

# Cross Connection

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## Grassroots support sought to streamline candidacy

### Lifting your voice now paves the way for diverse pastors later

By Eleanor L. Colvin  
Director of Communications  
Texas Annual Conference of The UMC

The Clergy Recruitment Ministry Team of the Texas Annual Conference Center for Clergy Excellence invites supporters to join them at General Conference to silently advocate for change.

The General Conference will consider legislation that propos-

Board of Ordained Ministry. "I think we've made the process too complicated for entering ministry, and, in turn, we have lost candidates who've been overwhelmed by that process," Temple said.

The legislation proposes the following to simplify the candi-

the probationary period from three years to two years;

- Change "probationary" language to "residency" language.

"This is to reverse some of the more recent changes that we

don't have to be so convoluted."

#### What's the rush?

Rev. Rebekah Miles of the Arkansas Annual Conference recently provided an overview of more than 50 years of ministry studies in the November/December/January 2007-2008 edition of *Circuit Rider*. Miles, who is a member of Ministry Study Commission, wrote that there have 14 ministry studies in the last 16 quadrennia.

Naturally, with each new study, new issues arise – and much has changed since the first study was authorized by the 1948 General Conference.

"If we keep on authorizing new studies in the hope of working out these tensions in our ecclesiology, we'll still be studying when Jesus comes—at which point, our studies and our ordering of ministry won't likely matter all that much," Miles wrote.

Miles and members of the TAC Clergy Recruitment  
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**"I think we've made the process too complicated for entering ministry, and, in turn, we have lost candidates who've been overwhelmed by that process."**

**Rev. Chappell Temple  
Pastor, Lakewood UMC and  
Conference Delegate to General Conference**

es the ministry candidacy process be streamlined.

Rev. Chappel Temple, who is the senior pastor of Lakewood UMC and a General Conference delegate, authored and submitted the proposed legislation on behalf of the TAC

dacy process:

- Reduce pre-candidacy discernment from two years to one year;
- Eliminate commissioning; separate ordination and full conference membership;
- Create an option to change

think proved not to be as helpful as some thought they'd be," Temple said of the probationary and commissioning practices that are relatively new to Methodism. "It's important that we keep the standards high, but some of the mechanics of that

## Spring delegate meetings jump-start work of Annual Conference

By Eleanor L. Colvin  
Director of Communications  
The Texas Annual Conference

Delegates to the Texas Annual Conference will get an advanced look at legislation, nominations and other issues during this year's Pre-Conference Delegate Meetings.

Each district will host a meeting for its lay and clergy delegates between April 13-20

or May 5-8.

The Rev. B.T. Williamson, director of the Center for Clergy Excellence and a member of the Annual Conference Planning Team, is organizing the Pre-Conference Delegate Meetings.

"The purpose of the meeting

is to give people something that whets their appetites and gets them enthused about the annual conference," Williamson said. "We can enliven the annual conference experience by providing helpful, directive information that provides quality information in advance."

This year's attendees not only will engage in holy conferencing on the day's issues, they will also learn new hymns. The goal: administrative and spiritual preparation of the delegates will ready them for a dynamic

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



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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## Methodists Retirement Communities names Jennette new CEO

By Renee Stavroff  
Methodist Retirement Communities

The Methodist Retirement Communities Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Ron Jennette as the organization's new Chief Executive Officer.

Jennette is currently the Chief Executive Officer at Air Force Villages in San Antonio. With more than 1,200 residents on two campuses, this organization serves retired military officers and their families. He has served at Air Force Villages since 2003 and prior to that was Chief Financial Officer for a Methodist retirement community in Tennessee.

He has worked in the field of aging services since 1994 and prior to that held various financial management positions. A native of Kentucky, Jennette



Jeanette

has a Bachelor's Degree in Finance from the University of Louisville and certification as a Management Accountant.

The Board of Directors, with the support of MHS Alliance, considered several candidates and believes that Ron Jennette brings an excellent combination of leadership skills, vision for the organization, and passion for the ministry of Methodist Retirement Communities.

Jennette will assume his new CEO responsibilities in early April. In the next several months, he and his wife will relocate to The Woodlands area.

The board would like to thank the staff, clients, families and other important constituents for their support during this time of leadership transition. Please join us in welcoming Ron Jennette as our new Chief Executive Officer.

## Early responder team training event

By Rev. Clayton Whitaker  
Disaster Response  
Texas Annual Conference

Early Responder Teams are trained and equipped to enter a disaster site soon after one strikes. They are self-sustaining in that they have their own transportation, fuel, food, equipment, and lodging already covered.

ER Teams provide a Christian presence in bringing immediate assistance to hurting people.

The Texas Annual Conference, in partnership with UMCOR, will conduct Early responder training using approved UMCOR curriculum. Early responders representing our conference must have this training to be certified.

Our goal is to see each of our nine districts with 25-plus persons trained for this vital mission effort.

The cost for the training is \$20 which includes lunch, Safe Sanctuary training, photo identification badge and a T-shirt.

Checks should be made payable to Partners In Mission and sent to 5215 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77002.

To register or for more information, contact Rev. Clayton Whitaker at 281-452-2861 or [claytonwhitaker@sbcglobal.net](mailto:claytonwhitaker@sbcglobal.net)

## Gift of fabric will support 'Nothing but Nets' initiative

By Nancy Hinshaw  
Episcopal Office - The Texas Annual Conference

At the 2007 session of Annual Conference, members of our Texas/Cote d'Ivoire delegation received gifts of traditional clothing made from brightly colored fabrics in a pattern that included the cross and flame.

After that presentation, we witnessed the generous out-



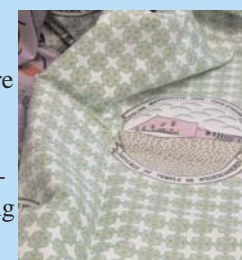
The pattered fabric that includes the cross and flame logo of the United Methodist Church.

pouring of donations for Nothing but Nets and several churches and individuals requested information on how to order the fabric.

We have been humbled by a gift from our Ivorian friends who had several bolts delivered to our conference office at no charge.

In response, we are offering you an opportunity to purchase the fabric at a cost of \$10 per yard. It is no coincidence that the cost of fabric is the same as the cost of a mosquito net for a family in Cote d'Ivoire. All funds collected will be used to further our goal of covering the entire country in mosquito nets.

If you are interested in purchasing this



fabric for use in making traditional clothing, banners for your church, altar coverings, etc. please contact Nancy Hinshaw (713-533-3710, [nhinshaw@txcumc.org](mailto:nhinshaw@txcumc.org)) in the office of Bishop Janice Riggle Huie.

### Early Responder Training Events 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

DATE	LOCATION
April 5	St. Andrew's UMC Mt. Pleasant, Texas
April 12	St. Luke's UMC Kilgore, Texas
April 19	The Foundry UMC Houston, Texas



# First UMC Crockett, Methodist Children's Home form partnership to reach "at-risk youth"

By Bryan Mize  
Director of Publications  
Methodist Children's Home

As a resident of Crockett for the past 15 years, James Berry has observed the hopelessness at-risk youth face in this small, rural East Texas community, located halfway between Huntsville and Palestine.

With few programs available for youth after school and on

Operational expenses are shared by both ministries.

The gymnasium is part of a former intermediate school campus, which is located next to the church in downtown Crockett. FUMC purchased the vacant buildings and land and plans to develop it into a "hub for social

going out to meet the kids where they are," Berry said. "These kids need to know that there are people who care about them."

Berry has seen evidence of the benefits of the program, with some students already showing improvement in their



**"The focus of our program is helping youth personally, not just providing something to do after school."**

**James Berry, Program Coordinator  
Crockett Youth Services**

weekends, Berry said many young people turn to criminal activity in an effort to escape their boredom.

"Since there's not a lot for them to do, the kids get restless and end up getting into trouble," he said. "People have prayed a long time for the youth in this community."

Berry believes a new partnership between First United Methodist Church of Crockett and Methodist Children's Home is an answer to these prayers. A former employee at the Crockett State School, Berry serves as the program coordinator for Crockett Youth Services, an educational and recreational program for youth ages 13-17.

The program, which began in February, offers tutoring sessions four nights each week, art lessons, recreational activities and service opportunities in the community. Berry utilizes the talents of adult volunteers and high school honors students to provide leadership for the various services. In this partnership, MCH provides the full-time coordinator position and program support, while FUMC provides offices, rooms for tutoring and a gymnasium.

services," according to Keith Tilley, associate pastor.

He said the program offered in partnership with MCH is the first of several services that could utilize the facilities. "I believe this program with Methodist Children's Home has great potential to impact youth and families in this community," Tilley said. "I can see God doing some incredible things."

Tilley said the partnership is helping church members learn the importance of serving their community. "We are discovering that this will change the whole culture of our church," he said. "It is making us more conscientious about the needs in this community. We are becoming more hospitable and welcoming as we meet needs through hands-on attention."

Berry and Dr. Joe Garms, a Crockett resident and consultant for the program, are working hard to publicize the program. Berry draws from the many relationships he has established with children and parents as a coach in youth sports leagues to spread the word about the program. He and Tilley also frequently visit with students during lunch at school. "We're

grades. He also believes the program helps student volunteers develop self-confidence in their abilities and knowledge as they observe the results of their work.

Jermeka, an 11th grader, looks forward to helping Coby, a 6th grader, with his homework each week. "I want to help guide these children in the right direction," she said. "I want to help them make good grades and good choices."

When Berry recruits volunteers, he makes sure they clearly understand their responsibilities. "The focus of our program is helping youth personally, not just providing something to do after school," he said. "I tell every volunteer, 'If you want to be a role model, then you can serve here. If you don't, then this isn't the place for you.'"

Berry believes God led him to this new leadership role, and he speaks passionately about the mission of this program. "I believe this is one of the reasons I'm on this earth," he said. "God put a calling before me and I take it seriously. And the best thing about this partnership is that both ministries are in it for the kids."



**Top Photo: Intensely focused. Coby gives his homework his undivided attention.**

**Middle Photo: Ashley and Cardell are busy with homework.**

**Bottom Photo: Left to right, James Berry, program coordinator for Crockett Youth Services; Cardell, Jermeka, Coby and Ashley. Jermeka and Ashley are honors students at Crockett High School and serve as volunteer tutors.**



# Candler and Lamar students devote s

By Eleanor L. Colvin  
Director of Communication  
Texas Annual Conference of The UMC

Coming in 528<sup>th</sup> place is usually not an honor. But, the ranking recently proved to be a blessing for Candler School of Theology seminarians and Lamar University Wesley Foundation students who cooperatively repaired the 528<sup>th</sup> home to achieve “completed” status by the Rita Recovery Office.

Twenty-six teams of “spring breakers” from eight states and Canada descended upon Beaumont during March. Six students from Emory University’s Candler School of Theology were among those dedicating their downtime to mission and ministry.

After racing to finish papers and assignments before the start of Spring Break, why devote your break to anything other than a break? Sara Corum, a 23-year-old first-year student at Candler had an answer to that question.

“We’re all pretty much veterans in the mission field,” said Corum, whose home church is First UMC in Jackson, Tennessee. “As seminarians, it’s a safe thing to say, we feel

called to this. It’s a part of who we are. But that’s not to say we don’t go out and have fun too.”

Matt Lawing, a second-year seminarian from Boger City UMC in Maiden, North Carolina, agreed that volunteering is one of many ways for them to live out their calling.

“I felt called to ministry at a young age and ran a long time,

**“I felt called to ministry at a young age and ran a long time, because I didn’t feel capable of doing it ... I thought the only ministry job was being in a pulpit preaching. I found there’s a lot more to do — like Rita Recovery.”**

because I didn’t feel capable of doing it,” said 29-year-old Lawing. “I thought the only ministry job was being in a pulpit preaching. I found there’s a lot more to do – like Rita Recovery.”

Second-year student Meg Edmondson, who is a leader in the national Young Seminarians Network, agreed that mission work is high on the group’s priority list because it’s fun and meaningful.

“We like going out to dinner and socializing, but we also want to step outside our comfort zones and be in hands-on mis-

people in two different spectrums working together. It’s not about where I go to school or where you go to school, it’s about someone else’s needs for a change.”

And, meeting the needs of the community was certainly one reason Lamar University Campus Minister Rev. Joshua Hale planned this partnership.

**Matt Lawing**  
Student, Candler School of Theology

sion and experience something different from what we learn in school and our experiences in our local churches,” said Edmondson whose home church is Wesley UMC in Beaumont.

“It’s exciting to see young

“We’re focused on making disciples and transforming the world,” Hale said. “So, doing mission and service is a crucial part of both of those things.

“It’s nice to have the Candler group here to be an

example for the campus ministry students and to share why they are considering ministry.”

Calandre Carr is one such Lamar student who served alongside the Candler seminarians.

“I enjoy helping,” said Calandre Carr, when sharing why she chose to participate.

Acknowledging that there were some difficulties in rallying her Lamar University classmates for a week of mission and service, Carr remained focused on the mission: “It’s better to come as a few people who are willing to work and show this family that there are people out there still working.”

“Showing families” is what recovery work is all about: showing families the love of God; showing families what the hands and feet of Christ look like when working in their communities; and showing families – as Carr said: “We’re all the church.”

*For more information of Rita Recovery or to volunteer, visit [www.umcortexas.org](http://www.umcortexas.org) or call 409-892-0140.*

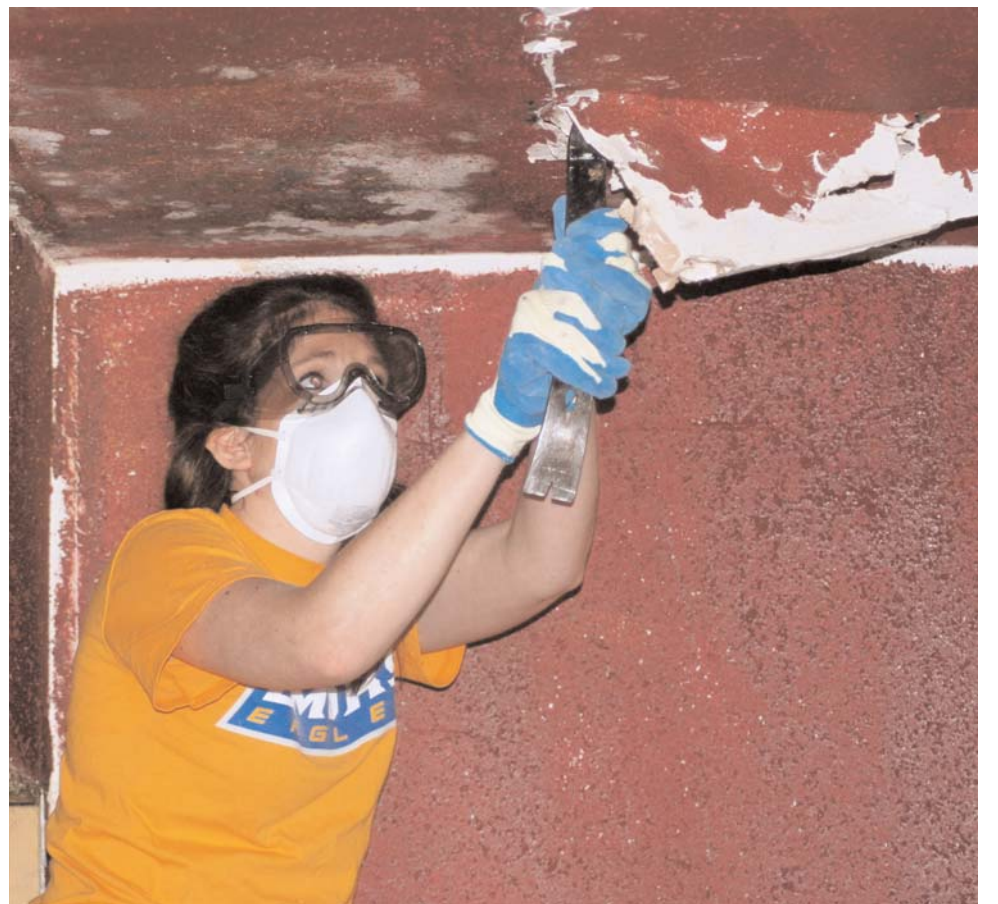


**Left: Lamar University Wesley Foundation student, Callandre Carr loosens screws to speed up the removal of dry-wall.**

**Right: Rev. Joshua Hale, Lamar University campus minister, rips out damaged drywall in the ceiling of a Beaumont home.**



# Spring break to Rita Recovery



**Top Left Photo:** Sara Corum, a Candler seminarian, works to loosen a molded patch of drywall. **Top Right Photo:** Candler seminarian Meg Edmondson hauls debris from the work site. **Bottom Left Photo:** Matt Lawing of Candler School of Theology prepares the work area by setting up ladders and other equipment. **Bottom Right Photo:** Sara Corum of Candler School of Theology painstakingly removes portions of a ceiling damaged by Hurricane Rita.



# Westchase UMC hosts Pakistani gospel concert

By Brant Mills  
Web Content Manager  
Texas Annual Conference

On Friday, March 7, Pakistani gospel singer Pastor Ernest Mall performed in Houston.

The event was organized by Dr. Afzaal Firdous, pastor of First United Methodist Church of Centerville and was hosted by Dr. Frank Varro at Westchase United Methodist Church.

Pastor Mall began singing 30 years ago in church. When he performs in India or

Pakistan 80,000 to 100,000 are typically in attendance. He sings in English, Hindi and Punjabi and plays a box-shaped instrument called a harmonium.

For this event, he was accompanied by Happy Singh on an instrument called tabla that are like small drums.

See photo gallery at: <http://www.txcumc.org/mall-concert>.



**Top Left Photo:** Gospel singer and Pastor, Ernest Mall performs a song in English, Hindi and Punjabi. During the performance, he uses the harmonium, an organ-like keyboard instrument that produces tones through metal reeds actuated by air forced from a bellows.

**Top Right:** Pastor Mall was accompanied by Happy Singh, who played the tabla, a drum-like instrument.

**Bottom Left:** A group photo of (from left to right) Happy Singh, Dr. Afzaal Firdous, Pastor Ernest Mall, and Dr. Frank Varro.

# Delegate meetings jump-start work of Annual Conference

*Continued from page 1*

move of God annual conference.

Dr. Elijah Stansell Jr., director of the Center for Connectional Resources, added during an Annual Conference Planning Team meeting that the pre-conference gatherings help equip delegates to serve with excellence.

“When we first put these meetings on the calendar, it was so our delegates would come to annual conference and be active participants who are informed,” Stansell said. “Decision making items that

are going to impact the life of the annual conference will be the priority.”

Delegates are encouraged to review the Pre-Conference Journal and bring questions to the meetings. Pre-Conference Journals will be mailed no later than April 6 and will be available online April 1.

Following is a list of the dates and locations for each district gathering.

DATE	TIME	DISTRICT	CHURCH
4/13/08	7 p.m.	Central South District	St. Luke's UMC
4/14/08	7 p.m.	Northwest District	Chandler UMC
4/15/08	7 p.m.	North District	First UMC Jefferson
4/17/08	7 p.m.	Central North District	Spring Woods UMC
4/20/08	3 p.m.	East District	First UMC Lufkin
5/5/08	7 p.m.	Southeast District	First UMC Nederland
5/6/08	7 p.m.	Southwest District	First UMC Missouri City
5/7/08	7 p.m.	West District	A&M UMC
5/8/08	6:30 p.m.	South District	First UMC Pasadena



# Bishop Huie addresses delegation

By Jill E. Krone

Texas Annual Conference Delegation Communications

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie recently addressed the Texas Annual Conference Delegation during its February meeting at The Woodlands UMC.

Delegates worked together for two days reviewing legislation slated for presentation during General Conference, April 23 – May 2, 2008, in Fort Worth, Texas.

“This is the first time in 12 years as bishop that I’ve been invited to speak to a delegation,” Huie said, as she shared the legislative pieces the Council of Bishops finds most relevant and would like to see addressed during the 10-day meeting for considering church business and doctrinal standards.

“This is a new piece for us, to be this forthcoming in terms

of issues that we feel are important,” Huie said of the Council of Bishops.

Lay delegate, Sue Sullivan of Redwater UMC in Texarkana said she appreciated Bishop Huie addressing the Texas Conference Delegation on behalf of the Council of Bishops. “I gained insight into the anxieties of the USA and Central Conference delegations,” Sullivan added.

Representational vs. financial issues between the Central Conferences (outside the United States) and Annual Conferences (within the United States) was noted as one of the complicated issues facing General Conference delegates. The issue stems from near future estimates of 40 percent of the General Conference representa-

tives coming from Central Conferences and 60 percent of the budget from Annual Conferences.

“It’s not just about the dollars, although the dollars are important,” Huie said. “It’s about the relationship and feeling supported in the wider community. Things that are simple from our point of view are everything to them.”

In the future, the episcopacy will seek fewer bishops in 2012; an extension of the retirement age, and the release of the higher threshold of the 12-year service limit. Additionally, the Council of Bishops passed unanimously their view on guaranteed appointment.

“They are not seeking to do away with it but to begin to think of ways for this to be seen

not as a right but as a fulfillment,” Huie said.

Lay delegate, Tom Wussow of Kingwood stated, “I thought Bishop Huie’s presentation was very informative and effectively covered several of the key issues.”

## Future focus

As the denomination moves beyond these sessions, much of what will be presented throughout General Conference is focused on “four great things” that identify areas of emphasis for the future of Methodism:

Creating new places for new people, starting new churches and revitalizing existing congregations;

Leadership development – clergy and lay;

Global health initiatives with

a focus on stamping out HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and eliminating poverty.

“I’d like to see us start a new church each day in the United States and a couple daily around the world,” Huie said.

“We are seeing more clarity of mission and purpose than we have in a while. Mission, vision and creativity – we hope you lean in that direction even when it means taking a risk.”

Bishop Huie concluded her time with the delegation with a challenge: “We invite you to approach with a conciliatory spirit and to follow the Wesley rules by asking, ‘Will it do good? What harm will it do? And, does it invite others to fall in love with God?’”

## Grassroots support sought to streamline candidacy

Continued from page 1

Ministry Team contend that the current path to ordination is long and unnecessarily cumbersome and bureaucratic.

“It’s discouraging to potential candidates for ministry — especially younger adults and people from some ethnic minority groups,” Miles wrote in *Circuit Rider*. “This is the number one complaint I hear from young pastors and candidates for ministry.

“If the 2008 General Conference streamlines the process leading to ordination, it will be a great achievement with lasting impact for the church and its mission.”

Meg Edmondson, who is a Candler School of Theology student and a member of the Young Seminarians Network, affirmed Miles’ assessment of the current candidacy process.

“We bemoan the candidacy process,” Edmondson said. “Our common thread [of concern] is the lack of communication in the process and lack of consistency between annual conferences ... For being a connectional system, we’re not so good at being connectional on this. I like the legislation and firmly believe in it.”

Flexibility is another issue in the can-

didacy process that seminarians hope will be addressed.

“I missed a DCOM (District Council on Ministry) meeting because it was scheduled right over a final,” said Matt Lawing, a second-year student at Candler. Lawing added that he called and attempted to reschedule his DCOM meeting. “They basically told me, ‘We’re doing it on this day. Either you come or don’t come.’”

Rev. Joshua Hale, Lamar University Campus Minister, echoed Lowing’s sentiments.

“Flexibility and attention to individual detail is not there at all,” Hale said. “If flexibility is there, it’s because individual annual conferences have built it in, and they have to buck the system to do that.”

### What can you do?

The Clergy Recruitment Ministry Team will wear spotted owl hats at General Conference to symbolize the fact that young candidates and young clergy are now an “endangered species” in the United Methodist Church. Additionally, the team will provide copies of the statement of support; owl

hats for young candidates and clergy; and “spotted owl society” stickers for all who support this grassroots effort.

Supporters are asked to silently advocate by attending the Opening Worship of General Conference on Wednesday, April 23; Morning Worship and Young People’s Address on Thursday, April 24; and to be present in the gallery at the Ministry and Higher Education Legislative Committee (#12) on April 24 through April 27.

Travel stipends are available to 30 young candidates and clergy from the Texas Annual Conference. E-mail [chasey@txcumc.org](mailto:chasey@txcumc.org) to register for stipends.

Additionally, you are invited to sign a statement of support. Visit [www.txcumc.org/candidacystatement](http://www.txcumc.org/candidacystatement) to learn more and to add your signature.

This grassroots effort speaks to Miles’ assertion that Methodist tradition “allows us to be creative as we seek to make disciples.”

“It invites us, when we dare, to function less like a large bureaucratic institution and more like the fluid and nimble movement that was early Methodism,” Miles wrote. “It fosters an environment where we can respond quickly to the

leading of the Holy Spirit and the needs of the time.”

And, among the significant needs of this time, are younger and diverse clergy.

“The church is coming to this shock moment: that 50 percent of our clergy will be retiring in seven years,” said Edmondson of the Young Seminarians Network. “There are 872 young adults in ministry in the United Methodist Church, under the age of 35 as ordained deacons and elders. That’s it. That’s scary.”

Edmondson’s classmate at Candler, Sara Corum agrees that urgent attention should be given to the ministry process instead of another half-century of study.

“It would be a really good time for the church to start being supportive of young people,” Corum said.

Streamlining the candidacy process is one such way the church can show universal support for future clergy.

Visit [www.txcumc.org/candidacystatement](http://www.txcumc.org/candidacystatement) to learn more and to add your signature in support of the candidacy legislation going before the General Conference in April.



## Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

### Fellowship Opportunities

#### **59th Annual Women's Day**

Join Trinity East UMC in celebration of *Women's Day*, a 3-day event scheduled for March 26-28. Team leaders, Debra Carter and Ginita Phelps have planned the following itinerary:

Guest preachers are: Rev. Michelle Hall, First UMC on March 26; Rev. Lorraine Brown, Faith UMC-Dickinson, Texas on March 27; and Rev. Rhanel Johnson, Union Memorial UMC on March 28.

The Annual Women's Day Prayer Breakfast will take place on Saturday, March 29 at 8:30 a.m., with Rev. Vickie Keys, officiating. A gift of \$8 is asked. The 59th Annual Women's Day Worship Service will be Sunday, March 30, 10:30 a.m. Judge Veronica Price will be the guest speaker.

#### **Native American Ministries Sunday**

The United Methodist Church will observe Native American Ministries Sunday on April 6.

One of the six Special Sundays in the United Methodist Church, offerings given on this day will help fund Native Americans urban ministries, provide scholarships for Native Americans attending United Methodist and other approved seminaries, or develop and nurture conference-based Native American ministries.

More information is available at [http://www.umcgiving.org/content/sundays/NAMS\\_nav/native.asp](http://www.umcgiving.org/content/sundays/NAMS_nav/native.asp).

#### **St. Paul's Book Group to Discuss "Same Kind of Different as Me"**

At their April 15 meeting, the Chapter One Book Group at St. Paul's United Methodist Church will discuss, *Same Kind of*

*Different as Me*; a book about a modern-day slave, an International Art Dealer, and the unlikely woman who bound them together. The book is by Ron Hall and Denver Moore.

The group meets at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month in the church's Youth Library. It is open to anyone who enjoys reading and discussing a wide variety of books. To be added to the group's emailing list, contact Linda@hibit.com.

Books for discussion are selected several months in advance. Among those to be discussed through the rest of the year are, *What Is the What* by Dave Eggers, *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, and *March* by Geraldine Brooks.

#### **Celtic Spirituality Retreat**

St. Paul's United Methodist Church is hosting a Celtic Spirituality retreat at Ole Moon, the church's retreat center near Magnolia. The retreat will begin at 7 p.m. Friday, April 18, and conclude at noon Sunday, April 20.

Rev. Gail Williford, St. Paul's Minister of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation will lead the retreat.

This retreat is open to all women. No specific religious commitment is required, and people of all faiths are welcome. The \$85 registration fee includes five meals. Maps will be provided to registrants. Carpooling is encouraged.

For more information or to register for this retreat, contact Rev. Gail Williford at St. Paul's, [gail-williford@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:gail-williford@stpaulshouston.org) or 713-528-0527. The church's website is [www.stpaulshouston.org](http://www.stpaulshouston.org).

#### **United Methodist Men Retreat**

The United Methodist Men of the Texas Annual Conference

will host their annual Spring retreat April 18-20 at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center.

Guest preacher will be Rev. Matt Idom, senior pastor at First UMC in Bryan, Texas. Registrations can be taken on line at [www.tcumm.org](http://www.tcumm.org) or you can mail your registration to Rev. Paul Woodworth, 20 Scenic Circle, Pt. Blank, Texas 77346.

### Mission Opportunities

#### **West University UMC to host guest speaker from Rwanda**

West University UMC will host Rev. Greg Jenks and Ms. Epiphany Mujawimana of Zimbabwe Orphans Endeavor, (ZOE) Ministry on April 6-7, 2008. Rev. Jenks will preach on Sunday, April 6 at the 9 and 11 a.m. worship services.

The ZOE Ministry originated in the North Carolina Conference and has expanded nationwide. Its purpose is to equip orphans with essential life skills. It is designed to create "families" of orphans in their own villages that will become financially independent within 2-3 years. Ms. Mujawimana is head of the *Giving Hope Project*. It is a ministry that focuses on discipleship, HIV/AIDS awareness, health and hygiene, and cultivation of crops. These two ministries will partner to open a facility in Rwanda that will serve approximately 810 children.

To attend this informative session about hearing God's call and learning more about new ministries in Africa, contact Susan Nutter, Director of Communications at 713-664-8111, ext. 21.

### Learning Opportunities

#### **Ministry Leadership Training Event by Easum, Bandy and**

### **Associates**

*Multiplying and Coaching Leaders for Outward Focused Ministry* is the title of the 2-day training conference scheduled for March 28-29, 2008 at Gateway Community Church in Houston, Texas.

The event has been designed to help churches make the transition from *It's All About Us* to an *Outward Focused Ministry*. Keynote speakers are Bill Tenny-Brittan, Tom Bandy and Bill Easum. This year, the conference is offering follow-ups to the workshops that include six months of webinars and coaching seminars by the senior partners of EBA.

For registration information, go to <http://www.txcumc.org/convergence08>.

#### **2008 Stewardship Summit**

Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at Greggton UMC, 1101 Pine Tree Road in Longview, Texas.

Clergy and laity can choose 4 of 10 workshops. The cost is \$15. A group discount (\$10) for four or more from the same church. Lunch is included.

To register, contact Krystol Brockermeier, 713-533-3780 or 800-521-9617.

#### **Total Marriage Makeover**

How do you create a lasting, intimate love with a member of the opposite sex? Hundreds of relationship experts have produced an avalanche of answers to this critical question. The trouble is, which answers are the right answers? To add to the confusion, many of these so-called experts keep failing in their own relationships.

There is one expert whose advice for couples actually works. He created marriage.

He created man and woman. He is God and He knows what He's talking about.

The Total Marriage Makeover provides a proven plan to revolutionize your marriage by improving your communication, your understanding for each other, and the spiritual aspect of your existence as a couple.

David Clarke will be the guest speaker at the event held at Klein UMC on Saturday, April 15, 2008.

It will be held in the Christian Life Center. The cost for the tickets is \$10 per person and registration is required. Lunch is included in the registration cost.

#### **"Addressing the Grief" training for faith-based communities**

Anyone from the faith-based community who is interested in learning about the effects of grief on children and families, in order to better prepare to serve them and support others in their daily lives, should attend.

The training event will be held at *Bo's Place* located at 10050 Buffalo Speedway in Houston, Texas on April 17, 9 a.m. to noon.

*Bo's Place* is Houston's only non-profit bereavement center for children and families who have experienced the death of an adult or child in their immediate family.

There's no charge for the training and everyone is welcome to attend.

For more information, contact Tanner Page at 713-942-8339 or the website, [www.bosplace.org](http://www.bosplace.org).