

Making Connections



East District Superintendent Keith Whitaker greets Making Connections tour participants in his district. Whitaker took a moment to introduce the book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, which his pastors will soon begin studying. Bishop Janice Riggle Huie will host a teaching tour on the book in 2008.

See story on page 5.

Volunteers report for duty

Lon Morris students commit to dental mission project

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Texas Annual Conference
Director of Communications

More than 400 volunteers are registered to serve in the upcoming Texas Mission of Mercy dental project – and more than 50 of them are coming from Lon Morris College.

Fifty volunteers would be a fantastic commitment from any college or ministry. It's especially significant, since the enrollment of Lon Morris College in Jacksonville is about 450 students. Roughly 10 percent of the student body is participating – a tithe of student time and talent.

An additional nine staffers will serve alongside the students at the November 2-3 event, including Assistant Chaplain Rev. Rhett Ansley and Lon Morris President Miles McCall.

"This is a great opportunity to encourage students to be in mission and to open their eyes to the number of people who don't have quality care," Ansley said. "Our students are really excited about it. They promoted it among one another and encouraged friends to go on the trip.

"I set a goal of 20 students – they blew that goal out of the water!"

Many of the students have participated in mission trips through their churches during high school, but have not had the opportunity now that they are away at college.

Ansley prays that this mission trip is just the beginning. There are plans to design an "alternate

spring break" that will focus on service.

Sign up today

Another 200 volunteers still are needed to serve an estimated 1,000 patients in the Spring Branch area of Houston. Past TMOMs have been held throughout the state, in Austin, Dallas, Hereford and Tyler.

Wesley Foundations and other college groups, Sunday school classes, mission groups, men's and women's organizations and youth are invited to participate in this hands-on mission project.

Registering is easy. Sign up

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Cabinet takes a 'hands-on' approach to mission project



Rev. Richard Burnham, District Superintendent for the Southeast District makes good use of the circular saw during the Cabinet's trip to Beaumont, Texas.

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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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Texas Annual Conference Endorses Candidates, considers legislation

By Jill Krone
TAC Delegation Communications



Earl Bledsoe

The delegates of the Texas Annual Conference gathered at Morton Lodge at Lakeview Conference Center for two days of meetings in September. Forty-seven of the 54 elected delegates were present for the Saturday session which dealt with finalizing the Episcopal endorsement process.

During this time, delegates voted to endorse two clergy for Episcopal consideration. Rev. Earl Bledsoe and Rev. Jim Welch will move forward in the process which includes being interviewed by delegates within other Conferences of the South Central Jurisdiction.

Rev. Jim Foster was also in consideration for Episcopal endorsement but withdrew his name during the balloting process to enable his focus to remain with the members of his church who have recently entered into a capital campaign.

Friday night, delegates reviewed legislation that is to be presented during General Conference, scheduled for April 23 – May 2, 2008 in Fort Worth, Texas. Legislation being evaluated included resolutions and studies authored by The General Committee on Episcopacy, various general agencies of the church, the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM).

Legislative topics discussed included resolutions on clergy promotion and modeling of generous giving and Biblical principals; considerations for the filling of Episcopal vacancies; World Service Advance and Specials funding; social screening issues as related to endowment investing practices; accountability issues for clergy through Bishops; and tying bishop's evaluations to valuing apportionment histories.

Delegates also had the opportunity to look at the GCFA



Jim Welch

budget recommendation for apportionments to Annual Conferences. The budget recommendation will be around \$642 million for the quadrennial. On average, it would work out to be about 25% of the Annual Conference budget.

According to the United Methodist Book of Discipline, the budget is to be recommended by GCFA and will go to plenary as well as to legislative committee. Legislation reviewed at this meeting was just a small percentage of the estimated better than 2000 resolutions to be presented to specific legislative committees at General Conference.

Rev. Chap Temple, a General Conference delegate, in conjunction with the Board of Ordained Ministry was authorized by a vote of the delegation to write and promote legislation. The tenure of this legislation will focus on giving full-time local pastors full right to vote.

This was initiated from discussion on the floor at 2007 Annual Conference as relates to the creation of a resolution in favor of giving full-time local pastors a full vote in all areas of Conference business. It was decided that the onus for perfecting the language of this resolution rests with the Delegation. Rev. Temple will distribute the created legislation to the delegation for consultation prior to the submission deadline of October 26.

The next gathering of the Delegation will be on December 1, 2007, at Southwestern University. This will be a one-day meeting for delegates from throughout the South Central Jurisdiction.

The purpose of this meeting is to create holy conferencing and open communication among delegates from the Conferences of this jurisdiction.

United Methodist Women show Texas size hospitality

By Charlene Fowler
UMW Communications Coordinator

A Texas size welcome was given to Kyung Za Yim, President of Women's Division at the Conference United Methodist Women's Fall Festival and annual meeting, at Lakeview Conference Retreat Center.

The Saturday meeting was attended by approximately 335 women and guests. A Friday evening banquet hosted 165, including several District Superintendents attending prior to their meeting on General Conference items the next day. In honor of Mrs. Yim and the theme, "Enchantment of the Orient" attendees were asked to dress in Asian attire for the banquet. Yim is a native of Seoul, Korea. Living through hunger and poverty, she and her family were displaced to the southern parts of Korea.

She attended Ewha Girl's High School, a well known and respected school founded by Women's Society of Christian Service. Mrs. Yim received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing



Kyung Za Yim

After the banquet program, Yim answered questions about issues and goals of

United Methodist Women. "Three goals are the focus of Women's Division," she said, "An emphasis on spiritual formation to enable mission ministry, leadership development, and an awareness and participation in social justice issues."

Membership in United Methodist Women is down from 1 million to 800,000. However, new communities (units) continue to be formed. The online community is now around 2,500 women who share experiences by computer.

Young women are changing the entire atmosphere of UMW. "We are adapting to new technologies and new ways of thinking and doing things. We must



A Texas sized gift: UMW president, Thebe Worden presents Kyung Za Yim with a gift of an afghan. Yim said it would keep her warm in the New York winters.

from Seoul National University where she worked until she came to the U.S. in 1969.

Her nursing career has led Kyung to positions as a nurse in community hospitals, a home care advocate in public policy and a leader in patient education workshops. She is a lay member of the New York Conference and has served in a variety of mission settings on different levels of United Methodist Women.

not be afraid to change," Yim said. Younger women are being hired and trained, jobs and responsibilities consolidated, quadrennial meeting events consolidated with schools of missions, all to save dollars at Women's Division.

Kyung Za Yim's early life and present message is a testimony to "what we do in UMW

Focus on Mission

North and Northwest district youth get connected with UMCOR

By Rev. Tommy Earl Burton, Reeves Chapel UMC and
Lonna Nunn, North District Conference Secretary

Passionate worship and passionate service was the theme for the Mid-High camp for the North and Northwest districts camp this year. Due to the cancellation of a mission project earlier, *missions* became the new focus for the event.

Our replacement project was health kits for UMCOR. We were able to raise a total of \$985 in just two short weeks! We also received donations of items that

remaining funds was sent to the Texas Conference to assist with the funding of flood buckets for relief efforts.

Presentations on UM Army were given by Conference Director for UM Army, David Sabom and UM Army's Conference Coordinator, Phyllis Pubentz.

Under the direction of Ms. Lonna Nunn (North District Office - Texarkana), Rev. Jesse



A successful camp retreat! The participants of the Mid-High camp for the North and Northwest districts.

make up health kits!

A total of \$879.36 was spent creating 232 health kits. Leftover items such as soap, toothpaste, combs, fingernail clippers, and fingernail files was delivered to the Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La. A check for \$105.64 representing the

Brannen (Cheatham Memorial UMC) with Rev. Tommy Earl Burton as the Mission Coordinator (Reeves Chapel UMC), the missions project for the North-Northwest District Mid-High Camp was a huge success.

Dental mission project gets underway

Continued from page 1

online at www.tdasf.org/houston, or, those without access to the internet may call Jacque Banman, associate director of

escort patients throughout the treatment process and more.

For more information or to register, visit

“I set a goal of 20 students – they blew that goal out of the water!”

*Rev. Rhett Ansley
Assistant Chaplain, Lon Morris College*

the Center for Missional Excellence, at 713-521-9383.

Volunteers are needed to set up and tear down the event; greet patients; serve food; take vital signs; complete data entry;

www.tdasf.org/houston.

For information on sponsorship opportunities contact Rev. Mark Woodward, pastor of West University UMC and TMOM co-chair, at 713-666-8111.

‘Thread of hope’

Cabinet offers hope through hands-on mission and service

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

Texas Annual Conference cabinet members recently traveled from all corners of the conference for a day-of-service to others in the Beaumont area.

The District superintendents, directors of the Centers of Excellence and Bishop Janice Riggle Huie came together to form three teams dedicated to replacing and reframing windows, demolishing damaged walls, ceilings and porches and reconstruction.

Southeast District Superintendent Rev. Richard Burnham invited the cabinet to the Golden Triangle to serve those who are still recovering from Hurricane Rita, which devastated the area two years ago. The event opened with a Remembrance of Baptism worship service at China UMC that affirms the call of all who are baptized to make disciples.

Having repaired more than 400 homes, the Rita Recovery Office has just as many cases on their waiting list. So, the sacrifice of time and service was appreciated by homeowners, such as

Frustrated by the complicated and long application processes for help and numerous scams, Thompson's husband, Gary is the one who convinced her to apply in spring 2007.

“I was so skeptical, I didn't want to apply,” she said. “Gary

walls and the porch, and started adding new wood in its place.

Still, the house is not inhabitable – like so many others in the Golden Triangle. But, each team's effort places the Thompsons one step closer to complete recovery.



Homeowner, Gary Thompson and East District Superintendent, Rev. Keith Whitaker place new plywood on the ceiling.

said, ‘You never know – something good may come of it.’”

Every thread counts

Some good did come of it. The first team came from

And, that was the message Rev. Tom Hazelwood, associate general secretary of UMCOR, shared with the team in its closing worship service at Sabine Pass UMC.

“What we do in ministry, is we offer threads of hope,” Hazelwood said. “Each individual thread may not seem like much. But when twisted and twined together ... before long, you've got something you can hold onto.”

Hazelwood, who has responded to disasters worldwide and served alongside the cabinet in Beaumont, commended the cabinet on their efforts.

“You offer a thread of hope when you, a district superintendent, show up out here in a place where people are struggling,” Hazelwood said. “You offer a thread of hope by your very presence ... The thread you offer, may be the most important thread someone receives.”

To help those recovering from Hurricane Rita, contact the Rita Recovery office at 409-892-0140 or visit the Texas Annual Conference web site, www.txcumc.org, click on the ‘Missions’ button and select, Rita Recovery.



Rev. Earl Bledsoe, West District Superintendent removes rotted wood from the ceiling in the home of Debra and Gary Thompson.

Gary and Debra Thompson.

“The morning they showed up, I just wanted to cry,” said Debra Thompson. “Every time I see Dan (from Rita Recovery), I'm thankful, and I just continue to pray for him.”

Missouri in July and repaired the roof. The second team came from Ohio, and dry walled the living room and made repairs in the bathroom. Then, the cabinet came and removed rotted wood from the bedroom ceilings and

Evangelism is the focus for Native American ministries

By Linda Green
United Methodist News Service

Promoting evangelism, assisting in new church starts and revitalizing existing congregations are the plans of the task force charged with encouraging Native American participation in the life of The United Methodist Church.

The evangelistic focus for the Native American Comprehensive Plan parallels the denomination's aggressive vision of "Path One," the newly organized strategy team on new congregational development under the United Methodist Board of Discipleship.

Meeting Sept. 27 in Reno, Nev., the task force visualized ways over the next four years to be part of the renewed emphasis on church growth in The United Methodist Church. The plan also seeks new ways to address poverty in Native America and provide native resources for the church and world.

The Texas Annual Conference was represented at the national conference in Reno, Nevada. Dr. Glenna Brayton, chair of Texas Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) presented a workshop on fund-raising for new ministries at the event.

Bishop Bob Hayes, Jr. of the Oklahoma and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences (OIMC) will be one of the featured speakers and preaches at a Native American worship service in the Texas Conference in 2008.

"Being closely affiliated with the OIMC, Bishop Hayes understands the need for Native American congregations, especially those in urban areas such as Houston," says Brayton. "With a documented population of over 33,000 Native Americans in Harris County alone, Houston is a prime location for Christian outreach among Native people."

One of the key outreach activities of CONAM is the 'Pow Wow,' an event whose focus is to raise awareness of the Native American culture in the Conference is held annually. This year, it will be held November 17, 2007.

In the United States, there are more than 100 United Methodist Native American churches, ministries and organizations, and an estimated 18,000 Native Americans among the denomination's 8 million U.S. members.

The plan seeks to work with at least two annual (regional) conferences a year to begin new Native American churches or faith communities. The plan also seeks to help revitalize urban, rural and reservation churches.

"Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of faith communities and congregations across the United States and make new Native American disciples of Jesus Christ," according to the Rev. Anita Phillips, the plan's executive director.

Aligning with Path One

Phillips calls Path One an exciting venture because the denomination "is no longer hiding from the reality of declining numbers, but rather we are claiming a future and an identity in Jesus Christ." Path One, she said, "approaches the decline in the U.S. church by believing that Creator God has great work for the U.S. church to accomplish in building the kingdom."

Since 1964, the denomination has experienced a 27 percent U.S. membership decline despite a 54 percent population explosion. The Path One team, organized earlier this year, seeks to help the church start 650 new United Methodist congregations by 2012. The new emphasis on church growth aims to return the denomination to its evangelistic heritage of starting a new congregation every day.

The Native American Comprehensive Plan and its 19-member task force were created under a mandate by the 1992 General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body, to help United Methodists view Native Americans as partners in ministry rather than as a mission of the church. It seeks to make disciples for Jesus Christ within the Native American community while recognizing the unique cultures and languages of native people.

Specifically, the plan's mandate is to develop and strengthen native congregations, ministries and fellowships; train and develop native leaders; and encourage their contributions to the life of the church. Key to each area is contributions that Native American cultures and spiritual expression bring to the mission of the whole church.

The focus on new church starts and revitalization of Native American congregations is the genesis behind the plan's request to the 2008 General Conference to move from the umbrella of the church's Board of Global Ministries to its Board of Discipleship, according to the Rev. David Wilson, chairman of the plan.

"We are shifting from being a mission to reminding the church of what we contribute to its life and our wanting to be a resource for the denomination. We are more than a mission. We are viable and have contributions to make to the church," Wilson said.

Studying evangelism

Beginning next Feb. 14-15 in Fort Worth, Texas, the plan begins a series of one-day "listening posts" among clergy and laity in regions where native churches and communities exist. Native Americans are invited to share information and testimony on presenting the Gospel within Native America.

"We will be trying to get feedback from local churches on how we can better talk about evangelism and new church starts," Wilson said.

Native American ministries exist throughout the United States. The Bureau of Indian Affairs recognizes 561 tribal governments in the country, and the 2003 U.S. census estimates there are more than 2.7 million Native Americans.

For more information regarding Native American ministry in the Texas Annual Conference, contact Dr. Glenna Brayton at 713-557-8756 or Kyker.brayton@juno.com.

Third Sunday worship is at 6 p.m. at Shepherd Drive Fellowship, 600 Shepherd Drive, Houston, Texas.

Shepherd Drive Fellowship is an outreach ministry of Memorial Drive United Methodist Church.

Green is a United Methodist News Service news writer based in Nashville, Tennessee.

Dr. Glenna Kyker-Brayton, chair of the Texas Committee on Native American Ministries also contributed to this article.



Top: The Wounded Warrior's Gourd Society leads the grand entry for the 2006 Pow Wow.

Middle: Female and male dancers participate in the event.

Bottom: Males dancers, Sage Beene (left) and Akhyka Pewo (right) join in the dancing.

Photos courtesy of Donna Reimers of New Dirt Images.

Making Connections

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

Nearly 400 Methodists recently made connections that will make their ministries more fruitful.

The Texas Annual Conference Making Connections tour traveled throughout the bounds of the conference – starting in Houston and stopping in Beaumont, Bryan-College Station, Lufkin, Linden and Tyler.

For the third year, conference staff members set out to meet the people they serve daily, answer questions and educate people on the newest developments in the respective Centers for Excellence. Conference consultants and colleagues from the The Methodist Hospital and the Texas Annual Conference Methodist Foundation joined the staff in this endeavor.

Leading laity

The first workshop Carol Hardistey attended addressed clergy payroll. Hardistey, who is the treasurer at St. Paul's UMC in Tyler, decided that night that she would participate in the remaining Making Connections visits.

"I feel I have so much to learn, and you all are offering so much to help," Hardistey said. "There's so many sessions that I couldn't attend them all ... So, I thought I'd travel to those I could reach in a reasonable

amount of time."

As promised, she attended workshops in Lufkin, Linden and Tyler.

"That's testimony to the value of the experience," said Rev. B.T. Williamson, director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, when he acknowledged Hardistey in Tyler. "We value her being with us, and we value each of you being here."

Hardistey was not alone in her commitment. Helen Terpstra, director of lay ministries and church secretary at First UMC Humble, participated in the Making Connections workshops in Bryan-College Station. She had a previously-scheduled church commitment on the date of the event scheduled closest to her, so she and several other members of the church made the drive to participate in another district.

"When I commit to something, I am committed to it," she said during the communications workshop. "I want to do whatever it takes, to learn whatever I can to help the ministries I'm involved in."

Real value

The Making Connections tour plants seeds of excellence in clergy and laity conference wide. The true value of those seeds cannot be measured today – but will be evident as congregations

continue to transform and become more fruitful.

Rev. Rick Goodrich, assistant to the Bishop and director of the Center for Missional Excellence, grounded each gathering in scripture through a short devotional that centered on John 14.

By way of introduction, he reminded people of the popular 1980s advertising that asked "Where's the beef?"

"The call [Bishop Huie] gave to the Annual Conference – and she didn't use these exact words – was 'Where's the fruit?'" Goodrich said. "Since then, everything we've been doing is to bring fruitfulness to local congregations, clergy, districts and the conference center ... to be what Christ called us to be – fruitful in making disciples in his name."

Goodrich also noted that Making Connections is designed to be a dialogue: "It's also a time to hear from you – to hear what you need from us to bear fruit as a church, as a district."

To access some of the resources shared during the Making Connections tour, visit www.txcumc.org/makingconnectionsresources.

To contact a Center of Excellence director, call 713-521-9383 or visit www.txcumc.org and click the Administration tab.



Above: Dr. Karen Dorris, Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence is all smiles as she prepares to share information on local church transformation.

Middle: Ivan Krowl, Information Technology Manager and Rev. B. T. Williamson, Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence chat with individuals attending the workshops.

Bottom Right: Signs highlighting the location of available workshops lined the hallway at Linden UMC.

Couple Embodies Extravagant Generosity

By Monroe Walker
Lakeview Conference Retreat Center

Although the dictionary defines "generous" as, liberal in giving or sharing; unselfish; a picture of Willard H. and Sarah D. George next to this word would be just as meaningful!

Just ask anyone who knew Willard and Sarah and they will tell you this couple embodied the full meaning of "generosity." Throughout their lives, the Georges were prime examples of

giving people. They gave of their time, talents, and resources to many causes and charities.

Whether it was teaching college students at

Henderson County Junior College, or serving in various ways at First UMC

Athens, the Georges were a quiet, unassuming couple who always gave their best. Willard

and Sarah are an example of integrity, commitment, and generosity.

And now, even after their passing, their bold example of giving continues on. Through their living trust, Willard and Sarah have made a significant gift to the Lakeview Permanent Endowment Fund as a way to continue to help others. We celebrate the lives of Willard H. and Sarah D. George and embrace the rich example of Christian faith and generosity they so passionately displayed.

To learn more about the Lakeview Permanent Endowment, call Rev. Von Dawson at 903-538-2711.



Port Arthur Temple celebrates renovation of sanctuary destroyed in Hurricane Rita

By Janet Cline



Pastor Chuck Huffman, building committee chair, Bill Coons and Port Arthur Mayor, Deloris Prince cut the ribbon for the new sanctuary.

More than 500 new and veteran members of Port Arthur's United Methodist Temple and their guests ceremonially cut the ribbon September 30 and joined in a worship celebration for the church's renovated sanctuary.

Calling it "a great day to celebrate in the Lord," Pastor Chuck Huffman greeted worshippers and pointed out new seating, lighting and audio-visual capabilities of the new space, new entrance hall and gathering rooms, and the church's new Rodgers organ. The choir offertory acknowledged the presence of "Jesus, Lord Jesus...in this very room."

It's been two years since a storm-chastened bunch of worshippers, many of them in tears, rejoiced at being back together in the United Methodist Temple's Scott Hall. They embraced in heartfelt relief, even as they grieved the loss of the church's sanctuary to Hurricane Rita.

"We were all a little shook up by damages to our own homes, and then we saw the church, with its back wall out and the memorial cross lying on the ground," said one longtime church member, "but God is good, and at least we were together again."

After a year of planning by the church's building committee and architects, the sanctuary was turned from its old "long-and-narrow" orientation to the more

stained glass from sanctuary windows to building committee chairman Bill Coons and other committee members.

Insurance and an aggressive



The United Methodist Temple memorial cross and back wall of the sanctuary was destroyed by Hurricane Rita in 2005.

modern "wide and welcoming" format. An open chancel provides space for all types of worship, including the traditional service's choir, the contemporary service's praise band, and other dramatic, dance, and bell choir performances.

Huffman presented crosses and plaques made by a church member from fragments of

building fund campaign provided the wherewithal for the renovation. Still to be done are the organ pipes, new flooring throughout the church educational wings, playgrounds, and a new rose window above the chancel.

UMW show Texas size hospitality at retreat

Continued from page 2

has far-reaching implications for women around the globe, who learn that God is their God and nothing is impossible with God," and that "mission money spent changes lives of women, children and youth throughout

3,803 kits, flood buckets and spare parts was part of the opening plenary on Saturday morning. A collection of \$1,500 was also sent to UMCOR for their shipping costs.

Seven educational and social

"We are adapting to new technologies and new ways of thinking and doing things. We must not be afraid to change."

*Kyung Za Yim
President, Women's Division
General Board of Global Ministries*

the world."

Two special guests in attendance for the weekend were Rev. Richard Laster and his wife Susan. Rev. Laster was the recipient of the 2007 Special Mission Recognition award.

Conference President Thebe Worden presented Rev. Laster a SMR pen with two diamonds for

issue oriented focus groups were also part of Saturday's agenda. Of special interest to many was the focus group on immigration, led by immigration specialist and lawyer Linda Vega.

A busy, mission oriented fellowship filled weekend which closed with a communion service led by Rev. Von Dawson.



Rev. Richard Laster, recipient of the 2007 Special Mission Recognition award exhibits his passion for mission by pointing out areas where the Texas Conference is involved in mission projects.

his long history of mission ministry and support for United Methodist Women.

Local units donated \$2,000 in honor of Rev. Laster with the funds going to Mission Giving.

UMCOR health kits for the Conference's "Hands-on Project," were collected over the weekend.

A dedication service for

"We United Methodist Women have to look seriously to the fundamentals of the Christian faith and our beliefs, enlist power of the Holy Spirit, glorify God and love our neighbors. We are challenged to take a leap of faith in doing work of UMW. We can be proud of what we do," said Yim.

Pastor uses Internet as her pulpit, gathering place

By Linda Green
United Methodist News Service

The pastor of a newly created United Methodist church in Houston is using the Internet as her pulpit and gathering place until a physical building is constructed.

nection, provides information about the church, its ministry and plans.

Building on technology

Nu Faith "is a creative way to

Houston. The new church's vision is to promote peace, grace, mercy and love and be a community of believers who will pray together, worship, serve and study.

King says many churches

study is conducted online and at King's home.

A "Living into Our Faith" study of the Book of James began Aug. 30. On the first and third Thursdays at 6:30 p.m., "A Study at the House" explores a passage from James. At 8:45 p.m., the study goes online and is interactive.

"It is like having a talk show," King said. People can plug in through a site called TalkShoe, listen and talk, or they can listen to the entire taped program after the online study ends at 9:30. "It is growing," she said.

The virtual Bible study is a response to people ages 24-45, young families and those who cannot attend traditional Bible studies.

King also provides weekly audio and Web site reflections.

Reaching young adults

members having not helped the Word become relevant to where they are."

King said many traditional churches are "Sunday only" while the Nu Faith virtual church is everyday. A person seeking a reflection, a word or to express a concern can go to nufaith.org any time for spiritual formation. "It makes God present and real where they are," King said.

Because the Internet is an avenue that people use to make social connections today, King believes God is calling the church to make e-connections for spiritual growth.

"If I am a person living in the 21st century and technology is part of every aspect of my life, why would I ignore that in building up my spirituality? ... People can find everything on the Web — love, money, jobs. Why take

Jesus out of that equation if the Scripture says our God is everywhere?"

Nu Faith is one of 13 churches to be started by the Texas Annual Conference before the end of 2008. Churches are being established in Tyler, Port Arthur and Houston and its suburbs. Several of the new church starts target specific demographics such as young adults, ex-prisoners and Hispanics.

Efforts to build new congregations in Texas are part of Path One, a United Methodist Board of Discipleship initiative seeking to help The United Methodist Church start 650 new churches by 2012. The new emphasis on

church growth is a return to the church's evangelistic effort to begin a new congregation every day.

**Green is a United Methodist News Service news writer based in Nashville, Tennessee.*

"Virtual church helps us to reach people who are living up the street and around the world while sharing the love of Jesus Christ online."

Rev. Jacqui King

Nu Faith Community United Methodist Church, created last June by the Texas Annual (regional) Conference, exists now at www.nufaith.org. The Rev.

Jacqui King uses the Internet to preach, evangelize and provide ministry and to solidify a community of faith within a virtual experience.

"Nu Faith is really an opportunity to experience God in a brand new way in a brand new faith community," King said. "It is also a chance to just make disciples for Jesus Christ in a different kind of way."

King says there are people wanting to know God who have visited churches, but they did not stay because they found those congregations lacking in energy, passion and technology. "Nu Faith is a way for people to allow God to meet them right where they are," she said. "At Nu Faith, I

want to be able to help them encounter God today."

The Internet allows King and a 25-member core group of wired individuals to connect with others and introduce them to the Nu Faith community. A semimonthly e-mail newsletter, called e-con-

nection, provides information about the church, its ministry and plans. "Virtual church helps

experience God through interactive expressions of love, grace and hope, which use many diverse technological formats," King said.

have a presence on the World Wide Web; however, the Internet was not how those churches came into existence. "The Web was either ... added after the fact or



The Rev. Jacqui King, pastor of a new church organizing in Houston called Nu Faith Community UMC, uses the internet to preach and connect with members of the virtual church.

us to reach people who are living up the street and around the world while sharing the love of Jesus Christ online."

The church will be launched next April 6 in a temporary location before a building is constructed on a 10-acre site in north

something else," said King. "They are not looking for it to be the DNA or the primary structure of the church. We are looking for technology to be our strength and major element."

In addition to promoting the new church on the Web, a Bible

King says a virtual-faith experience is a way to reach a generation that is not connected to any church. She says there are many reasons for the absence of young adults in many traditional Protestant denominations, but among them is "churches and



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Fellowship Opportunities

Moody Memorial UMC Seaside Treasure Festival

The ninth annual Seaside Treasure Festival will be on Saturday, November 17, 2007 from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.. Seaside features over 100 arts and crafts vendors, a gourmet lunch in the Seaside Cafe, a fabulous silent auction, entertainment, and much more.

Join the fun at Moody Memorial First United Methodist Church, 53rd and Avenue U, just two blocks off the seawall. Festival proceeds support mission and outreach work in the Galveston area. Admission is free. To request more information, email stf@moody.org or call 409-744-4526, extension 783 and leave a message.

First UMC, Trinity, Texas Heritage Sunday

First UMC will celebrate their 135th anniversary on Sunday October 28, 2007. The church was founded the same year as the town in 1872.

Former members and pastors are invited to share this special day. Rev. Ed Lamb, former pastor will be the guest speaker at the 11 a.m. service.

Following the service lunch will be served. A display of church memorabilia along with an updated church history booklet will be on display.

Mission Opportunities

F.O.A.M. to Tour Servants of Christ UM Parish

The fellowship of Older Adults Ministries (F.O.A.M.) will have its next meeting and tour the new Servants of Christ United Methodist Parish.

The Parish is comprised of four combined churches that offer joint mission programs and ministries to their communities such as Shalom Health Ministry, Crossroads at Park Place, Technology for All, and the Mission Milby Community Development Corporation.

The F.O.A.M. tour is scheduled for Tuesday, October 30 at 10:30 a.m. Lunch is a \$6 donation.

Reservations can be made by contacting Dorothy Fontana, 713-402-5031, dfontana@stlukes-hou.org or Marlys Barry, 713-408-5008, mbarry@stlukes-hou.org at St. Luke's UMC. Older adults in the greater Houston area are invited to attend.

Volunteers Needed: Texas Mission of Mercy Dental Project unites hundreds of dentists, dental professionals and volunteers to provide improved dental care access to the community. Thursday - Saturday, **November 1 - 3**, Spring Branch Development Center/San Jose Clinic, 8575 Pitner, Houston, 77080. Contact Jacque Banman, 713-521-9383, banman@txcumc.org. Volunteer Training/Registration Dinner: November 1, 6:30 p.m. Sponsored by: Texas Dental Association Smiles Foundation, www.tdasf.org; Texas Annual Conference, and The Methodist Hospital.

Learning Opportunities

Friday, October 26 (7-9 p.m.) First UMC Missouri City is bringing the nationally acclaimed *Smart Discipline* workshop presented by Larry J. Koenig, Ph.D., to the Methodist Day School.

This workshop is designed for parents, grandparents and any caregiver with children from infant age through the teenage years.

Learn to banish misbehavior and also learn how to instill positive beliefs in your children.

To pre-register, contact the Methodist Day School (281-499-2581) by Wednesday, October 24. Registration is \$15 (or \$25 per couple) in advance or \$20 per person the evening of the event.

November 3, 2007
Eliminating Colorectal Cancer: A Call to Action
Sponsored by *Hope Through Grace, Inc.* and *Houston Chapter BMCR*, this workshop will explore approaches to eliminating colorectal cancer, choices we make that may inhibit health and wellness and the quality of life

for colorectal cancer survivors.

The event will be held at Houston Community College (Highway 288 at Airport Blvd.) in the Willie Lee Gay Hall, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

November 10, 2007
Lessons About God: From The Land of The Bible
Delve deeper into the characteristics of God's nature. The conference will be led by Dr. James W. Fleming, founder and Director of the Explorations in Antiquity Center and the Biblical Resources Study Center. Fleming's unique teaching style weaves together four perspectives for a better understanding of Biblical times: theology, archaeology, history and geography.

The event will be held at First UMC Houston, 1320 Main Street in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$20, payable at the door. For more information, call the Biblical Ministries desk at 713-458-4781 or 1-800-652-2999.

"Loving Others to God" Seminar
Rev. Royal Speidel of the General Board of Discipleship will present a series of seminars across the annual conference.

The seminars are designed for leaders in the church responsible for evangelism and outreach. In "Loving Others to God," participants can expect to enrich their spiritual lives as they learn how their relationship with God intersects with every other part of their lives, and ways to share their Christian faith with others.

Meals and workshop materials will be provided by the Radical Hospitality and Evangelistic Ministries team. Following are dates and locations:

November 10, 2007 9:00 am-3:00 p.m. Aldersgate UMC, College Station
November 17, 2007 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. First UMC, Pasadena
November 18, 2007 2 - 8 p.m. First UMC, Jacksonville

Contact Giovanna LaFleur at glafleur@txcumc.org with location and number of participants.

Refuge in the storm

By Jan Floro
First UMC, Orange Texas

Even the wrath of Hurricane Humberto hitting the area of Orange, Texas two days before the scheduled Neighborhood Block Party did not keep FUMC Orange from the Open House event in September.

Most of the surrounding area had been without electricity and yet FUMC reported great attendance for the event that took place on the church parking lot complete with Moonwalks, super slides, Bingo, free popcorn, cotton candy, hotdogs and

Shield and guest Rach family choir presenting special music. Open House activities culminated that Sunday evening with their first children/parent drama production presented for a great audience.

A group of dedicated and enthusiastic members from FUMC Orange prepared for the Open House events by distributing over 500 door hangers and fliers throughout the neighborhood announcing the Block Party events.



Special venues for children were in abundance at the during the Open House celebration.

of course those deliciously cool – snow cones.

Guests registered for door prizes and the evening closed with a "Thank You God" service with message and choir.

September Open House activities continued through the weekend with the Fire House

Banners were placed on the church lawn, community newspaper articles were written, individuals canvassed their own neighborhoods with information, emails were posted, announcements were made on the local radio station, and once the electricity was restored to the area –



The Fire House band from Houston, Texas provided a part of the entertainment for the event.

band traveling from Houston to provide a student ministry concert on Saturday evening.

Sunday morning continued to offer wonderful worship opportunities with guest speaker Carla

the big push was made to let people know, "Yes, FUMC Orange is the place to be and the block party is still on....see you there."