



# Cross Connection

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

Label Space  
3.75 in. wide x 1.75 in. high  
Please do not place anything  
inside this area.  
Please remove before final out-  
put.

Two Sections, Section A 078000 Volume 138 Number 11 October 6, 2006

## 'Still in the storm' 1 year after Rita

By Eleanor Colvin

Director of Communications, Texas Annual Conference

Hurricane Rita was more than just a traffic jam. Ask the people of the Golden Triangle, who are still struggling to put their lives together one year later.

The hype of Rita's anticipated landfall blew over when she didn't strike Galveston as predicted. But, she still struck.

Thousands of toppled trees, mangled webs of power lines, and those who evacuated in the seemingly endless line of cars crawling at 5 mph and slower, can testify to the fact that Rita's winds were rough.

"It was just the most destructive thing I've seen in my public service career of 28 years," said County Judge Carl Griffith, Sunday, September 24, on the anniversary of Hurricane Rita. Griffith was speaking at an inter-

faith community remembrance service, "Shelter from the Storm," which was held at Ford Park Pavilion in Beaumont.

### Still stormy

"Some of the people are still right in the middle of the storm," said the Rev. Jay Richards, pastor of Aldersgate-Trinity UMC in Port Arthur. "It's not over for them—they're not still in their homes. It's still total chaos."

Chaos has become a very common feeling for those like Richards,

who returned to the area after being evacuated for weeks and attempted to patch together remnants of their lives.

Continued on page 8



The Rev. Jacqui Thomas King places a prayer on the prayer wall.

## New Expectations of pastors and congregations

By Bishop Janice Riggie Hale  
Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church



One of the questions I've been hearing recently comes from our pastors. It is often phrased

something like this: "Given all the changes in the Annual Conference, what is now being expected of me?" or "As a pastor, what am I accountable for?"

Last week, I had the privilege of visiting with pastors at "The Gathering," the Texas Annual Conference's historic pastors' retreat at Lakeview Conference Center.

It was a providential opportunity to share expectations from the Core Leadership Team and the bishop regarding implementation of "Bound for Greater Things," the plan approved by the Texas Annual Conference in June. It was also a time to hear concerns and to be in conversation together. Laity may be interested, as well.

The vision of the Texas Conference is "vibrant, growing congregations changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ." Our mission is to "equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God."

Disciple-making congregations are almost always defined by five key practices: radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming relationships, risk-taking mission and extravagant generosity. In addition, we believe in fervent prayer, diligent study of scripture and con-  
cessional ministry. We agreed

that "spirit-led excellence, fruitfulness and accountability" would be hallmarks of this conference.

The annual conference determined to hold itself accountable to improvement in four "measures of fruitfulness": worship attendance, professions of faith, hands-on mission and apportionment pay-out. We set specific goals for ourselves.

These decisions, adopted unanimously by the conference in June, require pastors and congregations to be responsible for implementing them in each ministry setting. Specifically, the Core Leadership Team and I have three major expectations, beginning in January 2007:

**Improvement in the four key measures of fruitfulness with monthly reporting to the conference office.** (Reporting will be done electronically.)

**Developing a congregational ministry plan that includes these four measures.**

**Working the ministry plan.**

**Reporting Fruitfulness**

For the first time in many years, pastors are asked to report key indicators of fruitfulness to the annual conference on a monthly basis. Our intention is both to call attention to the importance of improvement in these areas and to build a database that can be used by pastors, lay leaders and the district superintendent to monitor each congregation.

Continued on page 8

## Conference serves AIDS orphans

By Eleanor L. Colvin

Director of Communications

Kerryan Dr. James Mwoti visited the United States last week to educate people about mission opportunities in Kenya and to give thanks for current partnerships with United Methodists.

Mwoti shared his testimony at the Memorial Drive UMC Men's



Kathie Mann, Director of Partners in Mission visits with Dr. James Mwoti of Kenya.

Breakfast, the Clear Lake UMC Dinner and Missions Talk, Windsor Village UMC - Missions Day and at the Conference office during chapel.

Kathie Mann, director of the Texas Annual Conference Partners in Mission, commended Mwoti for coordinating a service trial consisting of the community, churches and the hospital to help serve the needs of children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

This summer, Texas Conference teams built eight housing units for AIDS orphans in Maza, Kenya. In total, the TAC has constructed 60 units in the region.

"It's made a huge, huge difference in that community."

Continued on page 4

# Answered prayers

## Methodist church solves 5-year problem

By Ashley Cook  
The Lufkin Daily News

If you think God doesn't answer prayer, consider the interesting circumstance and blessings that connected Hurricane Rita and two Angelina County churches faced with both need and excess.

The tiny congregation of Burke United Methodist Church, about 20 strong on a given Sunday, had been praying for more than five years to solve a growing problem.

Their small church building south of Lufkin is ringed by large, beautiful clear glass windows, several feet wide and tall. The harsh sunlight streaming into the sanctuary was bleaching woodwork and carpeting, causing expensive damage.

Four times the congregation scheduled a window contractor to check and assess the situation. Four times he failed to show up. Wooden shutters were suggested, but the cost of several thousand dollars in custom fitting was far too high for the small group to afford.

The arrival of Rita a year ago Sunday left behind roof damage to a garage owned by Margie and Wilburn Teer, who live in the Homer area. Covered by insurance, the damage was fixed, leaving behind a load of discarded wood.

Being in the logging business, the Teers weren't exactly happy for wood. So, they offered it to their friend Carl Hataway, who owned a wood shop. He had recently become a new member of Homer United Methodist Church.

Hataway was excited to get his hands on the lumber, which turned out to be a pretty large stack, much more than he needed, he said. But a large portion was one-inch thick, not wide enough for what he needed, Hataway said.

Not wanting the wood to rot outside, he stacked the boards on the floor of his shop. The next day, he got a call from

his pastor, the Rev. Michael W. Jordan. Jordan also shepherds the flock at Burke United Methodist. The two got to talking.

"The wood was just sitting

## 'Sometimes, an angel comes to you, and sometimes, you are the angel.'

there and he had no idea what to do with it. He told me God sent him the one person who had a need," Jordan said.

What followed was a lot of work by Jordan and church members from both congregations, building, painting and installing the large white shutters, each bearing the traditional United Methodist symbol, a black cross highlighted by two bright red flames representing the fire of the Holy Spirit.

What happened next and the

Quickly realizing their small sundries weren't enough for the job, Hataway went shopping on the Internet, searching for a bigger used sander on eBay, the online auction site.

He found exactly one? listed by a man in Missouri. He made an offer at the minimum bid, less than half the worth of the machine, and won.

"I'm so glad this happened, but I never see another sander that will be OK with me. I am tired of eating sand," Jordan said, laughing.

The examples of God's amazing tailor-fit answers to prayer continued. On a very tight budget, Jordan went to a Lufkin discount hardware store, looking for paint to finish the red flames. As he waited his turn, the saleswoman stopped to ask what he needed. Could she mix some red paint? he asked.

"She said, 'Come with me,'" Jordan said. "Handing me a gallon of paint, she said, 'Here, is this bright enough?' It was just perfect. They discounted the price because it was one someone left unclaimed."

Experiences like that leave no question in either Jordan or Hataway's minds about what was happening.

"God has been in this from the beginning. He was just waiting for us to catch up with him," Jordan said.

"God answers prayer," Hataway said, firmly.

"Sometimes the answer is not always what you thought. It is just fascinating," Jordan replied.

The unanticipated blessing for both congregations has been the spiritual growth and foster- ing of friendships as they learn to help one another, according to Jordan. It is frustrating, Jordan said, that churches don't come together more.

"That's what (churches) should do," Hataway said.

Hataway described how he feels God works in and around his children to answer prayer and meet needs.

"Sometimes an angel comes to you, and sometimes you are the angel," he said.

# Twist of faith

## Congregations come together in Devers

Article originally published in *The Vindicator* by Mike Eddelben Libery, Texas

A twist of faith turned a personal struggle for one area church into a example of universal faith and compassion that has made two churches stronger.

The news was a story like many others across East Texas following Hurricane Rita as the congregation of Galilee Baptist Church in Devers faced a future without a home.

"During the hurricane our church was picked up and shifted and moved" said Galilee Pastor R. J. Henderson.

"We called the fire department and diligent engineers to check the stability of it and they concurred it was too dangerous for us to have services there."

Henderson said the church was not without a home long, though as word got out the congregation at Galilee needed help.

"Right after the hurricane we closed immediately," Henderson said. "Pastor Greg (Edwards) and I met through one of his members and he stepped up his heart, he opened up the church to us the next Sunday after we shut down."

Edwards and the congregation of First United Methodist Church in Devers never hesitated, offering their sanctuary as a place for Galilee Baptist to hold services.

"I've gone through something like this before back in Beaurmont and it is the right thing to do," Edwards said. "You open your doors and help another faith community."

It was not simply a decision for the pastors of the two churches and Edwards was pleased with his congregations' support for the idea.

"To my jubilation they said, 'sure,'" he said. The church was the one that really opened up and welcomed them. They see them as part of this community and they've been a part of this community for years.

"They are truly doing the will of God because we are supposed to love everybody and we're supposed to help everybody," Henderson said. "The word went out about our dilemma and the only person that really stepped up was this man and their church to offer any type of help. They said 'mind the mess, but come in and make youself at home.'"

Since that first Sunday, First United Methodist members worship at 10 a.m. and Edwards followed at 11:30 a.m. by Galilee Baptist. The plan took a bit of adjusting for all, but Henderson said Edwards' leadership has been invaluable throughout.

"He is a very generous and heartwarming man," Henderson said. "Most congregations and most churches probably wouldn't have gone for it. Being the man he is he just welcomed us with open arms. He and I developed such a beautiful friendship and relationship that I thank God for allowing this to bring us close together."

The churches shared Communion at Christmas, just one example cited by Henderson as a reminder of their common foundation in Christianity.

"We've adjusted to a lot of things because of their beliefs and our beliefs, but there's only one God," he said.

"Pastor Greg always keeps us focused on that issue that we're serving one God. I think it is a lesson we all can learn, that it doesn't matter what color you are, we are serving one God. They showed love and I try to preach to my congregation that it is not the color of your skin or the side of the track you live on that means anything, it is who you serve."

Edwards echoed that sentiment, saying the church is a vehicle to challenge boundaries in a community.

"These boundaries or divisions we have created need to be intentionally crossed," he said.

The members of Galilee Baptist felt welcome from the first Sunday and while they hope to be back in a home of their own soon, this experience has had a profound effect.

"We've been accepted so well since we've been here and it has been great to us and when it comes time for us to leave there will be some shedding of tears," Henderson said. "It is not United Methodist Church, it is not Galilee Baptist Church, I figure we are a family now. I found some true friends. That bond we have now will forever stay intact."

Continued on page 8



Homer UMC member Carl Hataway sands Hurricane Rita-salvaged wood he used to create shutters to protect the unbleached interior of Burke UMC.

# Risk-taking mission - Help provided for Kenyan AIDS orphans

Continued from page 1

Marr said. "It's a program we'd like to model all over Kenya and all over the world. But, it takes a special organization and cooperation to make it happen."

## Never-ending need

In the area served by Masai Methodist Hospital in Kenya, 36 percent of the population is HIV positive. PIM has been present and serving the needs of the community and its children since 1999. In 2004, the scope of the mission project changed.

Following the vision of the community, PIM committed money and volunteers to build new homes, so orphans could remain in the village.

"When I hear people say, 'I want to build an orphanage,' it makes me cringe, because it takes children out of the village and it takes lots and lots of money to keep an orphanage running," Marr said. "Through this program, those children are still in the village and they're learning from their neighbors - how to tend the farm, how to raise goats, everything they need to become a whole adult - an adult who's going to be giving back to the community." The homes also help restore a sense of normalcy to the children's lives.

"The house looks like all the

other houses," Marr said. "Not more, not less, so that they feel just like all the other kids."

That is a priceless gift that impacts the orphan's home life, education and more.

"They go back to school because they can relate to the other children because they are able to come from a home - not the streets, not the garbage places," Dr. Mwatiri said. "So, they're back in school."

Most of the homes are small 10-foot x 12-foot, he said, or slightly larger depending on the number of children; yet, the impact on lives is monumental. "God has been with us,"

Mwatiri said. "We've been able to make it this far. The next goal is providing resources to assist them to dream again - to mentor them."

## What can you do?

Every donation helps. It costs \$14 to buy a school uniform and shoes for one child, \$15 per month to feed and educate a child and \$1,700 will build a new, safe home for one family.

To support the AIDS Orphan Project - Kenya, you may write a check payable to your local church and put it in the collection plate with Advance Special #140159 in the note line.

Or write a check payable to Advance GCEA and mail to General Board of Global Ministries, UMC Advance GCEA, P.O. Box 9068, GPO, New York, New York, 10087-9068.

To learn more about leading or participating in a mission team, contact Kathie Marr at 281-615-6051 or [kathie.marr@hotmail.com](mailto:kathie.marr@hotmail.com).



## Changes brought about by United Methodist mission support Before/After photos



One of the first homes visited by missions team. In the photo below, family enjoy their new home built by the team.



Kenyan brothers stand in front of family home. Photo below shows brothers and other siblings in their new home.



# Help still needed one year after Hurricane Rita

Continued from page 1

The sanctuary of Aldergate-Tinity was pristine, Richards said, but the office area was completely destroyed. The church, which sustained more than \$800,000 in damage, did most of its own repairs to help stretch the insurance money.

While assisting those who visited the prayer wall at the remembrance service, Richards said she came out to stand in solidarity with those who are hurting because she knows recovery is a long-term process.

"They say it will take two to four years to put everything back," Richards said. "We're still hauling the garbage off."

You can see, item by item, things are getting better. But not everyone has gotten relief."

Angela Baker, director of the Texas Conference Rita Recovery Center, knows all too well that not everyone is recovered.

"We still have 900 people on our waiting list," Baker said. Southeast Interfaith

aged homes had no insurance," Stumph said. "People are trying



Texas Annual Conference Recovery Team take time out to enjoy the Remembrance Service.

their best to live in homes with leaky roofs and mold. They have no way of helping themselves."

#### Forgotten storm

The Rev. Jacqui King, pastor of St. Paul's UMC in Port Arthur, was one of three featured speakers at "Shelter from the

blow roof on it - remember 365 days ago you were stuck in traf-

fic, someone praying that your home would be safe. God knew where you were then, and he knows where you are now."

King opened her speech with the music of gospel recording artist Israel and the New Breed singing "I Am Not Forgotten."

"We are part of a storm that some people have forgotten about," King said. "But we thank God that our suffering did not kill us - knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us."

King went on to define HOPE as Humility Offers Peace Everlasting. Southeast Texans are humbly assisting one another in the recovery and rebuilding process, and are thankful for those who have not forgotten them.

To send a work team to the Southeast Texas disaster recovery area, contact the Rita Recovery office at 409-892-0140 or e-mail [recovery@texasconferencetexas.org](mailto:recovery@texasconferencetexas.org).



Pastors pray before an interfaith remembrance of Hurricane Rita.

Organization member the Rev. Bob Stumph, whose group conducted a door-to-door survey in the Golden Triangle, said one obstacle to recovery is the staggering amount of uninsured losses.

"Forty-nine percent of dam-

Storm." She gave voice to what many Southeast Texans have declared during the past year.

"This storm was often called the Forgotten Storm," said King. "Even if you're not rebuilt yet, even if your house still has a

# New expectations for local churches

Continued from page 1

We already have such a base for payment of congregational ministry funds. Unfortunately, we do not have information for vital areas such as worship attendance, professions of faith and missions. We do not want reporting to be a burden for pastors or congregations, so the treasurer's office is developing a simple, electronic system.

#### A Ministry Plan

In order to make improvements in these key areas, congregations need a ministry plan. Many congregations already have a ministry plan. We are not trying to add another layer to those pastors and churches. We simply ask you to be certain that all four key areas are included in your plan.

For churches that do not have a ministry plan, we are suggesting conducting a January planning meeting. Those congregations can use the four key indicators as the outline for a ministry plan.

There are many great suggestions in the Churches Transformation Workbook. Pastors and congregations that

need more help should call their superintendent or Dr. Karen Dorris, Director of Congregational Excellence. We want to help you make disciples.

#### Work Your Plan

Finally, we expect pastors and congregations to "work their plans." Even a plan that didn't bear fruit can help us make better choices in the future.

"At 'The Gathering' pastors asked a number of important questions, particularly about censure. Others want to know how they will be held accountable. We will try to respond to some of these questions over the next several months.

We believe this process will enable the Texas Annual Conference to take another important step in our journey of growing faithfulness as a missional church. I feel so privileged to serve as your bishop.

Grace and peace,  
Janice Riggle Huie

# Pastors share pulpit, faith

Continued from page 5

Galilee Baptist did not own the land its church was on, so the first order of business was to find land. The church has purchased land and is now focused on finding the funds to build a sanctuary.

"Our hope is that God will bless us financially to be able to build another church."

To Edwards, it was never an

issue of his congregation giving anything up because he said it does not belong to them.

"This is not my house and my church, it is God's place," he said. "This is just a structure."

# Cramer Retreat Center provides ministry alternatives

By Lisa Mage - Cramer Retreat Center Board of Directors

The Cramer Retreat Center of the United Methodist Church will host an open house luncheon Wednesday, October 11 for the Texas Annual Conference staff clergy and laity from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Located near I-45N just north of FM 1960 in Spring, Texas, the Cramer Retreat Center provides a serene setting near Houston where people can experience God's peace while growing spiritually and in ministry.

The Center is available for use by churches and individuals desiring a rich, inspiring Christian experience away from the ordinary and hectic circumstances found elsewhere. It provides a serene setting for day staff or ministry team meetings or overnight retreats by groups or individuals. This is a great facility for pastor or lay person seeking time or lay person.

The Cramer Retreat Center is situated on 18½ acres, of which

3½ acres are soothing, serene ponds. There are three houses on the property, a prayer garden and a very unique prayer labyrinth. With the continued assistance of volunteer labor and gifts from various groups and churches within the conference, The Cramer Retreat Center has begun to blossom as a spiritual oasis for all to enjoy.

Visit our website at [www.CramerCenter.com](http://www.CramerCenter.com) to check the calendar for upcoming

events hosted by the Center, or you may schedule your own events, either personal or for your congregation. Provisions for mission projects to help build community and maintain the beauty of the facilities are available.

Wednesday, Oct. 18 The Cramer Retreat Center will offer, "Sabbath Rest," a retreat that allows one to slow your frantic pace and spend time with God in reflection and prayer.

Bring your Bible, a favorite pen and your journal. (cost of \$20.00 includes lunch and 5 CEU credits).

RSVP for the Open House and/or Sabbath Rest Day Retreat by calling 281-350-1355 or emailing [retreat@texasconferencetexas.org](mailto:retreat@texasconferencetexas.org).

We look forward to sharing God's abundant peace with you.