



Cross Connection

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

Two Sections, Section A

076000 Volume 154

Number 26

November 3, 2006

Bound for Mozambique

Council of Bishops' meeting in Africa is history making

By Bishop Janice Riggle Huie
Texas Annual Conference



I will be leaving October 26, 2006 for a six-day meeting of the Council of Bishops in Maputo,

United States and adapt to our language, our culture and our expressions of faith.

Our gathering in Mozambique will cause bishops like me to experience other languages, other cultures, and African expressions of Christian faith. Most of the U. S. bishops have added a mission trip into their itinerary to allow them to visit partner conferences in Africa. Our African colleagues are incredibly excited about our coming.

Another key reason for meeting in Mozambique is that we have designed our agenda to learn more about how United Methodists are

faith communities are forming so rapidly—almost spontaneously—in refugee and immigrant populations in Africa. I'll be watching and listening for how we might apply some of those insights in The Texas Annual Conference.

The Council of Bishops has made significant sacrifices to be able to gather in Mozambique. In order to stay in budget for 2006, we did not meet at all this spring. In addition, nearly all of the retired bishops chose not to attend this meeting. Travel costs to the church and difficulty of travel were their primary reasons for remaining at home. I deeply honor their offering.

Given all these decisions, I am confident the Council can honor its stewardship responsibilities to the church.

In addition to this focus on Africa, the Council of Bishops is working with various groups to get ready for General Conference. I'll let you know more about those efforts after our meeting.

I invite all of you, personally and in your congregations, to pray for the Council of Bishops and pray for me while we are in Mozambique. Pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Council. Pray for courage and resolve to lead the UMC to be more faithful in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Pray for traveling mercies for all who will make this trip.

I'll be home November 7.

God bless you.

Janice Riggle Huie

“Here or there, God is everywhere” quilt

Auction benefiting New London UMC's connectional ministry

By Jill Krone
New London United Methodist Church

New London United Methodist Church will auction a hand-made, quilt supporting the ministry of the Methodist church to the con-

indicating that Jeremiah 23:24 (*Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?*) declares the Lord. *“Do not I fill heaven and*



Photo of the “Here or There, God Is Everywhere” quilt.

continent of Africa. This symbolic one-of-a-kind quilt, interpreted through the gifts and talents of New London UMC church member, Sheryl Shuler, is 51 inches wide by 69 1/2 inches long.

Ms. Shuler has over five months of time invested in this gift of love to the African ministries of the United Methodist Church. She is quick to credit God with all the glory for the inspiration and her talent,

earth?” declares the Lord.) is the scriptural basis behind much of the symbolism found in the quilt. Hand-crafted in cotton fabrics of foliage and animal prints, the quilt is entitled, “Here or There, God is Everywhere.” It contains three very special blocks known by their quilting names of

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Mozambique. This meeting will be my first as President.

Our gathering on African soil will make history for the Council of Bishops and The United Methodist Church. It will be the first time the Council has ever met outside the United States. Our presence in Mozambique is a tangible recognition of the global reality of the UMC.

As with Christianity in general, the primary focus of growth in the UMC is in the Southern Hemisphere.

United Methodists, in particular, are seeing extraordinary growth in Africa.

It is the fruit of missionary efforts begun over a century ago and continued today through strong indigenous leadership and supported by the church in the United States.

This trip will be my fourth trip to Africa. Any small contribution that I have been able to make there in changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ has been among the most rewarding work I have done as a bishop.

Given the time, distance and expense of a meeting in Mozambique, a number of people have asked me, “Why did the Council think it was necessary to go to Africa for a meeting?” One reason is that authentic *koinonia* emerges from relationships of mutuality. Our African colleagues make many, many trips to the

witnessing to Christian faith in Africa. The culture of United States at this time is a highly individualistic culture. All of us want to learn and experience a deeper understanding of Christian community intrinsic to African culture. Most of the U. S. bishops are tending conferences that are diminishing in spiritual capacity and size year by year. We are eager to learn about the infectious, life-transforming disciple-making that is occurring on the African continent.

Lots of bishops serve Episcopal areas where we think we are doing well to start four or five new faith communities per year. We want to know how African United Methodists start scores of new faith communities annually. Most of them seem to thrive.

I am particularly interested in how United Methodist

Our presence in Mozambique is a tangible recognition of the global reality of the UMC.

'Greater sense of God's love'

Nacogdoches pastor celebrates cancer recovery, relationship with God

By Thelma Jones

Editor, Cross Connection

You see them everywhere, the little pink ribbons and curved symbols that tell you what time of year this is. This year, the observance of Breast Cancer awareness month meant more than a time when money is raised for research and support is given to hospitals and organizations dedicated to the eradication of this dreaded disease.

For Rev. Judy Anderson, Associate Pastor of First United Methodist Church in Nacogdoches, Texas, this was a situation that was very personal. In November of 2005, Anderson was diagnosed with breast cancer before she completed her transition of being moved to a new church in January 2006.

"My new congregation's

first impression of me was this cancer," said Anderson. "Now I have completed my treatment and am awaiting my six month follow-up."

Her new congregation has been very supportive. "When I first came back to work, it was like having a church full of 'mothers' who wanted to be sure that I wasn't pushing myself too much," says Anderson. The congregation has been extremely supportive and excited to have Rev. Anderson back and able to serve in the church.

According to the American Breast Cancer Society, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, aside from skin cancer. Based on rates from 2001-2003, the lifetime risk

of developing cancer of the breast is 12 percent. Through medical research, the tireless efforts of health professionals and organizations, great strides have been made battling this disease. In a survey taken by the National Cancer Institute, the overall 5-year survival rate is 88.5 percent.

When asked if this experience has impacted how she views her ministry, she responded, "Absolutely. I realize that I cannot be an effective minister if I am not first taking care of myself. I also have a greater level of respect and empathy for those who are battling cancer or other serious illnesses. The one thing I wanted to do more than anything was to have the freedom to do what I wanted

when I wanted. There are many around me that do not have that freedom."

Anderson's personal battle with breast cancer has also affected her faith in God.

"I have come to know God in a new way," she said. "I know that God is faithful and He really listens when we pray. It's a bit humorous that last fall, as we were approaching Advent I said a little prayer that I thought would be insignificant, really." As she was kneeling at the prayer altar, she asked God to help her know Him in a new way.

"Well...needless to say, after being diagnosed with breast cancer in December and enduring treatment and surgeries, I came to know God in a new way. "Be care-

ful what you ask for," she answered. "I read a book by Anne Graham Lotz. She told the story of a woman who was a missionary and was taken hostage, beaten, raped and tortured. The woman said that she felt honored that God would allow her to live and have the opportunity to grow through her suffering."

Rev. Anderson understands and relates to how that woman felt.

She stated, "On days that I was suffering, I was reminded of the suffering that Jesus endured on the cross on my behalf. It made it a little bit easier to endure and gave me a greater sense of God's love."

New London UMC auctions off quilt

Continued from page 1

Pyramids, God's Eye, and Interwoven Puzzle. These blocks remind viewers of the wonder, connection and presence of God throughout Africa.

The name 'Africa' is spelled out down the center of the quilt, creating a cross when combined with the special blocks. Quilted into the fabric are hearts, facing in and out, representing God's love flowing in and out of Africa.

Fish, long a symbol of Christian faith, are quilted clock-wise, denoting God's order for all things. An outline of the continent of Africa is quilted in gold thread, central to the quilt and Zimbabwe's location is noted with a cross, as it is the loca-

tion of the only United Methodist College in Africa.

All funds raised through the auction of this quilt will benefit the church's apportionments with emphasis on Africa-related ministries. Apportionments are connectional funds that each church participates in as a means of providing for special missions and outreaches, as well as the operating costs of the Texas Annual Conference and the denomination as a whole.

The highest bidder at the close of the auction (noon on Friday, November 17, 2006) will possess this fabulous reminder of God's presence in Africa through the connectional ministries of the United Methodist Church. To place a

bid, please contact Rev. Kelly S. Krone at

kelly.krone@txcumc.org, call the church at 903.895.4608 and leave a message, or click on the link located at the church web-site:

<http://www.gbgm-umc.org/newlondon/>. Pictures of the quilt and full details and information relating to the auction can also be found on the web site. Once received, your bid will be personally acknowledged.

Check the church web-site for a current status on the auction, including high bid amount and high bidder's initials. The Africa Quilt will be on display at the church before and after worship services.

Trinity East UMC to host Singin' Preachers Concert

By Edith Selgary, Trinity East United Methodist Church

Trinity East United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas will be the site for the *Singin' Preachers Concert* Sunday, November 12 at 4 p.m.

It is being presented by the Gleaners, a women's ministry created by Mrs.

Bertha Scott in the late 1930's during the pastorate of her husband, Dr. J. S. Scott. The ministry's

unique name is taken from a verse of scripture in the book of Ruth (Ruth 2:7) which speak of people working as those who gather the grain left by reapers in a field; the kind of work that takes a spirit of service and commitment.

The Gleaners' purpose is to serve the needs of Trinity East United Methodist Church and the community. Over the years, they have made many donations (monetary and service) to the

church and served as mentors to adolescent girls in the area.

The concert is an annual event that benefits the ministries and needs of the church. Its purpose is to recognize the God-given

gifts and talents of ministers to spread "the good news" of Jesus Christ through song. Special guests for this year's event



are: Bishop Thomas Wallace of New Oasis of Faith Church; Rev. Carolyn Gordon, Boynton Chapel UMC; Rev. Kenneth Green, Love UMC; Rev. Minnie Baxter, Pleasantville UMC and Rev. Sederic Dinkens of Dallas, Texas.

Cost of tickets is \$8. A pre-concert reception will begin at 3:30 p.m. Contact event coordinator, Mamie Ewing at 713-721-0511.

We're Looking For Writers!

The Texas Annual Conference Office of Communication needs experienced writers for limited freelance work throughout the conference. Pay will be per article, and the ideal candidate will have some background in journalism and be knowledgeable of regional ministries and events near you. This could be an exciting opportunity for an upper-level college student looking for journalism experience or a good writer who is active in the United Methodist Church. Please send us recent writing samples along with your resume and cover letter to:

The Texas Annual Conference Service Center
5215 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002
Attn: Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications

Center for Congregational Excellence implements first stage of new program

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications, Texas Conference

In the last edition of Cross Connection, an article on four of the first nine churches in the pilot Transformation Program was featured. This is a continuance of the first article focusing on the other churches.

Rev. Nolen Holcomb
Central North District

Church: Waller First UMC

Pastoral Profile:

Retired from the Texas Conference in 2002; in ministry since 1962.

Rev. Holcomb began serving Waller First UMC in October 2005.

“The death of their pastor 15 months ago was the downslide of the church. Not only have they had to deal with internal issues and problems in the church, but the loss and grief over their pastor and the pastor’s family ... A lot was lost to the congregation through her death. The church never has recovered where it was financially and leadership wise before she died.”

Challenge No. 1: Moving beyond survival mode.

The struggle at Waller is that they are fighting to keep the doors open. By that I mean they are barely bringing in enough money to pay the bills and keep the lights on – literally. My expectation is that the transformation project can help them move from survival mode to being a missional church again – a church with a mission and a purpose – not only to those few there on Sunday mornings, but to the potential folks that are out there and new folks that are coming that direction.

The membership at Waller is about 140 people. We may take in new members and others members move, membership stays steady, but participation in the life of the church is low. Among those 75 people [on the rolls] that have not been in the church in the last 13 months, among those peo-

ple are the folks who ought to be leaders – they are middle aged people and folks with youth and children.

Not being able to have

You bow down and honor those who have brought you this far. And then, sometimes you have to try something new. We have to get us from being maintenance focused to mission minded.

- - Rev. Rhanel Johnson

them carry on during the time of crisis, leaves a big hole, particularly in leadership, but also plays a role in finance and in programming, because we don’t have their children and youth in the church.

Challenge No. 2: The changing community

It’s both a challenge and an opportunity to attract and involve folks who are moving in that direction and are looking for a church home. It’s a challenge because, with an average of 42 in attendance, with minimal youth program and activities, it’s difficult to have folks with families give serious thought to becoming active in this church.

Opportunity: Serving the changing community.

Waller will eventually be a part of the Houston West movement, and I think the people of the church are somewhat in touch with that. We’ve got a lot to do with hospitality, a lot to do with stewardship, and a lot to do with leadership development.

People with youth and children are looking for churches with youth and children’s programs. That has to be a priority: re-building children and youth programs that would be attractive to people moving in that area

The first objective is to

address hospitality. That’s something I think the folks can get a handle on and do something about. I hope that before the holidays we will have taken a serious, beginning step on working on our hospitality. Many folks visit the congregation. Most will visit two to three times, and then they don’t come back.

It will be a joint focus on hospitality and on our spiritual development.

In my small group of 20 leaders – the folks who are going to show up no matter what – we have to find a spiritual engagement that we can find life in and find it in such a way that we can share it with other people.

Rev. Rhanel Johnson
Central South Parish



Church: Central South Parish comprised of Wesley UMC

and Union Memorial UMC in Houston.

Pastoral Profile: In ministry since 1999; in appointment serving two-point charge since June.

We found a couple of churches that were willing to be part of a pilot project. They were churches headed toward a decline, and we wanted to see if we could help them. Both churches were running about 15 in attendance and now we’re seeing about 60.

Challenge No. 1: Healing the past in preparation for the future.

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Report day scheduled for January 9-10 2007

By Peggy Z. Miller
Center for Connectional Resources

Plans are already underway for our next Report Day. Report Day is the gathering of all the statistical and financial data from our churches. It is quite an undertaking and once all this data is gathered from our Conference, it is sent to the General Council on Finance and Administration.

The data is a valuable tool used not only by our Conference leadership but also the General Church Leaders including our Bishops. We use this data to measure the growth of our churches—the memberships, the ministries. This data can help us to make the best decisions possible.

We can evaluate the direction of our church and as demonstrated by the changes within our own Conference this year, allow our churches to feel connected by providing support and accountability. Indeed this data helps us “Build Our Future Together.”

This year, we have nine new districts and nine new auditors. Our auditors work closely with the district in setting up sites for the gathering of our data. The auditors along with the district administrative assistants will be available to you on Report Day. You will need to contact your district to find out the exact date and time of your Report Day. Our statistician is Rev. Dick White. Our auditors and district administrative assistants are:

Central North

Rev. Marty Vershel
Doris Folser

Central South

Rev. Paul Whitlach
Donna Alexander

East

Rev. Judy Anderson
Vetta Quackenbush

North

Rev. John Whitehurst
Lonna Nunn

Northwest

Rev. Russ Munch
Pat Travers
Charlene Hall

South

Rev. Bert Bagley
Lillie Burleson

Southeast

Rev. Mark Bunch
Donna Moody

Southwest

Rev. Alex Lupo

Sharon Krowl

West

Rev. Danny Barrett
Priscilla Wright

Training sessions were held for our auditors on Tuesday, October 31 at the Texas Conference Methodist Building and in Lakeview (Harmony Building) on November 1. We are very pleased to have these auditors and district administrative assistants help us on Report Day. Some of our auditors have done this before and many of the administrative assistants have been helping for quite some time. They are very committed to the Texas Annual Conference of the UMC.

Again, this year report day data entry can be done using the internet. Go to the Texas Annual Conference of the UMC website: www.txcumc.org; under the word Administration, highlight Center for Connectional Resources, and then click on Report Day. This will link you to our Report Day Web Site. You (the church) will have a sign in name and password. This will be included at the top right hand corner of your Statistical Report – white worksheet form which your auditors will give to your pastor.

A practice session will be held from November 29, 2006 to December 6, 2006 (at 5 pm it is over) for the churches to go online and practice. When you practice, the data will not be saved. Once the practice is over all items will be reset to zero and the information that is entered will be actual 2006 data. Remember to check your data carefully. You may start to enter actual data on December 7, 2006 at 8 am.

Please note the following:
1. As with past years, our report form has been custom-designed to reflect the procedures of our own annual conference. Currently, it is a 6 page report.

2. Remember that the forms reflect the membership terminology and definitions from
Continued on page 8
The 2004 Book of Discipline, using the terms “professing member.”

Breaking down barriers in ministry

Church in Livingston hosts ladies tea

By Sally Humes
Program Director

First United Methodist Church of Livingston held an old fashioned Ladies Tea. The purpose was to bring together our Ladies Ministries. Officers and members our our United Methodist Women's ministry and our Celebration Ministry were invited.

"The reason for this tea was that women of both ministries were concerned that their areas of ministry were becoming competitive" said Mrs. Lisa Mayhugh. "It was my desire to eliminate these fears with common ground for all women and to comprehend that both ministries are



(From Left to Right) UMW and Celebration Officers: Frankie Jennings, Wilber Lee Schubert, Suzanne Ganzer, Susan Musny, Lisa Mayhugh, Vistoria Spencer, Mary Ellen Riley and Sandra Gray.

better way to do that than to host a Tea Party."

Using the illustration from the Bible of Mary and Martha, Lisa explained that we lose the story by simplifying it. We automatically assume that Jesus was critical of Martha. But the reality is that Mary had simply chosen the "most important."

What Jesus was trying to get Martha to understand is that worship is primary, but

that does not lessen the need for works. "Basically, UMW women need worship (i.e. Celebration) or they run dry and try to continue to do everything in their own strength. Celebration Women need to get up from the 'throne room of God' and do the work of the Kingdom," said Mayhugh.

The facts are simple, UMW is a 'Martha' ministry and Celebration is very much



Lisa Mayhugh speaks to the group on the importance of the ministry of United Methodist Women and Celebration Ministries to the Church.

a 'Mary' ministry. We have to have both women and both ministries need each other. Susan Muzny, UMW District President said, "everything was beautiful and Lisa gave a wonderful talk. I can't do it justice, but she asked everyone there to pass on her message."

She also pointed out that ladies interested in Celebration tend to be more like Mary and that UMW

ladies tend to be more like Martha. Mayhugh stated, "The church really needs us both so that we can be lifted up and be able to work without getting burned out."

Everyone had a wonderful time and enjoyed the opportunity to come together and break down any barriers that may prevent us from serving the Lord and doing the work of the Church.



Ladies enjoy a spot of tea.

vital. I couldn't think of a

New transformation program for local churches

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After first meeting with the consultant we held a healing service, with special music and personal ministry to each person.

What I have found is that most of our smaller churches have a lot of pain – from previous administration and pain from things that have happened in the church. As you get to hear the stories, you hear a lot of unforgiveness and bitterness because these problems happened in the church. I felt that to get us on good footing, we needed to get ready for healing – physical, spiritual and emotional – so we can receive what God has prepared for us.

Challenge No. 2: The biggest thing is to get people to think outside the box – getting people to see the real

reality instead of the perceived reality of the situation of the church.

There is hope at both the churches. At Union Memorial, a lot of the 30 to 40 age group has returned to the church and I'm hoping to get them more involved.

The challenge in churches like this is that you're missing the 18 to 35 year olds – everyone is 65 and older. It's in decline. The only children you have are the grandkids or great-grandkids.

So, we have to change some things. We have to change the way things are structured ... try to get the people to understand that everyone has a voice.

I'm not traditional. I'm very contemporary. That

may have helped because everything had been very traditional at both churches.

You bow down and honor those who have brought you this far. And then, sometimes you have to try something new. We have to get us from being maintenance focused to mission focused.

Opportunity: To see God do something miraculous with this whole mission and vision.

I'm open to doing things a new way.

I would say that I'm starting to see the excitement returning to both churches. Knowing that God is still able to stir up and move in these churches is wonderful. That's the best part for me at this point.

Report day information

Continued from page 5

3. Additional information is also requested on page 5 dealing with incorporation, founding date and EIN number. Note: If you entered this information last year, it will appear on the screen and you will only need to verify that it is correct.

4. Hurricane Relief Income and Expenses will be reported on page 6. Again this year, we will collect this data.

5. NEW: Hands On Mission on page 6. The church has to write down how many members (a number) were involved in at least one hands-on mission activity sponsored by or endorsed by your local church, District, or the Texas Annual Conference of the UMC during 2006.

Again, please remember that Report Day will be held on Tuesday, January 9 and Wednesday, January 10, 2007.

Contact your district office for the exact date and time. If you have any questions, you may call me, Peggy Z. Miller at 713-521-9383 or e-mail: pzmillier@methodists.net.

Remember, the accuracy of your data is very important to the Conference and the General Church. The Texas Annual Conference of the UMC has changed to four new centers: the Center for Congregational Excellence, the Center for Clergy Excellence, the Center for Missional Excellence, and the Center for Connectional Resources. The focus has shifted from committee maintenance to mission and ministry.

The Mission of the Texas Annual Conference of the UMC is to "Equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God."