

# Cross Connection

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

Label Area

Two Sections, Section A

076000 Volume 155

Number 38

January 23, 2009

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

## TAC youth join BMCR in journey toward change

By Eleanor L. Colvin  
TAC Communications

Texas Annual Conference youth paid homage to the past and honored the historical significance of the present, all while looking optimistically at their futures.

The youth shared award-winning essays, art and speeches at the annual Martin Luther King Day Breakfast Celebration, which Black Methodists for Church Renewal hosted January 19 for more than 300 clergy and laity.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie anchored the event with a message that also focused on the past, present and future. She lifted up the following quote from Dr. King as a formula for progress: "Change is neither automatic nor inevitable...No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability," King wrote.

True change calls for sacrifice, service and struggle, Huie said, noting that for African-Americans in this country, change has been a journey.

"A journey powered by a dream and fueled by the audacity of hope," Huie said.

Hence the reason, BMCR

blended the ideals of Dr. King and President Barack Obama to create the 2009 event theme, A Dream: The Audacity of Hope.

"Dr. King gave me the audacity to hope, because from him I saw that some risks are worth taking," wrote Virginia Johnson of Jones Chapel UMC in Fairfield, who won first place in the BMCR essay contest for 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Dekorian Whitfield of Norris Chapel UMC won the first-place essay honor for students in 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade: "I appreciate the advantages I enjoy today because of Dr. Martin Luther King. I have great respect and love for this hero of humanity," Whitfield wrote.



The 2009 MLK contest first place winners were: Melissa Atkins, art; DeKorian Whitfield, 4th-8th grade essay; backrow, Virginia Johnson, 9th-12th grade essay and Chesley Walton, speech.

The top orator was Chesley Walton of St. Mark's UMC, who began her speech with a dramatization of a girl being refused service in a library.

"Today, I can go to any public library without getting stopped and being called little colored gal," Walton said. "I will not be restricted from living my dream because of the color of my skin! I have the nerve, the audacity to hope and achieve my dreams."

Melissa Atkins earned the first-place award in the BMCR art contest. Her mixed-media work used drawings and textiles to illustrate change through the eyes of a 6 year old in 1946, 1972 and 2008. These dates represent the years in which Atkins, her mother and grandmother were 6 years old.

The first frame showed her grandmother picking cotton and the second frame showed her mother playing with classmates of all races. The third frame showed the artist and Obama shaking hands. Melissa had the honor of meeting Obama during the primary season, when, at the age of 6, she opened his rally at the Toyota Center by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

"We've already heard it said twice today that Rosa sat so Martin could walk; Martin walked so Obama could run; and Obama ran so that today's children could fly. And, haven't we seen those children spread their wings today," Huie said acknowledging the winners.



Kalu Diagu of Blueridge UMC addressed the BMCR gathering with the vision of King and the grace of Obama.



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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The Cross Connection is the official publication of the Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.



## Serenity Retreat for Healing and Spiritual Renewal

### A new kind of extension ministry

**By Brant Mills**  
Web Content Manager



*This article is part of a series offering a snapshot of extension ministries of the Texas Annual Conference. Please watch*

*the conference website and Cross Connection for future articles.*

Founded in 2000, Serenity Retreat for Healing and Spiritual Renewal has been helping people seek prayerful healing in every aspect of their lives. It is a ministry that Executive Director Rev. Kathryn Eason says came from a personal calling.

Now an ordained deacon, Eason, who has previous ministry experience as a lay chaplain at Texas Children's Hospital and several years of involvement in Stephen ministry described how her ministry got its start. "I was sitting on my bed about 10 years ago reading about Jesus healing someone. I said out loud that it

would have been so cool to have lived back then when he used to heal people. I felt like he was saying he still did, and just the thought that he did lit a fire in me. I sensed pretty clearly that there should be a place where healing of people should happen – not a church, but a center for healing... We found a place in Garden Villas UMC - a place that was underutilized - and just started praying for people."

In their first year of ministry, they prayed for about 50 people. "It has grown to where we have this really thriving ministry. There was so much healing, and last year we had about 1,200 appointments."

They now have 36 trained prayer ministers plus about 10 more volunteers who help with administration projects. "Our ministry is ecumenical and diverse," Eason said. "We have prayer ministers from a wide variety of backgrounds including ministers who are Spanish, Russian and Korean."

#### A Place of Healing

Eason said the center is a home-like atmosphere – not a clinic. People come to the center for prayer over a wide range of issues.

Eason said they "see people struggling with addictions, insomnia, mild anxiety... all the way to debilitating panic attacks

as well as physical things like fibromyalgia, chest pains, diabetes, leukemia... I've seen God set people free from clinical depression. Their doctor confirmed they were in remission and had reduced medication. Inner healing is what we specialize in – helping a person get to the core of why they have pain and then invite the Holy Spirit in truth that sets them free. We focus on emotional healing first. Physical healing often comes after emotional and spiritual healing."

Before they meet with a person, prayer ministers pray asking God to fill their hearts with

*Continued on page 6*

**"People come to the center for prayer over a wide range of issues... people struggling with addictions, insomnia, mild anxiety... all the way to debilitating panic attacks as well as physical things like fibromyalgia, chest pains, diabetes, leukemia... I've seen God set people free from clinical depression."**

*Rev. Kathryn Eason*

## Lowery, Height join those on inaugural platform



**Rev. Joseph Lowery, 87 gave the benediction for the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama.**

*A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose.*

**A UMNS Report**  
By Linda Bloom\*

Two United Methodist veterans of the civil rights movement were invited to share the inaugural platform on Jan. 20 when Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States.

The Rev. Joseph Lowery, 87, gave the benediction after President Obama's inaugural address. Dorothy Height, 96, was also invited to be among the special guests.

Both had worked alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday was celebrated a day earlier.

Lowery told National Public Radio on Jan. 19 that he was a bit unnerved by the thought that millions would be listening to

his closing prayer. "Every time I think about what I'm going to say, I get a little stage fright," he admitted to Michele Norris. But he added that he had been praying for strength from God.

No stage fright was evident after the new president's address, as Lowery began his prayer by reciting the third verse of the hymn, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which is No. 519 in the United Methodist Hymnal. "We truly give thanks for the glorious experience that we shared this day," Lowery prayed.

Noting that God will work "through faithful leadership" to restore the nation's stability, mend wounds and tend to the poor, Lowery called upon

Americans to "come into the spirit of unity and solidarity to commit our support of our president."

"Help us to make choices on the side of love, not hate, on the side of inclusion, not exclusion, tolerance, not intolerance," he prayed.

Lowery put on his preaching hat as he concluded the prayer, asking that "all those who do justice and love mercy, say Amen." The "amens" were repeated several times.

In a Jan. 19 essay written for the Chicago Tribune, Lowery said that, during the oath of office, he would look down the National Mall and in

*Continued on page 6*



# Black pastors build bridges that lead to justice

By Eleanor L. Colvin  
TAC Communications

Transformation and revival. Connection and coaching. The 2009 Convocation for Pastors of Black Churches provided this and more to the nearly 400 attendees of the 4-day ministry to pastors across the nation.

The General Board of Discipleship and a 13-member design team structured the event to offer clergy the invaluable opportunity to meet others, who would pray for, talk with and support them in their journey of caring for God's church in the black community. The Convocation was held January 6-9 in Houston at the Westin Galleria Hotel.

Those connectional opportunities were vital to the Rev. Aleze M. Fulbright, associate pastor of First UMC-Commerce in the North Texas Annual Conference. Fulbright is the only African American in her congregation.

"I don't get the opportunity to worship in the way that I was reared," Fulbright said. "But, now ... when I stand before them to preach, I'll be able to let them hear my voice."

While connecting with African Americans was crucial, Fulbright said the convocation offered her another much-needed networking opportunity. "I also made connections and was able to relate to other young people,"

she said.

The Rev. Vance P. Ross, deputy general secretary of GBOD, said the ultimate aim of the convocation is to create "a better church and a better people."

Ross, who chaired the design team, said that "in a climate of continued strife and stress across international, national, race and class lines, the intent to build bridges that lead—not merely to compromise but—to justice is a value desperately needed and one that the United Methodist Black Church is uniquely positioned to articulate."

## No secrets

Centered on the theme – Building Bridges Into the Future – the 6th convocation also provided a forum to share the expertise and experience of pastors who are recognized for their leadership in black ministry settings. And, as the Rev. Geraldine McClellan, who pastors Mt. Pleasant UMC in the Florida Annual Conference, said during her healing service sermon – it was an opportunity to share God's battle plan for victory.

"Battle plans are classified information – secret," McClellan said. "But there is no secret [to] what God can do; what he's done for others, he'll do for you."

With that in mind, plenary presenters who have been faithfully and fruitfully following God's battle plan shared their

insight on topics from prayer to mentoring to technology.

Presenters included: host pastor the Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell and Pastor Suzette Caldwell of Windsor Village UMC in Houston; the Rev. Rodney Smothers of St. Paul UMC in Maryland; the Rev. Sherry Daniels of Norfolk UMC in Virginia and the Rev. Olu Brown of Impact Church in Atlanta.

Fulbright, who is also a campus minister in North Texas, said she learned things that she can immediately begin implementing in her ministry setting.

"The technology piece was very helpful," she said of the session Daniels and Brown coled. "I'm already using Facebook, but the plenary encouraged me to utilize those resources better by sending out devotionals and encouraging messages. I can start that now."

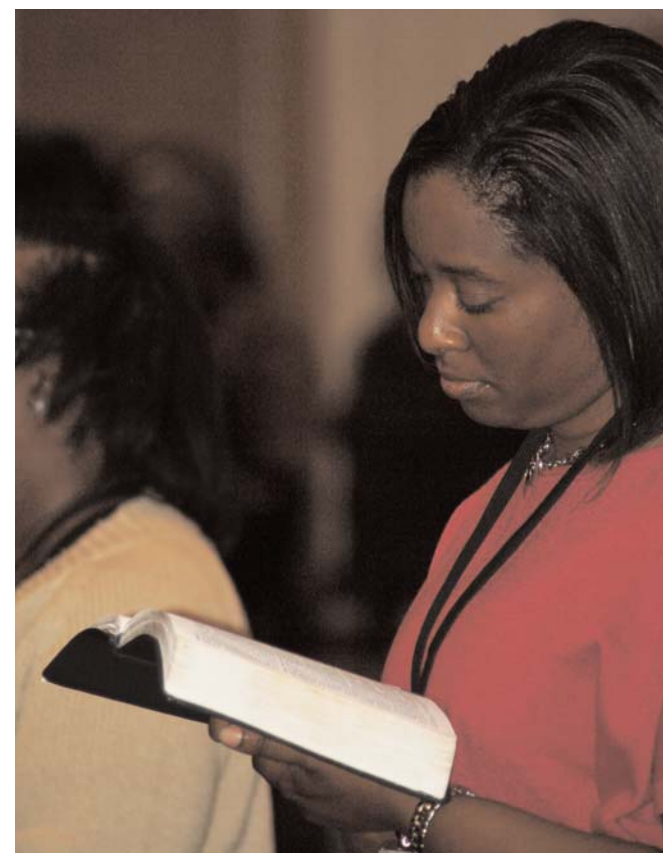
The Caldwells teamed up to lead a plenary that centered on prayer's role in Building Bridges Into the Future.

"Isn't it a shame that they didn't teach us in seminary how important prayer is?" Kirbyjon Caldwell asked. "Jesus said, my house shall be called a house of preaching, a house of praise and a house of committee meetings? A house of prayer!"

Suzette Caldwell turned to the Lord's Prayer for her exploration of why prayer – particularly the "Model Prayer" as she described it – is a necessary tool in building bridges: "You cannot implement a divine vision without using divine methods."

One of the teachings that stirred and stayed all week with Rev. Natalie N. Stephens, director of membership and evangelism at Asbury UMC in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, was

Kirbyjon



Rev. Aleze Fulbright reads from Joshua 1.

Caldwell's urging to build bridges from one's self to God and then from one's self to the community.

"I know that before we can become transforming agents in the lives of others, we have to engage in critical reflection about who we are and where we are," Stephens said. "Until we can be vulnerable in that way, we can't build bridges to other people. Until we can be our authentic selves – in genuineness and in His likeness, we can't connect to others. Transformation starts within, and then it manifests outward."

The convocation's soul-nourishing worship and the thought-provoking plenary sessions were clear evidence of God's power to transform people who will in turn transform the world.

"It's revival!" said the Rev. Donald E. McCoy, pastor of Faith-St. Paul UMC in the Western North Carolina Annual Conference. "It's just revival, and we need it."

Joshua 1 was the key scripture used in worship throughout the week to illuminate the theme – "Building Bridges Into the Future." Methodist preaching legend Rev. Zan Holmes set the atmosphere for praise and reve-

lation as he opened the convocation in worship. Bishop Violet Fisher's message "Standing on the Edge of Possibility" during the Tuesday evening Holy Communion service inspired pastors to "put their foot" on the promises of God. The Rev. Geraldine McClellan of the Florida Annual Conference sent servants forth on Friday with "God's battle plan" at the closing healing service.

"We are the Joshua generation!" Bishop Fisher exclaimed. "It's time now to name and claim the blessings God already promised us ... 'It's not enough to sing 'Standing on the Promises' and not move out in faith."

McClellan concluded the week of worship with the message "Receive the Promise" that explained the first step in building bridges into the future.

"If we're going to build bridges, we've got to receive the promise," McClellan said. "We don't have time to 'think about' receiving the promise ... You have mourned long enough, you have moped long enough, you have done nothing long enough – so, arise and claim the promise land."



Pastor Suzette Caldwell prays for a pastor following a plenary session.



# Bringing forth the king

## Bellaire UMC sends third mission team to



**Souls and bodies were fed as lunch was distributed to the children during the Winter Bible Camp.**

**Women from Malis came to receive food for their families. Bellaire UMC, in partnership with Bethany UMC in Guiguinto prepared sacks of food that would feed 300 families for five days.**

**By Rev. Diane McGhee  
Asian American Congregation  
Of Bellaire UMC Houston**

It started two years ago, as a vision inspired by God, of partnering with our brothers and sisters in the Philippines to bring the kingdom of God more fully on earth, even as it is in heaven, by caring for the bodies and the souls of the poor.

Compelled by Matthew 25:31-46, BUMC sent a medical team to Bicol in March 2007, to share the love of Jesus Christ and heal the sick. A second team went in June to work, with Bethany UMC in Guiguinto, amidst the poor in Malis.

They brought food and activities for the children and their families, boards and paint for the church building, money for medical and other needs, and they shared the good news of the gospel through a children's Bible camp, evangelistic services, and community visits. When they left, they promised, "We Shall Return."

Back home, the Bellaire

UMC team began working to fulfill their promise, praying that God would lead them. God did.

They raised \$25,000 for a micro-finance program for Malis, to be managed by local community members and in cooperation with Bethany UMC. The program offers loans to the poor to start businesses. Proceeds from the loans provide education scholarships for young people in the community.

Since the launch of the finance program, BUMC began working on a return mission trip to the Philippines. In December 2008, a team of 21 youth and adults departed for the Philippines to share the love of Jesus Christ in both word and deed.

They helped lead the Bulacan regional Christmas Institute (a discipleship gathering of over 350 Filipino Methodist youth). Then they went to Malis and in partnership with Bethany UMC, they bought and prepared food sacks that would allow 300 of the poorest families in Malis to



# gdom of God the Philippines

feed their families for 5 days; offered a children's Winter Bible Camp and lunch each day to over 300 children;

Through worship, visitations and evangelistic events, the love of Jesus Christ was shared.

The group returned to the United States on January 4, praising God for all God had done in and through them. They also came back with the next step in the "We Shall Return" vision. It's called "Jessica's Table" – a feeding program that works with Methodist Churches in Bulacan, Philippines, the Salika Foundation of the

Philippines, and *Together in Hope* of the U.S.

Through this program, for \$200 per Saturday, 300 children will be fed a hot, nutritious, vitamin-packed meal and will participate in a children's Bible class to learn how Jesus came that they might have abundant life, both in this world and the world to come.

By God's grace, "We Shall Return" and continue to share God's love with the least of these, who are God's precious children.

For more information, go to [www.togetherinhope.org](http://www.togetherinhope.org) and click on *Jessica's Table*.



The mission team from Bellaire UMC (bottom left) consisted of 21 youth and adults. The team held a children's Bible Camp in addition to distributing food supplies and materials to build a new church building. Approximately 300 children attended the Winter Bible Camp in Malis. Bellaire UMC has begun steps to return and continue their mission in the Philippines. Working with the Methodists churches in Bulacan, Philippines, the Salika Foundation and "Together We Hope," program in the United States, a feeding program titled, *Jessica's Table* will be the focus of another mission trip.



## Serenity Retreat for Healing and Spiritual Renewal

*Continued from page 2*

love. Two prayer ministers then meet with them in a confidential session which takes about an hour and a half. “There is zero judgment about anything presented during the session,” Eason said. “This is intense. You really focus on people’s pain and invite God to relieve it. We polled people who received our services and ninety-three percent say the pain they came in with is gone. Ninety-four percent say their relationship with God has deepened after they came here.”

“Seventy-eight percent of people we see are women. Eighty-four percent self-report abuse of some kind.” Eason said their prayer partners are trained to know when to ask the Lord for help. “They don’t do counseling or use guided imagery. They close their mouths and just wait.”

### Ministry Partners

Their ministry also develops partnerships with other congregations and trains people

to pray for healing. “Everything is free and is supported by partner churches, but most of the donations, eighty percent, come from individuals,” Eason noted.

Some of their partner churches include St. John’s UMC, St. Luke’s UMC, St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, Catholic Charismatic Center, Crossroads Community Church in Kingwood, Life Church in Katy and Touch Family Church in Clear Lake. “We love to help people start prayer ministry,” Eason added. “If a pastor is interested, it is one of our specialties.”

Serenity Retreat offers a year-long training apprenticeship they call the Inner Healing Institute. It is a place for providing inner healing to residents with them in healing prayer. Eason also said there is a waiting list for people to receive prayer – sometimes as long as 2 or 3 months. “If we had 40 more prayer volunteers we could double the number of people we see.”

### Moving Forward

They are now working toward expanding into a new overnight retreat center. This facility will be an hour and 10 minutes from Houston with semi-private rooms and baths in a country setting near Brenham in Bellville Texas. They have land and architectural plans for this new adult center, designed to be a ranch style house which Eason describes as an ideal place for healing. They have already raised about \$500,000 dollars and need \$2.5 million to complete it.

Eason said she wants people to know “there is a place where God is transforming and setting people free from the ordinary things they have to deal with. We are growing and not going anywhere.”

Contact information and additional details about Serenity Retreat are available through their website at: <http://www.serenityretreat.com> or by phone at 713-649 - PRAY (7729).

## Lowery, Height join those on inaugural platform

his mind’s eye “see a 34-year-old preacher standing before a crowd of nearly a quarter of a million at that Lincoln Memorial in 1963, calling on Americans to move beyond the color of their skin to the content of their character.”

“Obama’s inauguration is a nation’s response to that call,” he wrote.

### Never expected to see the day

Height, who was invited by Obama to be his guest at the ceremony, told The New York Times that she never expected to live long enough to see an African American elected as president of the United States.

“This is real recognition that civil rights was not just what Dr. King dreamed,” she said. “But it took a lot of people a lot of work to make this happen, and they feel part of it.”

A longtime member of St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in New York before moving to Washington, Height has received numerous accolades for her civil rights work. In 2004, she was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President George W. Bush.

She also was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton in 1994 and the Presidential Citizenship Medal by President Ronald Reagan in 1989.

Height was a national executive staff member with YWCA for 33 years and was elected national president of the National Council of Negro Women in 1957, where she led a crusade for justice for black women.

She envisioned the plans for the National Centers for African American Women and the Dorothy I. Height Leadership Institute, which were launched in 1996.

### Worked with King

Lowery co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership



**Dorothy Height is honored during a presentation at the United Nations in 1999. A UMNS file photo by John C. Goodwin.**

Conference with King in 1957 and served as its president and chief executive officer for 20 years, beginning in 1977.

King named him chairman of the delegation to take demands of the Selma-to-Montgomery March in 1965 to Alabama Gov. George Wallace. Wallace had ordered the marchers beaten—an episode that became known as “Bloody Sunday”—but apologized to Lowery in 1995 as the civil rights pioneer led the 30th anniversary re-enactment of the historic march that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

As a United Methodist minister, Lowery was elected a delegate to three General Conferences and presided over an annual conference as acting bishop in 1966. His prophetic voice was instrumental in moving the church toward the goal of inclusiveness.

He served as pastor of United Methodist churches in Mobile and Birmingham, Ala., and Atlanta, where he led Central Church for 18 years.

*\*Bloom is a United Methodist News Service news writer based in New York.*

## Are you ready for tax season?

### Clergy Income Tax Seminar and Church Financial / Legal Seminar

The United Methodist Foundation and the Texas Annual Conference Center for Connectional Resources are sponsoring seminars for clergy, as well as staff and laity who participate in the financial management of a local church, such as financial secretaries, business administrators, and treasurers.

There will two locations for the seminars; the first will be

February 11 at Marvin UMC, 300 W. Erwin Street in Tyler, Texas. The presenter is Amy Hume, a Principal with the Private Client Services Group in the Houston office of the accounting firm, UHY Advisors Texas, LLC.

The second seminar will take place at St. Paul’s UMC in Houston, Texas on February 26.

Frank Somerville, an attor-

ney with the law firm of Weycer, Kaplan, Pulaksi and Zuber, P.C. will conduct the Houston seminars.

Online registration and additional information is available at <http://www.txcumc.org/09taxseminar>.



## Annual Conference 2009

Following is a list of available hotels in The Woodlands area during Annual Conference 2009. This year, only the Marriott Waterway Hotel will have bus transportation to The Woodlands UMC.

NAME OF HOTEL	ADDRESS	PHONE	NO. OF ROOMS AVAILABLE	ROOM RATE
Best Western	17081 I-45, The Woodlands, Texas	936-271-2378	35 Regular; 2 Handicapped	\$85.00/Night
Comfort Suites	18456 I-45 North, Shenandoah, Texas	936-273-1500	40 Regular; 6 Handicapped	\$89.00/Night
Courtyard By Marriott	1020 Lake Front Circle, The Woodlands, Texas	281-292-3262	Will not negotiate a block of rooms	No group rates
Drury Inn	28099 I-45 North, The Woodlands, Texas	281-362-7222	45 King Suites; 2 Handicapped 40 Regular Double; 3 Handicapped	\$109/Night \$99.00/Night
Fairfield Inn	16850 I-45 South, The Woodlands, Texas	936-271-0110	20 Double Rooms 10 King Suites	\$95.00/Night \$120.00/Night
Hampton Inn	18484 I-45, The Woodlands, Texas	936-273-3400	35 Regular Rooms/5 Handicapped	\$95.00/Night
Hilton Garden	9301 Six Pines Road, The Woodlands, Texas	281-364-9300	15 Double Rooms 10 King Rooms	\$156.00/Night \$156.00 Night
Holiday Inn	24888 I-45, The Woodlands, Texas	281-681-8088	10 Double Rooms; 10 King Rooms	\$99.00/Night
Homewood Suites	29813 I-45, The Woodlands, Texas	281-681-9199	10 Queen Rooms; 10 King Rooms	\$149.00/Night
LaQuinta Inn	24868 I-45, The Woodlands, Texas	281-681-9188	In Negotiations	
LaQuinta Inn	28673 I-45, The Woodlands, Texas	281-367-7722	48 Double Rooms 31 King Rooms	\$89.00/Night \$96.00/Night
Marriott Waterway (Host Hoel)	1601 Lake Robbins Drive, The Woodlands, Texas	281-367-9797	282 Regular Rooms	\$109.00/Night
Residence Inn	9333 Six Pines Road, The Woodlands, Texas	281-419-1542	In Negotiations	
Residence Inn	1040 Lake Front Road, The Woodlands, Texas	281-292-3252	In Negotiations	

## Strategies to save energy this winter

Just a few simple changes around your home can improve your energy efficiency and impact your energy bills – in a good way – ensuring maximized savings during the winter.

First, contact your local energy company to conduct a home energy audit (if you have not done so already). This will help you identify where you can save the most and consider making a larger investment for long-term energy savings.

### Take advantage of the sun

Open curtains on south-facing windows during the day – allowing sunlight to naturally heat your home; close them at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.

### Cover drafty windows

Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of the window frames during the cold

winter months. Make sure the plastic is sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.

Install tight-fitting, insulating drapes or shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.

### Adjust the temperature

When you are at home, set the thermostat as low as is comfortable. When asleep or out of the house, turn the thermostat back 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours – this saves around 10 percent annually on your bills.

A programmable thermostat is a great investment and perfect way to easily adjust your home's thermostat.

### Find and seal leaks

Seal air leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes, gaps

around chimneys and recessed lights in insulated ceilings, and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.

Add caulk or weather-stripping to seal air leaks around



doors and windows. Talk with a local hardware store about selecting and applying caulk and weather-stripping.

### Maintain heating systems

Regular service for your heating system should be sched-

uled in order to keep it operating efficiently. Replace the furnace filter monthly or as needed.

For wood and pellet-burning heaters, clean the flue vent regularly and inside the appliance with a wire brush periodically to ensure that your home is heated efficiently.

### Reduce fireplace heat loss

Keep the fireplace damper closed unless a fire is going. An open damper is like a wide-open window during the winter; warm air (and your money) goes right up the chimney.

When using the fireplace, reduce heat loss by opening dampers in the firebox's bottom (if provided) or open the nearest window slightly – about one inch – and close doors leading into the room. Lower the thermostat setting between 50 degrees and 55 degrees.

Install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system

that blows warmed air back into the room. Check the fireplace damper seal and make it as snug as possible.

Purchase C-shaped metal tube grates to draw cool room air into the fireplace and circulate warm air back into the room. Add caulking around the fireplace hearth. If the fireplace is never used, plug and seal the chimney flue.

### Lower water heating costs

Water heating can account for up to 25 percent of the energy consumed in your home. Turn down the water heater temperature to the warm setting (120°F). You will save energy and avoid scalding your hands.

*This information was provided through the Texas Annual Conference Health Benefits Office by MHN Net Behavioral Health Services.*



## Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

### Fellowship Opportunities

#### First UMC Houston to host "Great Minds of Methodism"

The program is scheduled for January 25 at the 9 a.m. worship service of First UMC West Campus and at the 11 a.m. worship service at the downtown location.

The guest speaker is Dr. James W. Moore. Dr. Moore, retired senior minister of St. Luke's UMC, will preach at both services.

His topic, "The Moments that Take Your Breath Away" is the same topic as his new book. A book signing event will be held following the 11 a.m. service.

Contact Linda Calvert at 832-668-1834 or [lcalvert@fmhouston.com](mailto:lcalvert@fmhouston.com) for more information.

#### 2009 Religious Emphasis Week At Wiley College

Save the dates of February 1-7, 2009. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. of Mt. Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio will kick off the Wiley College 2009 Religious Emphasis Week observance beginning with a community worship service at 6 p.m., Sunday, February 1 at the Julius S. Scott, Sr. Chapel.

Dr. Moss will also deliver the sermon at 11 a.m. worship service on Monday, February 2.

The college's theme for this occasion is "Christian Ethics for the 21st Century Christian" and the guiding scripture for the week is Romans 12:1-2.

The public is invited. For more information, contact Melody Patterson at 903-927-3391 or Rev. Michelle Hall at 903-927-2455.

#### UM Student Day 2009

Lon Morris College will celebrate, United Methodist Student Day, January 31, 2009.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie will be the guest speaker for the worship service.

College information will be available, the Fine Arts Department will hold auditions and there will be a Lon Morris basketball game. The game is open to junior and senior high student ministry groups. The cost for the event is free.

For more information contact Rev. Rhett Ansley at 903-589-4003, [ransley@lonmorris.edu](mailto:ransley@lonmorris.edu) or go to [www.LonMorris.edu](http://www.LonMorris.edu) or [www.BeaBearcat.com](http://www.BeaBearcat.com).

#### Houston North Emmaus Community Hosts Spiritual Formation Retreat

A new opportunity is being offered that will allow men in the local church to feed the soul without neglecting the joy they express in working in their ministries.

January 28-31, the Houston North Emmaus Community will lead the Walk to Emmaus retreat at the Kaiserhof Retreat Center near Tomball, Texas.

For more details, go to [www.hnec.org](http://www.hnec.org) or call Larry Smith at 936-653-2287.

### Learning Opportunities

**Practicing A Life Of Prayer – Seminar At John Wesley UMC**  
Dr. Maxie Dunnam, widely-known leader, preacher, evangelist, and author, will serve as leader of this year's prayer seminar.

The seminar, entitled "Living Prayer: Introduction and Guidance to Practicing a Life of Prayer," will be held Saturday, January 31, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. A fellowship coffee begins at 8:30 a.m.

Invite a friend and register now. The cost of \$20 includes seminar, lunch, and refreshments.

For more information, contact Rev. Pam Jackson at 281-444-2112 or [pjackson@jwumc.org](mailto:pjackson@jwumc.org).

John Wesley UMC is located at 5830 Bermuda Dunes, Houston, TX 77069.

#### Summer 2009 College Pastoral Internship Project (CPIP)

Young adults age 25 and under interested in pastoral ministry; who have completed at least one year of college and earned no less than a 2.5 grade average are encouraged to apply.

Applications are due **February 1**. For information or an application, go to

<http://www.txcumc.org/internshipproject>. Churches interested in hosting a summer intern should email Cindy Hassey at [chassey@txcumc.org](mailto:chassey@txcumc.org)

#### Pet Therapy Workshop

Paws 4 Love/hphp is hosting a Pet therapy (Delta Society Pet Partners) workshop March 7 in the Liberty, Texas area.

The workshop entitled, "*Pet Therapy 101*" is designed to introduce handlers to Delta Society Pet Partner program and to the programs offered by Paws 4 Love/hphp, a Delta Society affiliate.

The workshop begins a 9 a.m. and ends at 1 p.m. The \$50 registration fee includes the Delta Society Student Home Study manual and shipping. For those who are ready to be evaluated with their pet, team evaluations will be held that afternoon. Evaluation fee is \$25 pass or fail.

For more information and registration, please contact me by e-mail or by phone or visit the website at [www.paws4lovehphp.com](http://www.paws4lovehphp.com).

**St. Luke's UMC Houston Starts New Year with Men's Life!**

MEN'S LIFE programs have

spread throughout the entire Houston area as men are exploring new opportunities for personal growth in all of their relationships.

When men connect in life-changing ways, a powerful ripple effect touches families, the workplace, even our communities. Deeper connections with God and other men inspire transformational change that is hard to describe.

Through authentic and entertaining presentations and small group discussion, MEN'S LIFE helps men grow in authentic relationships with one another, while steering men to be all they were created to be.

St. Luke's UMC's MEN'S LIFE program encourages men in their transformation towards being successful leaders at home, work and in their communities.

The topic for the study is Men's Life II: Winning @ Home (and life in general). The session is led by Senior Pastor Tom Pace and begins at 6:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. This session focuses on the home and family. Come and explore how a man can enjoy and relate to family in a whole new way.

Register anytime during the semester by calling 713-402-5086.

#### Mt. Sequoyah Offers Three Conferences in 2009

Coming early in 2009, Mt. Sequoyah will host the following events:

Addiction Ministry Responders Conference, February 23-25 – A conference for all church leadership to help shape the church's response to substance abuse problems within their communities and congregations.

Small Church Leadership

Institute, March 9-13 – A conference to equip laity and clergy with the knowledge and skills for leading their small attendance church into the future.

Caring for Creation Conference, March 27-29 – A conference designed to educate, network and inspire faith communities to initiate, develop and sustain stewardship programs that will protect and celebrate God's creation.

#### Workshop features author of "Serve God, Save the Planet"

Chapelwood UMC will host a Creation Care Workshop for clergy, featuring Dr. Matthew Sleeth, author of *Serve God, Save the Planet*, on Monday, January 26, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sleeth, a former emergency room doctor who is now a leader in the eco-evangelism movement, will help clergy explore and examine creation care and stewardship of resources within their congregations. There will be an opportunity for dialogue following his presentation.

Contact Trish Badger at 713-354-4487 or [tbadger@chapelwood.org](mailto:tbadger@chapelwood.org). The event will be held at Chapelwood UMC, 11140 Greenbay, Houston, Texas 77024, in the Fellowship Hall. The suggested donation of \$20 will pay for lunch and a copy of the book.

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

**Contact Thelma Jones at 713-521-9383, ext. 335 or [thelmaj@methodists.net](mailto:thelmaj@methodists.net)**