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950 evaluate model for ministry

By Eleanor L. Colvin, Director of Communications

Nearly 1,000 United Methodists listened, learned, and, most importantly, lifted their voices at listening sessions held during the month of March throughout the annual Conference.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie,

listening sessions," said Bishop Janice Riggle Huie.

Biblical basis for change

Each listening session started with a devotional period that the Bishop led.

"The bible is full of stories

12 to return with a favorable report and a can-do attitude was Caleb.

"Change is never easy. Transformation is never easy. It's been that way from the beginning of time, and it's the same for us," Bishop Huie said.

As the listening tour occurred during the season of Lent, the Bishop also examined transformation through the scope of the Christian tradition of making Lenten sacrifices.

"By the third week of Lent, I think, 'Whoo, this is a lot harder than I thought it would be,'" Huie said. "That's always the story of God's people in the midst of transformation.

"It's my hope and prayer that we, as an annual conference, are in a time in which we become clearer and clearer on who we are as a people called United Methodists and clearer as to what our mission and ministry is. It's a time of letting go of those people and things that hinder us and keep us from God's will."

So far, so good

The overall sentiment of those participating in the listening posts is that the first seven months of implementing

Change is never easy.

Transformation is never easy. It's been that way from the beginning of time, and it's the same for us.

Bishop Huie

Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Rick Goodrich and members of the Strategic Mapping Team that crafted the new model for ministry, traveled throughout the Conference to find out what's working well and what could be improved.

The model for ministry includes the new vision and mission of the conference; the key drivers and core values; and the streamlined structure that includes a Core Leadership Team and four centers for excellence.

"I have been awed by the level of participation at these

of the people of God in the process of change," she said. "You might say, starting in Genesis and ending in Revelation."

Speaking from Numbers 13, Bishop Huie paralleled the current journey of the Texas Annual Conference with that of the Israelites who had left Egypt, but had not yet reached the Promised Land.

The Bishop focused then on the "assessment team" made up of representatives from the 12 tribes of Israel, who were sent out to survey the land. The only one of the



A member of the Central North district lifts up the concerns raised during the group discussion.

change have been good. As with any change process, there are still some things that will take more time to live into, and other items that may need to be further adjusted.

One area of concern among some was the limited involvement of youth in the planning of mid-winter and summer camp. Youth participation in the planning process helps increase overall participation in the programs, many said.

As a result of sentiments voiced, the Strategic Mapping Team will make recommendations to help solve this problem. This is one illustration of how

the listening sessions contribute to the overall assessment and implementation of the model for ministry.

In addition, the conference garnered praise regarding the model's overall focus on mission and its power to motivate.

"I think it has invigorated us to want to do a lot more," said Rev. Wilmer Bonner of Prairie View First UMC during the time of offering individual feedback in breakout sessions.

Also in the group with Bonner, was Rev. Beverly Tune, associate pastor of Conroe First UMC, who also

Continued on page 4

Texas delegation visiting West Africa

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie has been invited to address the Cote d'Ivoire Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in West Africa.

The Bishop and a delegation comprised of Texas Annual Conference clergy, district superintendents and global ministries workers arrived in Cote d'Ivoire Monday, March 19, and will return Monday, March 26.

There are 1 million United Methodists in Cote d'Ivoire, which is also referred to as the

Ivory Coast. Bishop Huie will address the country's clergy and laity on Sunday, March 25.

What you do in Cote d'Ivoire, you spread abroad in neighboring countries . . . We are an open country that is the translation of hospitality.

Cote d'Ivoire is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, Burkina Faso,

Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Mali. A delegation from Cote d'Ivoire visited Houston in early

March to share some of the history of the African nation and of

Methodism in that country.

The population of Cote d'Ivoire includes 18 million peo-

Ambassador Daouda Diabate

ple representing 60 different ethnic groups. Twenty-six percent of

the population are considered "foreigners" – people who've moved to Cote d'Ivoire from neighboring African nations and from around the world.

"The first president wanted it to become a kind of melting pot, and it has become a melting pot," said the Cote d'Ivoire Ambassador Daouda Diabate.

Approximately 50 percent of the worshippers in Cote d'Ivoire are Christian and 50 percent are Muslim.

Continued on page 4



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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Conference cemetery gets new memorial gift

By Monroe Walker
Lakeview Methodist Conference Center

The Texas Methodist Conference Cemetery located in Palestine has honored the lives of many Conference Clergy by providing a dignified and beautiful final resting place. One of those clergymen was further honored with the placement of a cedar arbor given as a memorial to the Cemetery.



Friends and family members of Dr. Glen Eckols stand in front of the cedar arbor donated in his memory to the Texas Methodist Conference Cemetery.

The family of Dr. Glen Eckols provided the funds and labor to construct a cedar arbor in memory of their husband, father, and grandfather. Dr. Eckols died in March 2000, after serving the Conference in various appointments for almost 50 years.

His ministry included appointments as Chaplain at the

Methodist Hospital, Bethany United Methodist Church, the Conference Board of Pensions,

and St. Luke's United Methodist Church. He was known as a true and faithful disciple of Jesus Christ with the gift of sharing God's steadfast love and compassion, particularly during times of sorrow and hardship.

The arbor, located in one of the Cemetery's beautification blocks, is the latest project of the Master Plan to be completed. This addition not only beautifies the Cemetery by providing a place for shade and rest, it also represents a lasting testament to a beloved family member and servant of Christ.

Evaluation of model for ministry

Continued from page 1

discussed the new energy and excitement that the model has ignited.

"There is a tangible energy

not simply waiting for clergy to direct them;

- The need to equip more pastors to preach effec-



One of the break out groups discuss some of the positive aspects of the model for ministry.

that is permeating the conference and the local church," said Rev. Tune, "and that is worth noting."

Other ideas that were lifted up include:

- Acknowledging youth as the "church of today," and making them a priority;
- The increased number of laity who are initiating mission and ministry and

tive and relevant sermons;

- The need for Sunday mornings to be life changing experiences; and
- "Success Workshops" through which the leaders of fruitful ministries would offer guidance to others.

Delegation visits West Africa

Continued from page 1



Members of the Texas and African delegations who met earlier this month include: Ambassador Duado Diabate, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, Professor Saliou Toure'; Rev. Richard Laster, Texas Conference Secretary of Global Ministries; Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Rick Goodrich; a Cote d'Ivoire scholar and Cote d'Ivoire representative Samuel Kofi.

A former French colony, Cote d'Ivoire gained its independence in 1960.

The Texas Conference delegation includes the Bishop;

Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Rick Goodrich; Conference Secretary of Global Ministries Rev. Richard Laster; West District Superintendent Dr. Earl

Bledsoe; Rev. Todd Jordan of Trinity UMC in Beaumont; Rev. Velosia Kibe of Windsor Village UMC in Houston; Rev. Noel Denison of Chapelwood UMC in

Houston, and Eleanor Colvin, Director of Communications.

The group will tour ministries such as a boarding school and self-help project sites, and visit with district superintendents, lay leaders, students and others regarding ways Methodist churches in Texas Conference and Cote d'Ivoire can collaborate in the future.

"What you do in Cote d'Ivoire, you spread abroad in neighboring countries," said Ambassador Diabate. "When you invest in Cote d'Ivoire, you invest in all of sub-Saharan Africa. We are an open country that is the translation of hospitality. We have written that in our national anthem...Hospitality and brotherhood, that's what we have translated in deed and action."

Risk-taking Mission

Conference missionary thanks God for blessings: bread and opportunities to share bread

By Diane Wimberley
Bolivian Missionary

A friend and I were reflecting upon the variety of settings and situations in which we are called upon to minister. One that touches us both is the scenes that we pass in our travels upon any of the major roadways in Bolivia.

Inevitably, as our vehicle nears a field where a family is working or a yard where a fam-

ily lives, small children – and often the elderly – are seen sitting on the side of the road.

‘Give bread to those who are hungry and hunger for justice to those who have bread.’

Bolivian grace

ily lives, small children – and often the elderly – are seen sitting on the side of the road. The first time I saw this, I wondered if they simply wanted to see the car. I quickly learned that they were hoping that those of us passing by would throw out food for them.

It is not unusual on a trip between La Paz and Cochabamba or Oruro and Potosi to pass up to 200 chil-



Rev. Diane Wimberley teaching Bible study in the Bolivian countryside.

dren and elderly people begging for food. At first I was not certain how to react. After all, this is still primarily an agrarian society, so I reasoned that the children probably had food to eat.

However, after having eaten in the countryside – generally, we receive the most and the best that the people have to offer – I have learned that having food and being well nourished are two different things.

Primarily, potatoes in some form or another are the staple. If we are lucky, we receive soup loaded with potatoes and rice and a tiny piece of meat –

Then we often receive a plate laden with a variety of potatoes, a tomato and onion salad – not a hand full – and a bit larger piece of meat. So, while having food available, I am sure the children and the elderly are indeed hungry and probably malnourished.

As my friend pointed out,

the children in the countryside, while malnourished, probably have it better than the children in the city, where food has to be purchased.

Then there are the dogs that we pass. Being the dog fanatic that I am, I began quickly noticing the number of dogs that are lined up on the side of roads. I learned that they, too, were hoping for hand-outs. While once upon a

time they had been “working dogs” helping with the livestock, they learned from the children to wait by the side of the road for food offerings.

Now, when I think of it before leaving La Paz, a large garbage bag filled with bread accompanies me – enough for both children, elderly and dogs.

Giving to the poor comes in a variety of ways ... and in a variety of places. May God bless children, elderly and dogs as well as the many opportunities to give. As a Bolivian grace says: Thank God for our bread. Give bread to those who are hungry and hunger for justice to those who have bread. Thank you God for our bread. Amen.

Hallelujah moment from Brazil

Shade and Fresh Water project a success

Celebrations of United Methodist mission from the Mission Education unit of the General Board of Global Ministries

Shade and fresh water is a popular Brazilian expression that transmits a desire to find a place that provides for protection from life’s harsh realities. One of those harsh realities is that the Brazilian family is in crisis.

Millions of parents must rise early in the morning to hurry off to work in an ongoing struggle to provide for their families; working long hours trying to earn just enough money for food and shelter. Very little time is left for their children. Left alone, the children must make their own food, get to school on their own, care for their younger siblings and take primary responsibility for the home.

What does this all mean? This means that a seven-year old might have the major household responsibilities – like laundry, cleaning and health care. Often this situation drives the children to the streets to either play or find a way to survive. There they meet people who are all too ready to introduce them to a life of drugs, crime and prostitution.

The Brazilian Methodist Church recognizes this mammoth social crisis brought on by rapid urbanization and has responded by making children its “number one” priority. The “*Shade and Fresh Water Project*” is a Methodist pro-

gram where church and community come together to identify their problems and become partners in building a healthier society. Together they identify priorities and develop activities in the area of Christian education, academic support, sports and recreation, culture and artistic expression, health, citizenship, and/or computer education.

One example of this endeavor is with the Tapeorn, a native Brazilian tribe where most of the residents are children. The population on the reservation of about 10,000 includes three ethnic groups: Kaiowá, Terena, and Guarani. Through the Shade and Fresh Water Project, the Tapeorã Mission is able to provide support to their schools and other programs that benefit the children in their community.

Another example is the support provided by the project for school supplies and uniforms at two schools: Escola Yýverá (Little Light School), and Escola Mbóeroy Tupaáí Arandu

Reñoi (Little God School: Growing and Learning), as well as for sports materials and



Children are the number one priority of the Shade and Fresh Water Project.

Image by: Mission Education

supplies at the Soccer School of the Mission.

The Brazilian Methodist Church is making a difference in the lives of children. How can you get involved? **Pray** for the children and the workers as they discover ways to touch young lives and shape them in God’s path; **come** and share your love and talents with the Brazilian people as a volunteer and **give** to “Ministry with Children, Shade and Fresh Water Project” (Advance #11580A). Your donation will help reach children with Christ’s love and provide protection from life’s harsh realities.

“Skip a lunch. Send a net. Save a life.”

By United Methodist News Service

United Methodists are urged to give up lunch and save lives by using that money to buy an insecticide-treated bed net.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, president of the denomination’s Council of Bishops, is asking United Methodists and others to skip lunch on Africa Malaria Day and use their lunch money to buy a lifesaving mosquito bed net.

Wednesday, April 25, has been designated Africa Malaria Day and, for the first time in the United States, President Bush has proclaimed a Malaria Awareness Day that same day.

United Methodist

Communications and The Upper Room Living Prayer Center are also encouraging people to join in a continuous 24-hour period of prayer that day for the children of Africa, those suffering with malaria and for global health.

“Malaria kills a child every 30 seconds in Africa,” Huie said. “Bed nets are the most cost-effective way to protect children from the mosquitoes (that) carry this killer disease.

“This is an easy, tangible way to make a difference. Join me. Skip a lunch. Send a net. Save a life.”

The people of The United Methodist Church are a found-

ing partner in the Nothing But Nets campaign. Other founding partners include the United Nations Foundation, the National Basketball Association’s NBA Cares and Sports Illustrated.

For each \$10 donation, a bed net is purchased and distributed to Africa, where education also is provided about its use. A challenge grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will match contributions up to \$3 million.

Huie encouraged local churches to hold a lunchtime worship service on April 25 focusing on malaria.

Learn more at www.umc.org/nets.



Annual Conference 2007 special events



Upcoming Events

Saturday, May 26	
6:30 PM	Cabinet Dinner
Sunday, May 27	
6:00 PM	Prayer Room sponsored by Celebration Robb Chapel
5:15 PM	BOM-Dinner & Meeting The Loft-Green Room
9:00 PM	Memorial Service Reception Wesley Hall
Monday, May 28	
All Day	Display Area Gym
All Day	DOVE System Access Room D205
All Day	Prayer Room sponsored by Celebration Robb Chapel
7:00 AM	Southwestern University Alumni Breakfast Room D212
7:30 AM	Restorative Justice Breakfast & Meeting Asbury Hall
7:30 AM	UMM Board Breakfast & Meeting Room D206
8:00 AM	TAC Worship Planning Team Breakfast
8:00 AM	Wiley College Alumni Luncheon Holiday Inn-Astrodome
11:00 AM	UMW Luncheon The Loft-Gym
11:30 AM	Breaking the Silence Luncheon Marriott-Ballroom 5
11:30 AM	Friends of Wesley Foundation Luncheon Double Dave's/Research Forest
11:45 AM	Confessing Movement Luncheon Wesley Hall
12:00 Noon	Fellowship of Older Adults Luncheon Aldersgate Hall
5:30 PM	District Secretary's Dinner Jones Library
5:30 PM	"Festival of Faith" sponsored by UMM Wesley Hall
Tuesday, May 29	
All Day	Display Area Gym
All Day	DOVE System Access Room D205
All Day	Prayer Room sponsored by Celebration Robb Chapel
7:00 AM	Clergy Women's Breakfast Aldersgate Hall
7:00 AM	Local & Associate Members Breakfast Jones Library
7:30 AM	Deacon's Breakfast Aldersgate Hall
11:15 AM	Peace With Justice Luncheon Wesley Hall
11:30 AM	Retiree Luncheon Room D206
12:00 PM	Candler School of Theology Celebration Women's Ministry Luncheon Asbury Hall
12:00 PM	TCU Alumni Luncheon Jones Library
5:15 PM	UMW Executive Board Dinner & Meeting
5:30 PM	Duke Divinity School Dinner
5:30 PM	Perkins Alumni Dinner
Wednesday, May 30	
All Day	Display Area Gym
All Day	DOVE System Access D205
All Day	Prayer Room sponsored by Celebration Robb Chapel
7:00 AM	Lon Morris College Breakfast Jones Library
11:00 AM	TAC Secretaries/Staff Luncheon "The Loft" Summit
12:00 Noon	Clergy Spouses Luncheon Asbury Hall
12:15 PM	Laity Luncheon Wesley Hall
5:30 PM	BOM-Ordination Dinner Wesley Hall
9:00 PM	BOM-Ordination Reception Atrium
Thursday, May 31	
Until noon	DOVE System Access D205
7:30 AM	BOM-Commissioning Breakfast Wesley Hall
12:00 Noon	BOM-Commissioning Reception Atrium

Calendar Events

Cramer Retreat Center Lenten 'Noon to Noon' Special

During Lent, the Cramer Retreat Center is offering special prices to clergy for personal retreat days. It is called the "Noon to Noon" Special. For only \$30, clergy can retreat to Cramer on a weeknight (Sunday through Thursday) to step back and experience a time of peace and quiet, take time out, and focus on the season.

Give up some time during Lent. Give up the mantle of leadership and enjoy the role of disciple. Have a one night, retreat. Return rested, refreshed, and energized for the palms and the passion that carry us to the joy of Easter.

To book your day apart go to: www.CramerCenter.org and fill out a reservation request form. You can contact Nanette Radke, Property Manager, at 281-350-1355 or NERadke@CramerCenter.org.

St. Luke's "Market for Missions"

St. Luke's UMC will hold its annual "Market for Missions," a spring bazaar April 24-26, offering decorative items for the home, jewelry, clothing, and gifts. All proceeds from the event will go to fund Kids' Meals and Spanish Alpha.

Tuesday, April 24, there will be a Preview Party from 6-9 p.m. On Wednesday, April 25, a brunch and style show featuring vendors in the show will be held. Advance tickets

will be available for these events. The Market will be free and open to the public. For vendor information, contact Elaine Gartrell, at 713-410-1049 or ebgartrell@houston.rr.com.

United Methodist Men Spring Retreat

The Texas Conference United Methodist Men's retreat at Lakeview Methodist Center will be held April 20-22. Rev. Marvin Hood from Faithbridge UMC will be our guest preacher and Reginald Clemons, from Pearland UMC will be our keynote speaker.

Flyers are available for district and local church newsletters and Sunday bulletins. Additional information and registration forms are available on our web site, www.txumm.org or by contacting Kenneth Tielke at 281-342-9677.

Ministry and Educational Opportunities

Next session of UM101 underway

Join the next session of UM101 now. UM101 is an online (Internet) interactive, multi-media course about the basics of The United Methodist Church. Registration is \$12.

Participants can access the class any time between February 21 and March 28. It's never too late to register or start the class. For more information and to register, go to <http://training.umcom.org>. UM101 is offered by United Methodist Communications.

Texas Covenant Scholarship

Wiley College is offering the Texas Covenant Scholarship to incoming freshmen and transfer students. The criteria for approval are as follows: Current Texas high school graduate or current Texas transfer student, grade point average of 2.5 or higher, good moral character and have a financial need.

To be considered for this scholarship, students will need to complete an application for admission to Wiley College; complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (Wiley Code 003669) and, submit a one-page personal statement describing moral character, skills, accomplishments, extracurricular or community activities.

Sunday school stories sought

Do you have stories about how Sunday school has touched people's lives and ideas to help Sunday school succeed? The general church would like to hear them for an effort called "Sunday School - It's for Life."

Stories are shared on the following website:

<http://sundayschool.cokebury.com>. It is where stories are shared as a joint effort by United Methodist Publishing House and the General Board of Discipleship, and may be used for additional placements.

Submit articles approximately 500 words in length to Harriet Olson, holson@umpublishing.org, and Diane Denton, director of Public Relations at United Methodist Communications, ddenton@umcom.org.

Young United Methodist clergy ideas sought in new survey

By Joe Arnold, Research Manager - Wesley Theological Seminary

Young United Methodist clergy (35 or younger) are invited to complete a survey of their ideas on a host of subjects by going to www.churchleadership.com.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary is inviting young clergy to share data on when and why younger persons enter ministry, factors influencing their decisions,

perceptions of how age influences their standing in the church, the nature of their appointments, their financial well-being, and their level of satisfaction in ministry.

This inquiry grows out of the Center's report on clergy age trends issued in 2006, showing a sharp decline in younger clergy in the past 20 years. The survey will also help to inform a book on

young clergy to be published by General Conference.

For more information contact Joe Arnold, Research Manager at G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary, 4500 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20016-5690 or call (202)885-8560 or fax to (202)885-8605.