

Cross Connection

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

Praying for our new president



**Senator Barack Obama
President-Elect of the United States**

Along with all the other bishops in The United Methodist Church, I have just signed my name in a Bible which will be given to the next president of the United States of American, Senator Barak Obama. A second Bible will be presented to his wife Michelle Obama. A letter of congratula-

tions with the promise of prayer is being sent today. Each occasion has been bathed in prayer for the President-elect, our nation and world.

This tradition of a strong relationship between the President of the United States and the bishops of the UMC dates to the beginning of our nation. Shortly after George Washington was elected as the

first President of the United States, Bishop Francis Asbury met with him on behalf of the fledgling Methodist church. No White House or Capitol Building existed. No aides to either person were present. The two leaders met together in a simple room to talk about the future. Records are minimal. However, I'm confident that first meeting was also bathed in prayer for the President, our nation and world.

I write this message from the Council of Bishops fall meeting at Epworth-By-the-Sea in Georgia on the day following the United States elections. Today is the second time that I've participated in this ritual of the Bible and letter. My first time was eight years ago at President Bush's election. Each occasion has

Today our nation is facing unprecedented challenges: two wars, a global economic crisis, a planet in peril, and more. The words of Psalm 46 seem to echo around us, "The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter." Yet, this nation also has great assets: innovative and hard-working people, widely-held values of justice, freedom and a willingness to make individual sacrifices for the good of all. The election of Senator Obama, an African American, demonstrates to the world that the American dream can become reality for all its citizens. With all that is facing our nation and world, President Obama will need our continual prayers.

A number of the Psalms were written to celebrate the anointing of a new ruler for Israel. As a new President of the United States prepares to take office, I invite you to read, study and pray Psalm 72. In part it reads, "Give the king your justice, O God, And your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, and give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. Long may he live! May prayer be made for him continually, And blessings invoked for him all the day long. May there be abundance of grain in the land; may it wave on the tops of the mountains. May its fruit be like Lebanon; and may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field."

Grace and peace,
Bishop Janice Riggie Huie
Texas Annual Conference

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Ornaments still needed – only a few weeks remain

As we enter into the heart of fall season and begin preparations for family gatherings, counting our blessings and celebrating Thanksgiving, we have

been asked to remember those who are working to put lives back in order. Hurricane Ike created chaos for thousands who continue to struggle with the

daily routine of cleanup and reconstruction. Experiencing such devastation, it can be difficult to focus on personal blessings in the midst of emotional, fiscal, and personal upheaval.

Emory UMC is seeking your help in collecting Christmas ornaments. By offering these donated ornaments (homemade, new, old, and bulk packaged) to those in the recovery process, we seek to bring a bit of brightness and hope. Based on the number of ornaments received, centers for 'shopping' will be

established at available churches in the affected areas.

Your help is needed to provide this gift for as many as possible. Your donation of ornaments will enable the variety and numbers needed to reach out to hundreds of families. Parents who are rebuilding are focused on that effort which will provide the basics of everyday living for their families. There is little time left to look ahead and imagine what Christmas will look like.

Continued on page 3

“Residents of Sabine Pass have been very blessed with many ‘practical’ gifts...how great to receive gifts of the heart.”

Rev. Kitty Key, pastor of St. John's/Sabine Pass UMC



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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Funds for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Ike

Recap of contributions to the Texas Annual Conference

Appeals have been made in the Texas Annual Conference for the past four years in response to devastation caused by hurricanes. The membership of both lay and clergy have responded graciously.

To all of our members and friends alike, we express our heartfelt appreciation for the

financial contributions you have made.

We are presenting this financial recap in an attempt to be transparent and informative about the receipts and disbursements of those funds. The remaining funds will be utilized to assist in mission work.

Yes, we are in a very chal-

lenging financial period.

However, your hearts have been opened to the needs of others.

It has been and always will be the United Methodist way.

On behalf of Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, the cabinet and the entire conference service center staff, we offer our prayers for your congregations and fami-

lies. Again, we say thanks for every act of kindness you do in the Name of Jesus.

Dr. Elijah Stansell is the Conference Treasurer and Director of the Center for Connectional Resources

	Katrina/Rita Receipts	Katrina/Rita Disbursements		Ike Receipts	Ike Disbursements
Total 2005 Receipts	\$2,471,671.84				
Disbursements					
Pastor Assistance		\$ 20,373.51			
Beaumont Dist. Churches		\$183,589.93			
Christian Alliance Inc.		\$ 6,000.00			
Houston East		\$ 1,000.00			
Louisiana Annual Conference		\$336,000.00			
Florida Conference		\$ 10,000.00			
Methodist Retirement		\$ 25,000.00			
United Way		\$100,000.00			
Interfaith Ministries		\$ 50,000.00			
Lakeview Conference Center		\$250,000.00			
Longview District		\$ 3,524.62			
Habitat for Humanity		\$ 95.00			
Total 2005 Disbursements		\$985,583.06			
2005 Receipts less Disbursements					\$1,486,088.78
Total 2006 Receipts	\$ 48,866.80				
Disbursements					
Lufkin District		\$ 40,000.00			
Methodist Retirement		\$ 25,000.00			
Beaumont Dist. Churches		\$164,808.23			
Houston Churches Assist.		\$124,000.00			
Shalom Mobile Health		\$ 28,000.00			
Southeast District		\$182,000.00			
Christian Alliance		\$ 5,000.00			
Gulfside Assembly		\$125,000.00			
Total 2006 Disbursements		\$693,808.23			
2006 Receipts less Disbursements					-\$ 644,941.43
Total 2007 Receipts	\$ 7,279.12				
Disbursements					
Kansas West Conference		\$ 50,000.00			
Southeast District		\$ 35,000.00			
South District		\$ 10,000.00			
Total 2007 Disbursements		\$ 95,000.00			
2007 Receipts less Disbursements					-\$ 87,720.88
Total 2008 Receipts	\$ 1,330.00		\$429,785.00		
Disbursements					
Southeast District				\$ 32,770.03	
South District				\$ 203,823.88	
Shalom Mobile Health				\$ 50,000.00	
Total 2008 Disbursements				\$ 286,593.91	
2008 Receipts less Disbursements					\$ 144,521.09
Remaining Receipts from Katrina, Rita & Ike					\$ 897,947.56



St. Mark's UMC earns third year welcoming certification

St. Mark's UMC in Baytown is the first church in the Texas Conference to be certified as a "welcoming congregation" for the third year.

Kay Bowers and her husband joined St. Mark's in 2006 and were soon invited to serve on the LAMP team (Loving and Motivating People), which is the Evangelism and Welcoming ministry team consisting of 20+



Rev. Michael Proctor
St. Mark's Baytown

seminar, and continues to keep inviting and welcoming ministries as a primary focus of the congregation.

After receiving year one welcoming

Extreme effort is made to help everyone become involved in the life of St. Mark's, and John Mabry, the former LAMP chairperson, assists by tracking the connection and involvement of first time guests and new members, allowing LAMP to not only note progress but also determine gaps for improvement. Kay says there are many rewards to being involved in the welcoming ministry and hearing the positive feedback from guests and new members keeps them motivated to grow toward year four certification.

Kay Bowers LAMP Team Leader

St. Mark's UMC, under the leadership of Rev. Mike Proctor, is honored to be the

first church in the Conference to earn the third year welcoming certification and encourages all congregations to become involved in the certification process.

Jan Floro is the welcoming training consultant from Grow Church Now.

certification, members of St. Mark's were even more committed and motivated to achieve year two and three certification. They continue to expand the church's welcoming ministry to include a hosted welcome center, greeters at every entrance and outside, and improved welcoming skills by everyone.

people. Kay, the current LAMP team leader, wanted to be involved in helping other guests receive the same extraordinary welcome they had experienced.

In the welcoming certification quest, St. Mark's responded to a *Mystery Guest Audit*, participated in on-going welcoming training, hosted an Evangelism

"It is an honor to be the first church in the Texas Conference to earn year three of the welcoming congregation certification. This is the motivation to keep us striving for year 4."

Ornaments still needed

Continued from page 1



Your donations will allow their children to eagerly anticipate a festively decorated holiday.

Rev. Kitty Key, pastor of St. John's/Sabine Pass UMC reminds us, "Residents of Sabine Pass have been very blessed with many 'practical' gifts...how great to receive gifts of the heart."

Take time in your holiday preparations to join us in offering this heartfelt gift of holiday spirit and Christian love. Time is running out and it can be difficult to think about Christmas as we focus on Thanksgiving. Still, your donations will make a difference to so many seeking to

create new Christmas traditions to replace those lost in the hurricane.

To allow for sorting, counting and preparation for multi-facility distribution, send your donations to Emory UMC, 456 N. Texas Street, Emory, TX 75440 **no later than December 1, 2008 – that is only a few weeks**

away! To learn more about this ministry outreach or for additional information, please contact Jill Krone at 903.473.3755 or by email to jill.krone@gmail.com.

Jill Krone is a contributing writer for the Office of Communications with the Texas Annual Conference.

St. Paul UMC presents the Pearson Lecture Series for interfaith understanding

St. Paul's United Methodist Church presents Dr. Weston W. Fields, executive director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation, as the second speaker in the Pearson Lecture Series for Interfaith Understanding. Fields will speak at 6:30 p.m. Monday, December 15, in the church's Fondren Hall, 5501 Main at Binz/Bissonnet in the Museum District.

Fields is on the curatorial team for *The Birth of Christianity: A Jewish Story*, a special exhibit at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) from December 12 to April 12. He also is the author

of *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History, Sodom And Gomorrah: History And Motif in Biblical Narrative*, and *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of Gap Theory*.

As stated by the HMNS, "to understand the influence of Christianity, it is important to understand the nature of Judaism. During the 20th century, a number of spectacular archeological discoveries in the land of Israel have greatly contributed to our understanding of ancient religions, culture, and lifestyles. Though the display of ancient scrolls, objects, and artifacts, *The Birth of Christianity:*

A Jewish Story tells the fascinating story of two of the world's most important religions."

Origin of Pearson Lecture Series

A respect for people of all faiths inspired Pat and Sonny Pearson to establish The Pearson Lecture Series for Interfaith Understanding.

"In 1989, Sonny was sent by his company to Saudi Arabia," recalled Pat Pearson. "Our minister gave him one task while over there: 'I want you to bring me back a prayer rug.'

"Through an Arab engineer co-worker, Sonny was able to

fulfill the mission, but upon being given the rug, he was told, 'You tell your minister that he may have this prayer rug on one condition: that when he prays, he prays for all God's people, not just Christians.'"

"It is our hope," continued Pat, "that this lecture series will foster understanding and respect between and among the three faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and encourage an appreciation of our common faith heritage dating back to Abraham."

The Pearson Lecture Series for Interfaith Understanding is made possible by an endowment

through St. Paul's United Methodist Foundation of Houston. In 2007, the first speaker in the series was Muhammed Cetin, president of the Institute for Interfaith Dialog.

St. Paul's UMC is located at 5501 Main Street at Binz/Bissonnet, across from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Donna Adair is the Director of Communications for St. Paul's UMC in Houston, Texas.



Making a difference

Two congregations are stronger

Two congregations, St. Luke's and Gethsemane, in the Central South District of the Texas Annual Conference are collaborating in new, more effective ministries. The primary mission field for this enhanced ministry is the area around Gethsemane, including the Sharpstown and Gulfton area, and extending to northeast Fort Bend County.

The Gethsemane area is demographically similar to the City of Houston overall: including a rapidly-changing mix of ethnicities and income levels. More than 50 different nationalities are represented in the area, with significant Hispanic, Asian, and African immigrant populations. The Gulfton area, once a major crime site, is changing significantly as the largely Hispanic residents become upwardly mobile.

Forging a new model for ministry

The "Gethsemane Initiative" began when the two congregations, each seeking to reach the city more effectively, began to consider collaboration. The Initiative implements St. Luke's 2008 strategic goal to develop outreach sites in the city to reach a demographic outside of a River Oaks-based church. Jack Steele, who headed the task force, says, "This initiative points toward a brighter future of collaborative ministry in Houston. Neighborhoods like the Gethsemane area are changing, growing, and revitalizing. Gethsemane, with its history of neighborhood ministry, and St. Luke's, with its deep commitment to outreach, are ideal partners in ministry to a neighborhood that in many ways hangs in the balance." All shared ministry initiatives – current

and future — are geared toward life-changing outreach and neighborhood revitalization.

Timeline of collaborative ministry plans

- August – expand a Food Pantry ministry (in collaboration with CCSC-Christian Community Service Center) by six hours a week and coordinate activities for Spanish Alpha, senior citizens, and United Methodist Men
- September – research discipleship and apartment ministry opportunities with the area YMCA and other regional social service organizations; St. Luke's UMC appoints Merger Assessment Team to study pros/cons of merging the two churches to leverage additional synergies
- October – Bishop Huie



Top Right: The Food Pantry of Gethsemane UMC. The pantry is open to the public twice a month on Tuesday, 10 a.m to 2 p.m. and Thursday, 3-6 p.m.

Bottom Left: English as a second language classes are taught at the Las Americas Apartment complex in the Gulfton area.

Bottom Right: Photo is of the ALPHA Bible study class held at the Pizza Hut each week. All classes are taught in Spanish.



e in the city than one

appoints Rev. Justin Coleman to serve as the lead pastor onsite at Gethsemane with Dr. Tom Pace offering oversight and guidance as Senior Pastor for both churches; Bill Newcomb will serve as a consultant to the Center for Clergy Excellence through May, 2009.

- November/December—research how to use acreage at Gethsemane for soccer ministry; consider further expansion of the food pantry

According to SLUMC

Senior Pastor Dr. Tom Pace, a merger is being considered

because: it would allow quicker ministry expansion without capital investment to acquire facilities, it would clarify responsibility and

accountability relationships, it is more focused and streamlined than an informal cooperative program, and it allows both congregations to develop ministry skills for possible use elsewhere.

Steele adds, “The ministry approaches we develop together may be models for other groups in the future.

Regardless of the format, this partnership will keep Christ in the heart of a changing area.”

The goal: a shared experience for both congregations and the community

Gethsemane member and pantry volunteer Phoebe Catli says, “Having seen the enormous demographic changes in

the area around Gethsemane through the years, I am so thankful we are jointly providing this much-needed ministry to those certain economic levels around the four zip codes we service. In fact, shortly after Hurricane Ike, four volunteers improvised with tables on the parking lot and ultimately we made a difference to 131 families, (611 individuals) in just two hours’ time.”

The Apartment Ministry initiative hosts meetings in area apartment complexes several times a week for Bible study, ESL classes and career counseling. Collaborative ministry also includes a new relationship

Funding for salaries and projects is shared by both churches, combined with additional money from the community and designated giving through St. Luke’s. “Developing new relationships will take time, but we are encouraged about current conversations with area leaders and corporations about additional partnerships that would allow us to build excellent soccer fields on the church property,” notes Justin, “which is a dire need due to a lack of green/play space in this densely populated area.”

In September alone, the food pantry impacted 1,265

lives and connected families with additional referrals based on their individual needs. With continued prayer and volunteer support and increasing food

donations, the hope is to expand pantry service hours again in the months ahead. Adds Phoebe, “As we recover from the effects of Ike and the meltdown of our economy, we see a lot of families struggling to make ends meet. I know our partner ministries are making a huge impact in our community.”

For more information about the process or results, contact Rev. Justin Coleman at jcoleman@stlukes-hou.org.

April Canik is the Communications Director at St. Luke’s UMC in the Texas Conference

“The ministry approaches we develop together may be models for other groups in the future. Regardless of the format, this partnership will keep Christ in the heart of a changing area.”

Jack Steele

with the YMCA to develop a national model. Alpha classes on Wednesdays in the Gulfton Area consistently draw day laborers in to learn life lessons from the Bible.

Lisa Lett, staff assistant in Youth Ministries at St. Luke’s, has recently demonstrated her support of this collaborative program by recently worshipping at Gethsemane and joining soon thereafter. “From Justin’s initial invitation to the greeter and others meeting us with smiles and

Handshakes, we knew God had opened this door for us at Gethsemane,” says Lisa. “My husband joined the choir immediately and it already feels like home.”



Top Photo: Rev. Manuel Rodriguez lead five individuals in the profession of faith.

The middle and bottom photos depict Bible study classes and worship being held in the Las Americas apartment complex.



Manage your debt by creating a spending plan, and sticking to it



If you really want to reduce your debt, the first thing you will need to do is create a spending plan, then stick to it. Your spending plan, or budget, needs to focus on paying down your debt and not adding to it.

This may mean cutting up the credit cards and avoiding sales and bargains that are too good to be true. Set your primary financial goal to be out of debt in six months, a year, two or whatever it takes. Write it down. You need to stick to this plan until you have achieved your goal.

Identify and prioritize essential expenses. Limit your spending to the bare essentials: food, shelter, utilities, etc. It may be difficult to define what is essential and what is "luxury," but if you are to get out of debt, you must be tough.

Make a list of essential expenses and how much they cost on average each month. Do not forget those expenses you pay only once or twice a year, such as insurance premiums or property taxes. If you can economize and reduce some monthly expenses, do it.

Once you make your list, do not buy anything that is not on it until you reduce your minimum debt payments to below 15% of take-home pay.

By the way, your monthly debt payments are not expenses. Except for your mortgage payment, which is like rent, debt payments are the *ghosts of prior months' expenses* you incurred when you did not have enough cash to pay for them.

Furthermore, they are causing you to pay more and more for those prior expenses because they have hidden expenses – interest and finance charges. Now deduct your monthly debt payments (except your mortgage) from your income. This is what you have left to pay

essential expenses.

Here is where many get into trouble. If you find that you do not have enough to pay debts and expenses, you will need to take additional action. Some people simply

start juggling debt payments by making minimum credit card payments or paying one bill this month and another the next. This is a bad move.

Revisit economizing. Look at those expenses again. When you simply cannot cut expenses any further, you might consider refinancing methods.

If you set a priority of being out of debt by a certain date, you

will need to determine how much you must pay each month until that date to reduce your debt payments below 15% of your take-home pay.

To calculate this amount, you will need a financial calculator. You can find free financial calculators on many websites or in financial software you may already own.

This article was taken from MHN Net Behavioral Health Resources



Tips For Managing Your Debt

- Reduce utility bills by carefully adjusting the temperature in your home by raising the thermostat in summer and lowering it in winter.
- Turn lights off in rooms when no one is in them.
- Spend less time on the telephone.
- Avoid expensive convenience foods and buy raw ingredients to prepare less expensive, more nutritious meals.
- Make gifts instead of buying expensive items to give away during holidays and for special occasions.
- If you set your mind to it, you can come up with many ideas that may save you pennies a day, which add up to dollars you can use to reduce your debt.

In future editions of the
Cross Connection newspaper,

Look for more articles on

Balanced Living from

MHN Net Behavioral Health Resources.



Annual Conference 2009

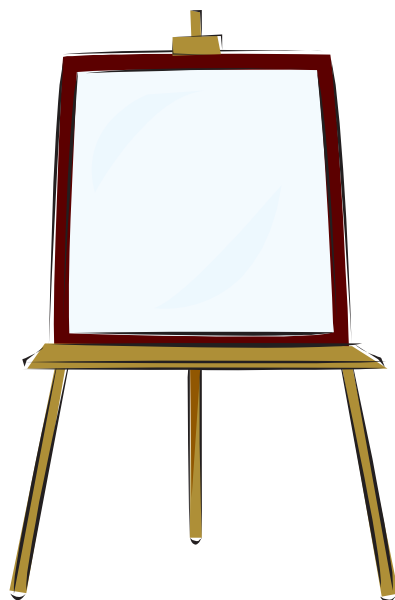
Display Tables

The 2009 Session of the Texas Annual Conference will be held at The Woodlands UMC. The location for displays will be in the Gymnasium area in the main building of the church. So that you fully understand our display procedures, please read the rules carefully, as there have been reservation changes. The dates for Conference are May 24-27, 2009.

Reservations for displays will be staggered this year. Texas Annual Conference participants can reserve first and may begin sending in their reservations after January 1, 2009, continuing through March 15, 2009. After March

15, reservations of all tables left will be open to the public.

All tables will be provided with covers and skirts and each table will be 6 feet long by 30



inches wide. There will be three types of booths with tables available: 1) *Outside Row against the wall without electricity* cost \$50; a table directly against wall for basic display only, no chairs will be allowed in aisles; 2) *Outside row against the wall with electricity* cost \$65; table directly against wall for basic display only, no chairs allowed in aisles; and 3) *Inside row without electricity* cost \$75; table set away from backdrop for a "manned booth" set-up with 2 chairs behind table.

Space is limited—all display tables are on a *first-come, first-serve basis*. Due to electricity and space limitations, displays with electricity capability and "manned booths"

are very limited. You may not use glue, tape or pins of any kind on the walls or backdrops of the booths. On the inside row booths, one light-weight sign (paper or plastic), may be hung from 2 hooks that will be provided, on the backdrop poles. On the outside row booths, one sign may be hung from the front of the display table only. This information will be helpful to you in planning for space.

Tables will be labeled and available for set-up on Sunday afternoon, May 24, 2009, no earlier than 3:00 pm. **Please DO NOT arrive before 3:00 p.m.** The Woodlands UMC will need time to set-up the area for us. All displays must be removed at noon on Wednesday, May 27, 2009.

Display reservation forms are available from Jan Ervin in the Assistant to the Bishop's office. The forms are to be returned to this office (do not send form or check to the fiscal office, you will delay processing of your form), with your check enclosed.

Your table is not reserved without a check or a voucher form for transfer. Once the information is received, a confirmation note will be sent to you and your reservation will be added to the display list which will be posted on our website, www.txcumc.org, after April 1, 2009.

We are looking forward to an exciting Annual Conference in 2009.

Meal Planning Information



The following information is being provided to assist you in planning meals and special events being held in conjunction with conference. Conference will begin with the worship service on Sunday evening, May 24, ending at noon on Wednesday, May 27.

There are a large number of fine restaurants in the area, which you are welcome to use for your meetings and/or meals. If you choose to use either The Woodlands UMC or the Marriott Waterway Hotel, please note the following information:

- The Woodlands UMC (Chef Stephen), contact: Jan Ervin, 713-533-3708. Do not contact The Woodlands UMC

directly.

- The Woodlands UMC The Loft, choice of approved local caterers listed in "Meal Planning Information Packet."
- The Woodlands UMC "The Columns Cafe," (Chef Stephen), contact: Jan Ervin, 713-533-3708. Do not contact The Columns Café directly.
- Marriott Waterway, Brent Foreman, 281-367-9797 (Note: Your meal must be approved before you call the Marriott)

All meals held at The Woodlands UMC will be required to pay a set-up fee for the 2009 conference. This fee will be based on room size and set-up required. The set-up cost for a small classroom is \$30 and the set-up cost for a meeting hall is \$50 plus \$1 per person for over 50 participants. Send your reservation form with set-up fee payable to The Texas Annual Conference, 5215 Main St., Houston, Texas 77002.

You must submit your reservation form to our office before February 15, 2009 in order for your information to be included in the Pre-Conference Journal.

- Contact by phone or e-mail the Assistant to the Bishop's Office to assure that your event is approved for scheduling at the Texas Annual Conference 2009.
- If you have chosen Marriott Waterway, the Assistant to the Bishop's Office will provide notification to that facility that you have been approved. You will not be able to make arrangements at the Marriott until an approval has been given and they have been notified you are approved. After approval has been given to the Marriott, you may contact Brent Foreman at 281-367-9797 to make arrangements for menus, schedules, locations, costs and payments.
- If you have chosen The Columns Café at The Woodlands UMC for your boxed lunches, this on-site food service will be paid directly to The Columns Café, 2200 Lake Woodlands Drive, The Woodlands, Texas 77380. Payment for your meal selection must be received no later than May 1, 2009. Schedule your deadline for ticket sales

accordingly. Only one change to your reservation attendance number will be accepted; no later than May 8, 2009. Box lunches are \$9.00 each.

- If you have chosen The Woodlands UMC, "The Loft" only the approved local caterers listed below will be available for use. After your room assignment has been determined, it will be your responsibility to contact one of the approved caterers to make arrangements for menus, schedules, costs and payment. **ONLY PAPER PRODUCTS** will be allowed in The Loft, so let the caterer know this. The caterer will need to provide utensils, plates, cups, ice, table coverings, and anything else you feel necessary for your meal.

The list of accepted caterers follows:

1. Carrabba's Italian Grill, 281-367-9423
2. Catering for All Occasions, 281-364-8470, contact: Marsha Lamb
3. McKenzie's Barbeque, 936-539-4300
4. Pappadeux Seafood Kitchen,

- 713-952-9782, contact: Annie
5. Pappasito's Mexican Food, 713-952-9782
6. Santa Fe South Catering, 281-367-3663, contact Lisa Green
7. The Chef's Table, 713-706-3111, contact Rachel Plunkett



When all details are finalized, complete the reservation form and submit to the Assistant to the Bishop's Office along with your check for the room set-up fee. Giving accurate information is important, as this will be included on our website (txcumc.org) and in the pre-conference journal.

If you have any questions, contact *Rev. Rick Goodrich, Assistant to the Bishop*, rgoodrich@txcumc.org or *Jan Ervin, Administrative Assistant*, jervin@txcumc.org for assistance.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Fellowship Opportunities

Prayers and Squares

If you can tie a knot and say a prayer, you can be a part of Prayers and Squares. If you are handy with a needle — or want to learn how to be — you also can help make these prayer quilts.

Prayers and Squares meet in Abraham Station at St. Paul's UMC from 2 to 7 p.m., the first and third Sundays of the month. Some people also participate by hemming and finishing the quilts at home.

The quilts are prepared as a "physical prayer of comfort and healing" for the intended recipient(s). These may be individuals who are gravely ill or who are going through another kind of life trauma.

Once completed, the quilts are displayed on the church's Jones Plaza, giving everyone the opportunity to tie a knot and say a prayer on behalf of the recipient.

All ages, stages, and genders are encouraged to be a part of this prayer and caring ministry. One need not be a member of St. Paul's to participate.

To request a prayer quilt or for more information about how to become a part of Prayers and Squares, contact Rev. Gail Williford at gailwilliford@stpaulshouston.org or 713-528-0527.

Moody Memorial UMC Hosts Seaside Treasure Festival
Seaside Treasure Festival celebrates its 10th year by expanding to a 2-day event on Friday, November 21-22, from 1-7 p.m., Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. Seaside features arts and crafts vendors, lunch, a fabulous silent auction, entertainment, and much more.

Join the fun at Moody Memorial First UMC, 53rd and Avenue U, Galveston, Texas. Festival proceeds support mission and outreach work in Galveston.

Admission is free. To request more information, email stf@moody.org or call (409)744-4526, ext. 783 and leave a message. For detailed vendor information and applications, please visit the web site at <http://www.moody.org/stf>.

Learning Opportunities

Advent Studies at St. Paul UMC Houston

St. Paul UMC will conduct several advent studies starting November 23, 2008. The first is *Countering Pharaoh's Production-Consumption Society Today*. Its focus is on journey from slavery to covenant relationship that we keep making over and over again. This study will be conducted by the POV Forum on Sundays, at 9:45 a.m.

The second study, *Come to the Manger*, is based on a book by the same name by Bob Kaylor. Kaylor invites readers to see God's face, to find our way to the manger, to identify a vision for vocation, to build God's house and to behold Jesus. This study will be conducted by the Chapel Bible Study Class on Sundays at 9:45 a.m.

Additional studies by the Cross Walk young adult Sunday School class will begin an Advent study at 9:45 a.m. and the Fidelis young couples class will study, *Christmas from the Backside*. For additional information, contact Rev. Shelli Williams at 713-528-0527.

Central South District presents Strengthening Smaller Congregations

Central South District in association with Union Baptist

Association and Antioch Institute of Houston Baptist University will host this event.

The guest speaker is Dr. Kennon L. Callahan, author of *The Future That Has Come and Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*. The workshop will be Tuesday, December 2, 2008, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center of Houston Baptist University.

The registration fee is \$25 per person (includes training materials, lunch and a copy of, *Small, Strong Congregations*).

To register, contact Sheila Hardman at 713-222-0117.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Making a Difference" A workshop for Rural/Small Membership Churches

Churches whose membership totals less than 100 members are invited to attend a workshop geared specifically for them. The event is scheduled for Saturday, November 22, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Aldersgate UMC, 2201 Earl Rudder Freeway S., College Station, Texas 77845. The cost is \$40 per church, with five persons attending and \$10 for each additional person. Lunch is included in the cost for registration.

The presenter will be Rev. James Hollifield, Pastor of Newkirk UMC, Newkirk OK. For more information and to register by November 18, contact Mary Reed @ 936-348-2050 or maryrreed@att.net

Summer Collegium Project 2009

Applications are now being accepted for the Summer Collegium, a Lilly Endowment project in support of small congregations.

Twenty-five clergy and their spouses from all Christian denominations will be invited to spend nine days at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, focusing on Body, Mind, and Soul: Celebrating, Strengthening and Sustaining Clergy Wholenss in Small Congregations.

The Summer Collegium takes place June 24-July 1, 2009, and applications must be postmarked by December 15, 2008 to be considered. All expenses for the event, including travel, meals, lodging, books, pulpit supply and child care at home are paid for by the grant.

For more information and an application packet, visit our website at www.vts.edu/education/collegium or call Marilyn Johns at 703-461-1760.

Mission Opportunities

Neighbor Helping Neighbor

Seabrook United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church of Seabrook, Taylor Lake Christian Church and the Seabrook Alliance have teamed up to form the Hurricane Ike Relief Ministry called "Neighbor Helping Neighbor" to offer much needed assistance to those in the Seabrook community.

Specific food donations are being requested so that food bags can be assembled and handed out to families: The list of food donations is: paper towels, toilet paper (4 roll packages), peanut butter, canned green beans, jelly (no glass), canned mixed vegetables, cereal, macaroni and cheese, canned soup, canned fruit, spaghetti noodles / pasta, spaghetti sauce (no glass), canned ham, dried pinto beans (1 or 2 lb bags), pork and beans, vienna sausage, spam, tuna, canned corn, crackers, rice (regular sizes only), cornbread mix, jello, instant pudding, cake mixes/icing, koolaid, ramen noodles and paper grocery bags.

Donations of toiletries, pillows and blankets are also needed.

Call 281.474.2851 to schedule the drop off of donations.

Do you have information about your church or ministry you would like to share with others?

Contact Thelma Jones at 713-521-9383, ext. 335 or thelmaj@methodists.net.