

# Cross Connection

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## A witness to forgiveness

**Bishop Janice Riggle Huie**  
Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church



The news this past week has been almost uniformly grim: many more deaths in Iraq, worsening devastation in Darfur, and another sex scandal in Congress. Perhaps closest to home was the shooting of 10 Amish girls in a one-room school in Lancaster County, Penn.

As I write, funerals for five of the children were held yesterday. A sixth girl has been brought home to die in the loving arms of her family. The milk truck driver

to forgive grows out of their deep Christian faith. It is a remarkable gift of hope to the whole world.

I couldn't help but reflect on the differences in response between this school shooting and the ones that occurred while I was bishop in Arkansas a few years ago. You may remember the 1998 tragedy in Jonesboro, Ark. Two boys, ages 10 and 12, never in trouble previously, took hunting rifles from a grandparents' shed and killed four middle school students and a teacher.

In the year following, the public outcry for vengeance resulted in the Arkansas legislature adopting some of the harshest juvenile punishment laws in the nation. Except for the work of dedicated

Rarely do Christians develop such a capacity to forgive alone. They need to be a part of a community where forgiveness is practiced daily.

who committed this horrific act took his life – leaving behind his wife, young children and a traumatized community.

As dispiriting as this news has been, a powerful witness to God's unbounded love and grace and human forgiveness has also taken place. On the evening of the shooting, even as the Amish community began to grasp the horror of the carnage at the school and grieve the incomprehensible loss of their children, their representative was slowly making his way to the home of the gunman. He went to offer his wife and children a word of forgiveness and peace.

Throughout this week, even as they mourn the tragic deaths of their children, this Amish community has quietly continued its witness of forgiveness. Their capacity

children's advocates and courageous legislators, Arkansas could easily have enacted a death penalty for juveniles.

These Amish Christians have chosen a different way. It is a way preached and practiced by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is a way led by Bishop Desmond Tutu through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. It is Jesus' way.

Forgiveness and reconciliation lie at the heart of Christian faith and practice. In no way do they deny the reality of evil or our own hatred or desire for revenge. In no way do they imply that Christians don't set appropriate boundaries or safeguard their children.

*Continued on page 4*

## Transformation is at hand

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

The first nine pilot churches in the Texas Annual Conference Transformation Program began their work with Don Nations of DNA Coaching on October 9.

During his two-week visit, Nations traveled the bounds of the conference and met with pastors, lay workers and district superintendents to further examine each church's ministry challenges and opportunities.

District Superintendents also are identifying 25 churches in each of their districts to begin the transformation process in January 2007.

There is an overwhelming need to transform in most United Methodist Churches, as

evidenced by declining membership, worship attendance and active involvement hands-on mission. In spite of the obvious need for transformation, this particular transformation journey is not to be embarked upon without careful consideration and sincere commitment.

"Churches that participate in the transformation project must demonstrate readiness to participate whole heartedly in the process with a willingness to make changes necessary for transformation," said Dr. Karen Dorris, director of the Center for Congregational Excellence. "As part of the process, churches will have a coach/consultant who walks

beside them in the three year process and provides them with a ministry plan unique to their context that will result in growth and vitality."

Training for clergy and lay leadership will be provided by the coach/consultant, and additional training is slated through the Centers of Congregational, Clergy, and Missional Excellence.

If your church would like to be one of the 225 transformation churches, please contact your district superintendent.

Take a look at the pilot churches inside this issue of the *Cross Connection* on page 5.

## Remembering Golden Cross

**By Woodie Wells**  
Golden Cross Ministry

The Texas Annual Conference Golden Cross program has been providing a healing ministry to persons in need of assistance with medical care since its beginning in 1921. Many persons have been restored to health and have had their faith restored as well, through the generosity of Christians in the local churches and the benevolent medical care of doctors and hospitals throughout the Conference.

The cost of medical care has increased greatly over the years. Due to the rising cost of medical insurance many working families cannot afford medical and health insurance. As the number of uninsured and under insured families increase the requests for assistance from Golden

Cross also increase. Many times Golden Cross gets the doctors or the medical labs to discount the bill. This allows your donation to help more individuals.

In 2004 donations to Golden Cross were \$87,723 whereas in 2005 donations to Golden Cross were \$57,251.

That year, requests for assistance

increased from the previous year by 27% and the amount paid by Golden Cross for medical assistance was \$125,645, compared to \$98,948 the previous year. Many churches were helping families affected by the devastating hurricane season we had in the Gulf Coast Area in 2005. As a result, donations

decreased by 53%.

Although the first Sunday in May is observed by the Texas Annual Conference as Golden Cross Sunday, there are many opportunities throughout the year to make contributions. Many churches have chosen a different Communion Sunday for Golden Cross offerings.

If your church has already given to Golden Cross this year we thank you on behalf of those individuals helped. If your congregation has not made a contribution to Golden Cross this year consider doing so in the next few weeks. Your support of Golden Cross helps many people in our conference. Without donations from the local churches and individuals, this ministry would not be possible.

For more information on the ministry of Golden Cross, call Woodie Wells at 713 521-938 ext 326, or e-mail [wwells@txcumc.org](mailto:wwells@txcumc.org)



# Boy's Ranch in Waco aim for new targets

## Skeet-shooting – a creative tool for ministry

By Kirsten Pasha, Community Relations Officer  
Methodist Children's Home

At the Methodist Children's Home Boys Ranch in Waco, aiming toward goals and shooting for excellence took on a whole new meaning when Life Outdoors Ministries held a day-long skeet-shooting and hunter safety event last month.

haven't been shooting before," Trautmann said. "For the rest of us, it was great practice for the upcoming hunting seasons."

Don Scott, Boys Ranch administrator, agreed that this first-ever event was a "phenomenal" way to let the boys do what

rifle and gun range in Conroe, Texas, and he started the Life Outdoors Ministry four years ago. He said God has brought other professionals into the ministry – like Leon Measures, who's known world-wide for shooting an Aspirin pill in the air with a BB gun.

Measures participated in the Boys Ranch event, which was the ministry's first experience with at-risk youth. Scambray said they felt God called them to work with the Boys Ranch.

"I really feel God wants to do a mighty work at the Boys Ranch," he said. "This ministry is God-inspired; He started it and we follow Him. And we want to be part of the Methodist Children's Home ministry."

Scott said that Scambray and the event leaders shared the gospel not only through a closing mini-sermon but also through their actions. "Their joy was evident in how much they

enjoy life and the outdoors. It was testimony throughout the day," he said.

According to Scambray, 10 of the boys "came to Christ" during the event when they shared the gospel. He plans on following-up with their homeparents, as well as sending Bibles to the boys.

"Even though

we had fun shooting, the sermon was the most significant part of the day, because of those in the group who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior," Trautmann said.

And while the boys hit their targets – whether skeets or circles on a poster – the ministry team did as well.

Scambray said, "If even one of the boys listened to the Word, it was worth it."

kerosene lamps. It has everything to do with daily living shaped by an ever-deepening friendship with God and with other people.

Neither is forgiveness a series of isolated acts. Only when Christians practice forgiveness in ordinary, daily living do they develop the capacity to

## Forgiveness grows when Christians practice speaking the truth in love and offering reconciliation and peace.

pointed out, "There is no future without forgiveness."

This is why forgiveness is such a profound testimony to hope.

It is no wonder that Jesus placed a petition to forgive in the brief prayer he taught his disciples. He spoke directly of forgiveness to Peter, telling him "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times." At his own crucifixion, Jesus responded to those torturing him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Forgiveness became a hallmark of the early church. The Apostle Paul wrote a set of practices for Christians in Ephesus. He admonishes, "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as Christ has forgiven you."

In Colossians he writes, "If anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

In a culture often dominated by strident voices of anger, punishment, and vengeance masquerading as justice, the gentle witness of these Amish is testimony to the power of life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is also a witness to the resilience of a community that lives quite literally according to Jesus' teaching.

Some people will dismiss their witness to Christian forgiveness because of the Amish's quaint lifestyle. A lifestyle of forgiveness has nothing to do with horses and buggies, milk cows and

forgive such horrifying breaches of relationship as the murders of these innocent children. Rarely do Christians develop such a capacity to forgive alone. They need to be a part of a community where forgiveness is practiced daily.

Dr. Greg Jones, Dean of Duke Divinity School wrote a book several years ago titled *Embodying Forgiveness*. He notes that it takes courage to forgive in even small, day-to-day conflicts. Such courage grows in a community which regularly practices reconciliation with God, neighbor and self. Forgiveness grows when Christians practice speaking the truth in love and offering reconciliation and peace. Forgiveness increases when we quietly refuse to join in hate-mongering conversation about people who are different than we are. The capacity to forgive enlarges as we learn to listen carefully to those with whom we disagree.

I hope that you will keep this Amish community, the shooter, and the family of the shooter in your prayers over the next few weeks. I also invite you to join me in pondering their witness of forgiveness and hope. What would such a lifestyle of forgiveness look like for our United Methodist congregations? How might we live differently with one another and with our neighbors? What might forgiveness look like when it is translated into public policy? May the courageous witness of this Amish community continue to inspire us to live more completely in forgiveness and hope.

God bless you,  
Janice Riggle Huie



A boy from the Ranch in Waco learns how to shoot skeet from a Life Outdoors Ministries' trainer.

The Ranch's residents and staff members learned from Life Outdoors Ministries professionals hunting safety tips, how to use shotguns and shoot bows and arrows – all while hearing the gospel.

"We share our knowledge in guns and hunter safety, but also promote the gospel of Jesus Christ – that's our main goal," Mike Scambray, Life Outdoors Ministries director, said. "We want the boys to have fun outdoors and do it safely, but we also want them to know we care about them, and we want to see them grow in Christ."

For Boys Ranch residents, like Mark Trautmann, the event was highly anticipated and enjoyed.

"The skeet shoot was a great experience for those of us who haven't been shooting before," Trautmann said. "For the rest of us, it was great practice for the

they enjoy, while "being around positive, Christian role models who show how to have fun in a



Residents of the Ranch show off their trophies for skeet-shooting, bow and arrow and rifle competition.

responsible manner."

Along with safety training, there were three stations – a skeet shoot, bow and arrow targets and shotgun shooting. At the end of the day, there was a time for sharing, and everyone received a trophy.

"The boys were on cloud nine showing off their trophies. For some of them, it was the first trophy they ever got," Scott said. "Some of the boys were intimidated at first, but their confidence grew, they came together as a team and they cheered for one another."

Scambray manages a skeet, rifle and gun range in Conroe,

# Have you heard of SPIM?

## Center for Missional Excellence spotlight social principles

By Thelma Jones  
Editor, Cross Connection

In May 2006, the Texas Annual Conference introduced and adopted, *Bound For Greater Things*, a new model for ministry for the Conference. It is comprised of four centers of excellence, one of which is the Center for Missional Excellence.

The purpose for the Center for Missional Excellence is to provide and equip leaders who carry forth ministries of mercy, justice and wholeness so that all persons, inside and outside the church, can experience mercy, justice and wholeness in an emotional, physical, financial and spiritual way.

To help the center fulfill its purpose **SPIM** (Social Principles Implementation Ministries) was created. SPIM's primary focus is to pursue the implementation of the social principles of the United Methodist Church, justice concerns and other policy statements on Christian social concerns of the Texas Annual Conference.

"The United Methodist Church has always been concerned with both personal and social wholeness," says Rick Goodrich, who leads the Center for Missional Excellence falls. "The Book of Discipline has an entire section devoted to social issues and concerns."

SPIM is comprised of the following groups in the United Methodist Church:

- Asian Ministries
- Black Methodists for

- Church Renewal COSROW (Commission on Status and Role of Women)
- Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns
- Church and Society
- Disability Concerns
- Hispanic Ministries
- Native American Ministries
- Peace with Justice
- Religion and Race

When asked 'how can this ministry benefit the local church?', Goodrich answered, "The creation of SPIM is an effort to help the local church take seriously the heritage of social wholeness, be cognizant of various social issues and the United Methodist Church's position on these issues and to prayerfully study and discuss these issues in the church."

SPIM will host a two-day retreat, October 27-28, 2006 focusing on training participants in the tools needed for: Personal growth; Relational skills for problem solving; Exploring injustice; History and nature of social change and Community building and action planning

The cost is \$25 and scholarships are available. For registration and more information about the retreat, contact Brenda Hardt at 979-830-5210 or [bbhardt@academicplanet.com](mailto:bbhardt@academicplanet.com).

# Transformation conversations

## Pilot church transformation pastors discuss change process and first meetings with consultant

**Rev. Jean Ferraro**  
East District

**Church:** Attoyac Circuit  
**Pastoral Profile:** One year in circuit appointment; six years in ministry.



Each of the three churches would've had difficulty keeping a full-time pastor by themselves. They decided to link with one another...

Interestingly enough, two of the towns have been athletic rivals for years ... the churches have demonstrated that they're willing to do whatever it takes to keep their church strong.

**Challenges:** In rural areas like this, where there's not much growth, it's difficult to grow the church. So, we're looking for different ways to keep the churches strong.

**Opportunity No. 1:** Attracting young people.

Our culture has changed so dramatically that people no longer need the social outlet of a church. When my parents were young, they didn't have anything else to do. So, they went to church. There are so many things competing for people's time that church is no longer needed to fill that social void.

**Opportunity No. 2:** Outreach and evangelism

When the church realizes that it's not what the world can do for the church ... but what we can do for the world – what we offer to the world – then we'll change the way we do ministry.

That's what we're to be about – not what people can do for us, but what JC can do for them.

I'm proud to say that this a rural East Texas town, but we recently welcomed a black woman and her two little girls – they are the only

two little girls in the church and we love them. And, that's what it's all about.

Each of us has to ask ourselves the really hard questions that we don't want to ask. That's where the growth comes from.

**Rev. Kevin Kissel**  
Southeast District

**Church:** Faith UMC, Orange. A merger of Park Avenue UMC and St. John UMC, as of Jan. 17, 2006

**Pastoral profile:** 16 months in current appointment; nine years in ministry

**Thoughts on transformation:** I felt like (Don Nations) did an excellent job speaking with the members of the church...helping them understand what this process is all about.

Probably one of the biggest benefits is he's going to be offering them some far out ideas – things to help them stretch and things they may never have considered before.

To have an additional person come in with fresh eyes and fresh ideas, who has no personal agenda in the church – other than helping



Our culture has changed so dramatically that people no longer need the social outlet of a church ... There are so many things competing for people's time that church is no longer needed to fill that social void.

-- Rev. Jean Ferraro

it succeed – is really good.

I see what he's doing as helping us move along that road of transformation more quickly. When you can pick up tips from people who've been there and done that – and did it well – it helps keep you

from reinventing the wheel.

It's no telling where God will have us be five years from now. My guess is three years from now, we may well be somewhere it would've taken seven or eight years to get there on our own ...

No one's doing the work for us, but giving tips and guidance is going to be very critical in us becoming a transforming church.

**Challenges:** Having just merged churches with the goal of relocating – that is a huge task. Don made some recommendations as to how we can best utilize that land to our advantage ... One of the things that struck me, was ways to generate income. Our eyes are opened to new possibilities on how to use what we already have to our advantage.

**Opportunity:** Relocation is also our biggest opportunity, we'll be redefining who we are as we move into a new community. If we do things well, by the Grace of God, we will make a more significant impact in our community in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Rev. Nita Newman**  
West District

**Church:** Mount Pleasant UMC, Thorndale  
**Pastoral profile:** 16 months in



current appointment; eight years in ministry.

**Thoughts on transformation:** We have access to expertise that we never would have had. The transformation process has forced us to organize our thinking, as far as who we are as a church and where we want to go.

I am personally very excited. We did this at Bay Harbor in League City, where I was before. Hired an independent consultant, and it worked. It works if everyone is behind you.

**Challenges:** About 50 percent of the people in the church, don't necessarily want it to grow. The other 50 percent says: "We've got to go forward, we're out of space, our church is growing so fast."

I think what happening is wonderful, but I think what was left out was the emotional impact on a congregation.

**Opportunities:** It's a growing community, with retirees coming in from the Austin and Houston.

There are 100 on rolls. There were about 30 when I came, and within 10 months, attendance was nearly 60.

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# Transformation conversations

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## Rev. Carol Heath

Northwest District

### Church:

Glenwood UMC, Tyler

### Pastoral profile:

At current

appointment

since June; this is her first appointment.

**Thoughts on transformation:** I

am exceedingly excited about it. The congregation is – this month – celebrating our 69<sup>th</sup> birthday. They are a church with a history of having been very vibrant in the past. Of course, all churches go through cycles. And, not just churches, but any organization tends to go into decline, unless we are continuously revisinging ourselves.

We know we're going to have to build that bridge as we walk on it. The conference is giving us terrific tools to help us get there.

**Challenges:** I think our biggest challenge is financial. We have a tremendous physical plant. We could easily have worship for 1,000 people on Sunday in two services, making no changes. Currently, we have 75 or 80 in worship supporting that physical plant. That obligation is so large, that it doesn't give us the resources to fund transformation.

There are some monetary considerations that go along with transformation, so that will be a challenge.

**Opportunities:** Reaching and keeping the community

We are in a location that is exceedingly diverse ... Two blocks from the church, is a home valued at \$2 million in one direction. In the other direction, is a home that is filled with migrant workers. I see that as being a tremendous opportunity, as well as a challenge, but an opportunity. Our worship is more of a liturgical style, not very contemporary ... what people are seeking is an authentic encounter with God.

While a contemporary style may draw more people in, it won't keep them there if the encounter is not authentic.

I tell them all the time that my goal is to retire at Glenwood. Why do pastors ask for another appointment? So they can have a larger church. I'm just going to grow my own.

*The next edition of Cross Connectin will include interviews with pastors of five more of the pilot transformation churches.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### October 22 and 29, 2006

"Gift from the Heart," presented by St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston is a two-part seminar during which an attorney, a minister, a physician and a psychologist will examine end-of-life issues.

Open to the community and free of charge, the seminar will take place in the Activity Center located on the second floor of the sanctuary building at 5501 Main Street. Presentations by the attorney and minister will take place on October 22, 2006 and presentations by the physician and psychologist will take place on October 29, 2006.

Issues to be covered and by whom are:

Attorney – Forms needed including "Do Not Resuscitate" (DNR), other medical directives and the medical power of attorney plus the need for a will, how to add to a will or make changes to it.

Minister – Life after death, funeral procedures

Physician – Types of care and heroic measures, doctor's view of the DNR and other medical directives; types of decisions family members can make; ventilator and feeding tube issues.

Psychologist – Sharing wishes with family, putting family members in charge, and how

### October 31, 2006

Newly formed *Older Adult Ministries Networking Fellowship* will host its Kick-Off luncheon Tuesday, October 31, 2006 at Blueridge United Methodist Church located at 2929 Reed Road, Houston, Texas.

The new Fellowship is designed to provide training, resources, information, support and encouragement for those working in Older Adult Ministries, as well as plan execute and administer events for local churches and leaders of Older Adults. The time for the event is 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the cost is \$5.

For more information or to make reservations, contact Reverend Ellen Willett, First United Methodist Church, Huntsville at 936-295-5441 or [ewillett@huntsvillefumc.org](mailto:ewillett@huntsvillefumc.org).

### November 12-13, 2006

First United Methodist Church, Beaumont will host the annual Hearn Lectures/Revival. This year's speaker is Dr. Zan Wesley Holmes, Jr., Pastor Emeritus of St. Luke Community United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Holmes is also Adjunct Professor of Preaching at Perkins School of Theology.

Following is the agenda for the event:

**Sunday, November 12, 2006** – 10:45 a.m., "Are We Hung Up on Our Past Hang-

6 p.m., "Are We Good Stewards of Our Wounds?"

### **Monday, November 13, 2006**

– 12 noon, a meeting and luncheon will be held for pastors. Dr. Holmes will speak on "Are We Participating in the Process of Pursuing Our God-given Preaching Potential?" Cost is \$5 and reservations are requested. Contact the church office at 409-832-0295.

**Monday Evening, 7 p.m.,** "Are We Getting It All Together?"

All worship services will be held in the church sanctuary located at 701 Calder Avenue, Beaumont, Texas.

### December 2, 2006

Foundry United Methodist Church Chapter of Celebration, A Woman to Woman Ministry invites you to join them for their Christmas celebration scheduled Saturday, December 2, 2006 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Joanna Weaver, author of "Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World," will be the guest speaker. Bring a friend or family member for a morning of lighthearted, festive fellowship. Foundry UMC is located at 8350 Jones Road, Houston, Texas.

For more information, please see [www.foundrychurch.org](http://www.foundrychurch.org) and click on "Events," or call Lynda Zelenka at 713-937-9388, ext. 106 or [www.foundryfamily.org](http://www.foundryfamily.org).

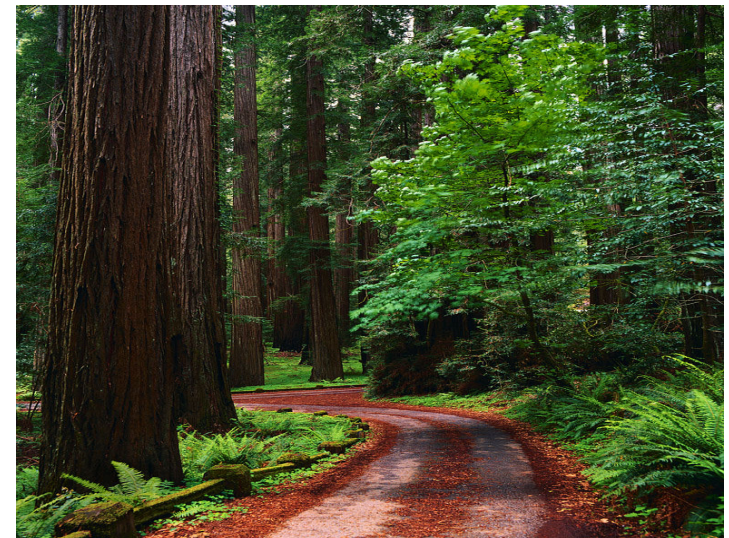
## Youth camp Activity Update

### **Mid Winter Events at Lakeview will include:**

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Winder Carnival "Grabbed by Grace" November 3-5, 2006. Rev. Morris Mathis and Laura Stinnett leadership team

### **Summer Camping experiences at Lakeview will include:**

June 11-15, 2007 Conference-wide Senior High Camp for students who have completed 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.



Junior High Winterfest I January 12-14, 2007. Rev. David Brasher and Rev. Jason Burnham, leadership team

Junior High Winterfest II January 19-21, 2007. Rev. Mike Mayhugh and Scott Bryant, leadership team

Senior High Mid Winter I January 26-28, 2007. Boyd Goodloe and Rev. Thomas Walker, leadership team

Senior High Mid Winter II February 2-4, 2007. Tiffin Wilsford and Rev. Laurinda Kwiatkowski, leadership team

The remaining camp experiences are by districts and will be for students who have completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade and younger.

June 18-22, 2007. Southwest District Camp.

June 25-29, 2007 South District Camp

July 2-6, 2007 Southeast District Camp

July 9-13, 2007 Central South and Central North District Camp

July 16-20, 2007 East and West District Camp

July 23-27, 2007 North and Northwest District Camp