewise,
are to be reverent in their behavior,
not malicious gossips nor
enslaved to much wine,
teaching what is good.
So that they may encourage
the young women
to love their husbands,
to love their children,
to be sensible, pure, workers at home,
kind, being subject to their husbands,
so that the word of God
will not be dishonored.*

Titus 2:3-5



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Choir to Sing Evensong July 3

The St. Paul's UMC Houston choir will sing an Evensong service on Sunday, July 3, at 4 p.m. The service will be in the sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church. This will be the choir's last choral evensong prior to their residence at Exeter Cathedral in England, where they will lead Evensong daily during the week of July 10.

The liturgy traces its origins to the daily rites of the medieval church and has been said or sung regularly in its current form since the 16th century. All the words have been shaped and refined by long use and by renewed attempts to express the mysteries of God.

St. Paul's UMC is located at 5501 Main Street at Binz/Bissonnet, across from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Free parking is available across Fannin Street from the church, and the Museum District MetroRail stops are within walking distance of the church.

Benefit Concert set for July 15

Ebenezer UMC will have a benefit concert on July 15, at 7 p.m. in the church's sanctuary. This concert will benefit the Rev. Jethro and Mrs. Georgia White Scholarship and the Ebenezer Scholarship funds.

Tickets are \$5 per person, and are now on sale. Or, they can be purchased at the door on the day of the concert.

Ebenezer is located at 7312 N. Main St. Houston, Texas, 77022. For more information contact Cassandra Sampson at 713-718-5948.

Clear Lake UMC hosts diverse support groups

Hire Power-Houston is a Jobs Ministry, and a sub-group of Linked Local Houston Bay Area. The group meets on Mondays, 9 a.m., in the Wesley Center at Clear Lake UMC, 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, Texas, 77062.

Hire Power is focused on working with local churches, businesses and many other local organizations with a sole desire to bring the community together and strengthen it, while supporting families, friends and neighbors who have been affected by the current economic conditions. For more information, contact Eric Beauford at eric@centivity.com.

Additionally, the church has an **Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Group**, which meets Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. in Elrod 311, at the church. Anyone who is caring for a person who is afflicted with Alzheimer's is invited and urged to attend. No fee or registration is required. For more information contact Betty Flanders at 281-488-5111, x114.

The **DivorceCare** group meets on Sundays, from 6:45-8 p.m. in Flanders 422 at Clear Lake UMC. Anyone who is divorced or separated is invited to come and find help, discover hope and experience healing. Interested participants should register with Cari Robinette at cari@clearlakemethodist.org or 281-488-5111 x135. The group uses a resource book, which costs \$12.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

DISCIPLE training slated

A DISCIPLE Bible Study mini-training event will be held at First UMC Gladewater in the North District on Sunday, July 24, 2011, from 2-5 p.m.

The training is free for all laity and clergy wishing to learn about these life changing studies and how to facilitate them in your church. Please RSVP to Jill Krone, DISCIPLE Bible Study taskforce coordinator, at Jill.Krone@gmail.com or 903.473.3755, so that adequate materials are available.

Additionally, you may contact her if your church would like to host a free mini-training event in your district.

Pension and benefits forum

The United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits will hold a public forum at 11:45 a.m. July 15 at the agency headquarters, 1901 Chestnut Ave. in Glenview, Ill. Anyone who wishes to address the board may do so.

To register, contact Colette Nies by July 1 by calling 800-269-2244, extension 4296, or sending an e-mail to nies@gbophb.org.

Academic Trip to Israel October 23-November 6

Come join Rev. Daniel Irving and Rev. John R. Stephenson as they travel and study the Holy Land with Bible scholar Jack Beck. This is a study trip, which focuses on biblical geography. You will be filled with a love of the Land that will amplify your love of the Lord.

For trip information please email john@clearlakemethodist.org or call John at 281-488-5110.

Serve at General Conference

Volunteers can now apply online to serve as marshals or pages during 2012 General Conference. The United Methodist Church's top law-making body will meet in Tampa, Fla., April 24-May 4, 2012.

About 150 volunteers are needed during General Conference. Marshals and pages are responsible for their own travel and expenses.

Those interested can submit an online application at www.umcevents.org/gc2012marshalspage. The deadline is Aug. 31. Applicants will be notified of their status by Nov. 30.

Grants available

Applications are being accepted until July 31 for up to \$300,000 in grants offered to clergy leaders and United Methodist seminaries whose ideas and programs help strengthen the denomination's ability to maximize racial diversity and inclusiveness. The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race supports the fund. Visit www.gcorr.org for more information.

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Disaster Recovery Volunteers

The Missouri Annual Conference is ready to start receiving Volunteers in Mission teams to continue clean-up and recovery work in Joplin, which was devastated by a May tornado. While the City of Joplin will not be issuing building permits for 90 days, the conference reported in its latest MissionCast video, teams can help with debris removal and warehouse organization.

United Methodists in Missouri are doing some volunteer work through Americorps. Call the volunteer hotline at 417-625-3543 or register online at www.21missouri.org. To volunteer for long-term rebuilding efforts through the United Methodist Church, visit www.umocm.com and fill out the online form.

Send Spotlight submissions to:
thelmaj@methodists.net or call 713-521-9383