



Cross Connection

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

Label Area

Three Sections, Section A

076000 Volume 155

Number 30

November 28, 2008

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

“Be There. Be Hope.”



Bishop Janice Riggle Huie distributes the first net to help prevent the spread of malaria. The delegation from the Texas Annual Conference delivered nearly 1 million nets Cote d'Ivoire.

The front cover of the 2009 UMCOR calendar displays these words: “Be there. Be hope.” Through your generosity and your prayers, you were there in Cote d'Ivoire being hope to hundreds of thousands of children. You made it hap-

pen through the first integrated health campaign in Cote d'Ivoire, which included the gift of a long-lasting, insecticide-treated mosquito net, the most cost-effective way to prevent malaria.

Like the other members of

our team, I returned home tired in body, but joyful in my spirit. These children and their moms have a chance at a better life because of what you made possible. Thank you for your generosity and for giving me the privilege to participate.

Each of us has returned with stories—about the people, their faith and the children. I encourage you to ask a team member to share his/her story with you, your Sunday School class and your church. I offer one of my special memories.

Holy Communion has always been a special time for me. I believe that the sacraments are a means of God's grace. They are a “holy moment.”

The ordinary elements of earth—bread and grape juice—bring us into the presence of God. In eating the bread and drinking the juice, we receive

God's love and grace into our bodies. In some way—large or small—we are changed to become more like Jesus whose body we have shared.

For more than 30 years, I've been privileged to stand behind the Table and share the sacra

Continued on page 3

More news and photo coverage of the delegation's trip to Cote d'Ivoire are in the special edition section in this issue of Cross Connection





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.



First UMC Atlanta teen puts faith into action

By **Thelma Jones**

Savannah King has developed a love for mission ministry. This year, she set a goal of raising \$500 for the *Nothing But Nets* initiative. She not only accomplished her goal, but she raised an additional \$222.50 that she sent to Jamaica to a gentleman she met during a mission trip. He was living in a grass hut and the money helped him build a new house.

Savannah loves going to summer church camp. Each year she looks forward to going to Lakeview Retreat Center in Palestine, Texas. "Church camp means the world to me, because every year I seem to take home more than I came with," she says. She's not talking about physical things like a pillow cases participants may have

made. She means spiritual things, things that have a profound impact of one's life.

The first year she attended camp, she accepted Christ into her life. The second year, her walk with Christ deepened, so much so, that even her mother noticed. This year proved to be as fulfilling as the previous ones. This time she brought something back something tangible that she could share.

During a session at camp that focused on missions, it happened. "I could just tell the Lord was pulling on my heart," said King. "He wants me to do something specific." The camp coordinator showed a film about the *Nothing But Nets* initiative. "I had heard of it before, but I guess I never really paid attention to what it really was," she said.

This time, she paid attention and decided that this was "the something" God was calling her to do. "It was all I could do not to break down and cry when I found out about the little children and other people who were dying because they didn't have enough money to buy a mosquito net to keep from catching malaria." Savannah continued, "It is so sad to find out that every 30 seconds, someone dies from malaria. It leaves you speechless."

Savannah discovered she has a unique spiritual gift – the gift of baking. She used her gift in a fund raising project for the ministry of missions. She decided that she would bake pies and sell them. She did not set a specific price for her pies – she



Savannah King shows off one of her homemade pies.

asked for donations, instead. All proceeds went to the *Nothing But Nets* program.

Thelma Jones is the editor of the Cross Connection newspaper, a publication of the Texas Annual Conference.

Renewal Ministries – prioritizing prayer leads to new territory for extension ministry

By **Brant Mills**

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.

As an affiliate with the General Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Renewal Ministries has built about 10,000 prayer rooms in churches across the country and has started several prayer ministries for pastors. They have 50,000 prayer boxes in businesses where people can give prayer requests even if they don't go to church. Their ministry has also distributed one-million "prayer helps" in the form of CDs, books and prayer guides and initiated a world connection for prayer online at www.worldmethodist-prayerteam.org.

Today Rev. Terry Teykl, an ordained Elder in the Texas Annual Conference, takes the



Rev. Terry Teykl

core values to heart in his appointment at Renewal Ministries where he lives out the practice of fervent prayer and works toward the goal of equipping congregations. He didn't start out to be in ministry, though.

The Path to Renewal

Teykl was working as a mail carrier in Houston when he received his calling to preach. He says it was interesting because before then he had never been to church. He looked through the phone book and found information for Bellaire UMC, and began attending church there as they helped him take steps toward ordination.

In 1979 he started Aldersgate UMC in College Station. "The church grew to about 1,200 on Sunday and I began to write books on prayer – mobilizing churches to pray – and that was kind of a new approach," Teykl said. "I got so many invitations I had to resign the church and was appointed to this prayer consulting ministry."

As an extension minister, Rev. Teykl helps churches and

ministries focus on prayer. "We want to pray the community into a relationship with Jesus Christ," Teykl said. They offer weekend seminars to churches who want to attend a Saturday event and also help individuals with their personal prayer lives and prayer walking.

Wesleyan Focus

Renewal Ministries "is focused on embracing Wesleyan spirituality," Teykl noted, adding that: "John Wesley was certainly prayerful. Charles wrote many hymns but encouraged the Methodists to worship every day and used a pocket hymnal to promote that. Early Methodists carried pocket hymnals and worshipped a lot. Charles taught folks to worship with hymns. They basically sang their theology and did it in a lifestyle manner... hoping people would worship every day and not just Sunday. We try to revive that."

In conjunction with KSBJ, Renewal Ministries recently started a program called "Praydown at High Noon," which involves asking people to say the Lord's prayer at noon every day.

"We are trying to build a million voices of prayer – a team that will have an identity to pray for the Gulf Coast," Teykl said, referencing the destruction left by Hurricane Ike and the current economic climate.

Rev. Teykl is available to speak for churches, districts and annual conferences and says he will be speaking at the Conference on Evangelism in January.

If you are in need of the services they offer, you can reach Renewal Ministries through their website at www.renewalministries.com.

Additional Resources

Renewal Ministries has built a system for a "virtual prayer room" that is customizable for churches to offer online, www.virtualprayerroom.net. They also have books available through <http://www.prayer-pointpress.com/store/menu.htm>.

*Submitted by Brant Mills
Texas Conference Office of Communications.*



First UMC Houston hosts Disability Awareness Sunday



Cutlines:

As Adair Smith was assisted to the podium to read scripture from his brailled Bible, the congregation smiled. As Taylor Tillman and Ryan Wells (both teens with special needs) gracefully danced onstage with a group of ballerinas, the audience clapped.

As the video testimonial chronicling the life of Jana and

Sunday in November at both, the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. services.

The 9 a.m. traditional service featured the Brookwood Handbell Choir.

The Brookwood Community provides an educational environment that creates meaningful jobs, builds a sense of belonging, and demands dignity and respect for adults with special needs.

touched, uplifted and honored by the outpouring of love, prayers and support. Our congregation was humbled and proud to be a part of Disability Awareness Sunday.

The JOY Ministry reaches out to kids/youth/adults with special needs through Sunday School, respite nights, summer camp, e-devotionals, educational

“It touched my heart to hear how the children and adults with their differing abilities were able to be an active part of the worship service so they could share their precious gifts with the community of faith.”

I hope others can be encouraged to sponsor a Disability Awareness Sunday and develop their own special needs ministry for truly there is a blessing and joy to be found in this ministry.”

Rev. Greg Edwards
Disability Committee Chairperson

David House as they bravely raise a child with special needs played on the large screens, tears were wiped and sniffles were heard. Welcome to Disability Awareness Sunday at First UMC West Campus!

The JOY Ministry, a ministry for kids/youth/adults with special needs, and First UMC hosted the third annual Disability Awareness Sunday on the third

The 11a.m. contemporary service featured Matt Brouwer, a Christian singer. Both services featured Cookie Joe’s Ballet Grace Dance Company and a special musical presentation orchestrated by Worship Directors, Molly Ness and Keith Williams. JOY volunteers and buddies served as ushers.

JOY families who attended these extra-special services were

seminars and various special events throughout the year.

For more information, please contact Tanya Sterling, Director/JOY Ministry at 713-458.4700 or tsterling@fmhouston.com.

Submitted by Tanya Sterling
Director, JOY Ministry

“Be There. Be Hope.”

Continued from page 1

ment of Communion. On Sunday two weeks ago, I stood behind the Table with Bishop Boni. He held the bread and I held the cup. About 2,000 people had gathered on the grounds of the Methodist Hospital in Dabou. We were seated under a series of tents to protect us from the blazing sun. The temperature was in the mid-90s or warmer, and all

the nets (“to show the love of Jesus not only by our words, but also by our actions”). Then we moved to a second tent and began seeing the children.

After a few minutes, I got to move to the end of the line where we were distributing the mosquito nets—one net per child under the age of five. These nets are precious commodities. They cost about \$10

I have known for many years that Christ is present in bread and wine. In Cote d’Ivoire, Christ was present in a blue, long-lasting, insecticide-treated mosquito net.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie

the clergy were in full vestments.

Bishop Boni spoke the words of institution in French and I lifted the cup to the heavens. Together we served the Texas/Ivorian clergy teams who would move out into the tents to serve the people of God.

As people received the bread and wine, they offered joyful smiles to these Texas United Methodists who had come so far to share Holy Communion together and to offer hope to the children. One could feel the presence of God.

Just two days later, I found myself under another tent. This tent was in Alépé where we were celebrating the formal opening of the integrated health campaign. It was still hot. Several thousand people were waiting patiently and hundreds of children were waiting not so patiently. There were lots of public officials, a band playing, traditional dancing, and an honoring of the ancestors. Bishop Boni prayed. I explained why United Methodists from America helped to purchase

locally, but few people have that much money. The moms understand what these nets mean for their children, and they stand in the sun for hours with fussy children to be able to receive one or two. Most nets will be used by multiple children.

As I offered the net, the mom offered a joyful smile to this Texas United Methodist who had come so far to bring the nets and offer hope to these children. Then she said, “Merci” after which all the moms began a chorus of “Merci, merci.” In offering the net, we were offering life. We knew it. They knew it. One could feel the presence of God.

I have known for many years that Christ is present in bread and wine. In Cote d’Ivoire, Christ was present in a blue, long-lasting, insecticide-treated mosquito net. Again, thank you for being there with us bringing hope.

Grace and peace,

Janice Riggle Huie
Resident Bishop
Texas Annual Conference



Disaster recovery efforts continue

Hurricane Relief Efforts at Clear Lake UMC

By Natile Cook
Outreach Ministry
Clear Lake UMC

Despite all the warnings, Hurricane Ike took Galveston, Houston and surrounding areas by surprise. After all, no one actually expected Ike to hit directly, never mind cause the amount of damage and devastation left in his wake. As members of Clear Lake UMC (CLUMC) began to return home to survey the damage to their homes and the surrounding area, their immediate response to the whole disaster was, "How can I help?"

In response to this query, a Hurricane Ike Recovery Committee – "Operation Restoration" was quickly activated and a plan of action was developed.

During the first week while the committee was getting organized, a group of CLUMC youth went out each day to do some sort of recovery work. This dedicated group of teens and their adult advisors worked on jobs ranging from cleaning debris out of people's yards to helping clean up the damage sustained by Crossroads Homeless Program at Park Place UMC.

They also enthusiastically joined in the human chains required to unload the shipments of flood buckets sent by

UMCOR to be stored at CLUMC and dispensed from there.

The first Ike recovery team was sent out to several locations, including Pearland, Shore Acres, Galveston and Jamaica Beach. The work they performed that day included clearing people's yards of debris and then carrying their possessions out of their homes to the curb.

Every Saturday since that first one, teams have gone out to various homes in these locations pulling out sheetrock, trimming tree limbs, cleaning, cataloging peoples belongings for them and anything else the family might need. These teams also brought something to each of these families just as important as the grueling physical work....God's Love and comfort.

Many people whose homes were flooded and damaged needed hugs and words of encouragement as much as they needed the help with their homes. They definitely felt God's presence as the volunteers worked diligently for them.

CLUMC was asked by UMCOR to host Hurricane Recovery teams from out of town as Houstonians were not the only ones clamoring to help. In order to accommodate these teams, CLUMC first had to solve an important

issue....where would these teams shower?

After options were explored and discarded, the only real solution seemed to be to build showers! So, a group of very skilled and dedicated men set to work to build four shower stalls. Within two weeks, the showers were finished and ready for a test run. The first team to stay at CLUMC, a group of college students from a small Christian college in Illinois raved about how wonderful the showers were! There are several more teams scheduled to stay at CLUMC over the next few months to work in the affected areas.

Interfaith Caring Ministries set up a Hurricane Relief Center in League City. CLUMC held a food, water, clothing and household items drive to help outfit the Relief Center. CLUMC also sent 10 volunteers each Thursday and Friday to help man the Relief Center. Several other church members worked at the Center during the week whenever they could spare a few hours. A food drive has been held to benefit Seabrook United Methodist's Food Pantry.

The Hurricane Recovery Efforts of CLUMC will continue for as long as there is a need. The volunteering nature of the congregation of CLUMC is its driving force.

Operation Restoration in action!

Volunteers from Clear Lake UMC and a Christian college in Illinois worked tirelessly clearing property and cleaning homes in Hurricane Ike's aftermath.

Clear Lake UMC also held a food drive in support of the Hurricane Relief Center in League City, Texas.





ie throughout the conference

Extravagant generosity at its best - Christ UMC donates \$3,000 in Lowe's cards to disaster recovery

By Thelma Jones

There are seven core beliefs that are a part of the vision statement for the Texas Annual Conference.

They are: radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming relationships, risk-taking mission, extravagant generosity, connectional ministry and fervent prayer and diligent study of scripture. On a daily basis, as a church family, we are called to live out these beliefs.

In one compassionate gesture, Christ UMC exemplified three of the seven, extravagant generosity, connectional ministry and risk-taking mission. The church made a donation of \$3,000 in the form of gift cards through Lowe's Home Improvement Center. The cards were presented to Rev. Marty Boddie, senior pastor of Bay Vue UMC for distribution in High Island and Bolivar Peninsula areas.

Volunteers from Christ UMC, Tomball UMC and Klein Collins High School spent time in the devastated area clearing homes of debris and helping to rebuild the community.

The photos depict the work being done by the volunteer teams in the High Island and Bolivar Peninsula areas.





Recent disaster responses highlight UMCOR, UMVIM working relationship

Susan Meister
United Methodist Committee
On Relief

When the Louisiana and Texas Conferences invited UMCOR to consult in response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in September, the domestic disaster response ministry dovetailed with a well-established volunteer network.

Recent responses reflect deliberate efforts by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) over the past two years to strengthen their relationship and supply better training and support services to conferences facing natural disasters.

“An Excellent Relationship”

“This is evolving into a very excellent relationship,” explained Lorna Jost, UMVIM Coordinator for the North Central Jurisdiction. “UMCOR trains conference leadership in how to prepare for a disaster, and consults on the execution of a recovery plan after the disaster hits. UMVIM steers volunteers to where they are needed,” she continued.

UMCOR and UMVIM are two program areas of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) of The United Methodist Church. UMCOR maintains a corps of trained disaster response specialists to assist with relief and recovery work throughout the US. UMVIM has a coordinator in each of the five jurisdictions. Each annual conference identifies disaster response and volun-

teers in mission coordinators who work cooperatively on training and response with local churches and the denomination.

Emergency Response Teams Stand in the Gap

Early Response Teams (ERTs) occupy a unique position in the response to a disaster.

“The interesting thing is that (after Ike) now churches understand the need to be organized at their church and district level. We are scheduling (ERT) trainings each weekend as people understand the role of ER Teams.”

While ERTs are neither a first group of responders nor a recovery/rebuild/repair team, they establish the presence of the church in the early days of a response.

Kathie Mann, Texas Partners in Mission director (UMVIM coordinator), reports that more than 40 UMCOR-trained ERTs worked in the conference after Hurricane Ike’s landfall, mucking out homes affected by the high storm surge. In the southwest part of Louisiana, teams dealt with surge-related damage from Ike, but in Baton Rouge and other parts of the conference, teams tackled roof damage and tree removal, the effects of the winds of Hurricane Gustav.

“ERTs were first created in the 1990s as a cooperative effort between UMCOR and UMVIM,” explains UMCOR consultant Barbara Tripp, who is one of the authors of a compre-

hensive ERT manual. Under a 2007 covenant arrangement between the two program areas, UMCOR agreed to equip certified trainers in each local conference, who then train team members. When a disaster occurs, these trained volunteers are ready to make an appropriate early response.

Paulette West, North Alabama VIM Coordinator, has been actively involved in training and certification of ERT members in her conference. “It’s important to be proactive and have teams trained and ready,” she said. “They need to be self-contained and self-sufficient, with credentialing in place.” UMCOR encourages conferences to have clear requirements for members, including background checks, up-to-date ERT and safe sanctuary training, medical forms, t-shirts and photo badges.

Once the emergency phase of a disaster has passed, the conference disaster response organization and UMVIM remain closely allied to bring volunteers to the community for the long-term rebuilding effort.

Jurisdiction Offers Ongoing Coordination and Support

At a recent training event in Colorado, UMVIM representatives from all five jurisdictions met with UMCOR representatives to refine a response protocol laying out how the two groups would work together and properly use volunteer resources. Mann was in place in her home conference to coordinate after

“UMCOR and UMVIM learn from each other so that we can be more effective in our ministry.”

Kathie Mann reports that the Texas Conference has trained over 300 individuals for early response. “The interesting thing is that (after Ike) now churches understand the need to be organized at their church and district level,” she said. “We are scheduling (ERT) trainings each weekend as people understand the role of ER Teams.”

“There needs to be a good balance in our mission response,” said West. “We are called to be in missions in our local church, our communities, our conferences, our nation, and the world. Jesus called us to take His message to the ends of the earth.”

You Can Help

Volunteers are needed in Texas, Louisiana, and throughout the Midwest. Contact your Jurisdictional Volunteer in Mission Coordinator for information about volunteering.

You can help with the recovery from the 2008 Hurricanes with a donation to Advance No. 3019695, online or by check to UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. One hundred percent of your gifts to this and other UMCOR Advance Specials will be used to help survivors of natural disasters.

Susan Meister is UMCOR’s Domestic Disaster Response Correspondent.

Kathie Mann
Director of Partners In Mission
Texas Annual Conference

Ike and applied the recommended approach.

“After Ike, Bishop Huie toured the affected areas with the conference communicator and UMVIM representative, accompanied by UMCOR,” said Tom Hazelwood, UMCOR executive. “Plans were put in place for emergency response, and the ground work was laid for the long-term response.”

Already-existing disaster response organizations set up in both conferences from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were extended for Gustav and Ike immediate response. Plans are still evolving for the long-term recovery and rebuilding phase.

Ministries Learn and Grow for Effective Response

“In every disaster, we learn more about the best ways to be in ministry,” said Hazelwood.



Left: Larry Norman, Louisiana Conference VIM director, reports that ERTs worked primarily on tree removal and roof repair after Hurricane Gustav did damage in early September.

Mike DuBose/UMNS

Right: Leadership of UMVIM programs includes (left to right) Nick Elliott, Lorna Jost, Greg Forrester, Heather Wilson, Barbara Stone, Clint Rabb, Debbie Vest, and Beth Buchanan.

courtesy Barbara Stone





Ethnic Young Adult Summer Internship applications due February 1



2007 Ethnic Young Adult Interns

The Ethnic Young Adult Summer Internship (EYA) program is for young adults, ages 18-22, who have an interest in exploring issues of public policy, social justice advocacy and social change.

Applicants, age 18-22, will work in social justice placements in Washington, D.C.

The deadline to apply for an EYA Summer Internship in Washington, D.C., is February 1, 2009.

Sponsored by the Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group and administered by the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church & Society (GBCS), interns will work in social justice placements in the U.S. capital from June 1 to Aug. 1, 2009.

Interns will live in Christian community together at George Washington University, in the heart of downtown Washington, D.C. Work placements will be supplemented by evening intern-led devotions, Friday seminars on topics of social justice concern, area field trips, and Sunday worship in area United Methodist churches.

Participants must commit to being present at these activities.

Every Sunday, the intern group will experience the rich and diverse nature of The

United Methodist Church by visiting a different congregation. The congregations will reflect diversity in ethnic makeup as well as worship style.

Applicants must be in good academic standing at their college or university, demonstrate evidence of their concern for social justice through their extracurricular activity, academic study and have some history of involvement in their church and/or community.

If employed full-time, applicants must show active leadership and participation in their local church and community, including involvement in social justice activities.

The Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group and GBCS will provide round-trip transportation to and from Washington, D.C.; housing for the eight-week EYA Internship; commuter stipend for travel to intern work sites; and \$1,500 for each intern for the nine-week period.

EYA is funded through GBCS's Ethnic Local Church Grant program.

Participants are expected to return to their schools, churches and communities with an increased commitment to working with and on behalf of marginalized groups in society.

Participants are also expected to share their experience with other persons from their community, school and church.

An application form is available at www.umc-gbcs.org > Leadership Development > Racial and Ethnic Connections > EYA Internships.

For more information, contact the Rev. Neal Christie, Assistant General Secretary, Education and Leadership Formation, General Board of Church & Society, 100 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, or nchristie@umc-gbcs.org or (202) 488-5611.

GBCS is one of four international general program boards of The United Methodist Church. The board's primary areas of ministry are Advocacy, Education and Leadership Formation, United Nations and International Affairs, and resourcing these areas for the denomination. It has offices on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and at the Church Center at the United Nations in New York City.

Wayne L. Rhodes is Director of Communications, at the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C.

Ethnic Local Church and Human Relations Day

The Ethnic Local Church Grant program is to strengthen ethnic local churches through education, advocacy or leadership training and development as they engage in social justice.

The Human Relations Day Grant is to support ministries that respond to non-violent young offenders through education, advocacy or leadership training and development

Both grants are awarded through two funding cycles: January 10 is the deadline for March funding; August 10 for October. Grant decisions are made by GBCS's Board of Directors at its spring and fall meetings.

To qualify for either grant, applicants must be: a United Methodist local church, district, annual conference or other affiliated group/organization; or an ecumenical group/organization working with and through at least one United Methodist agency or organization, whose program affects at least one United Methodist local church.

Ethnic Local Church Grants

Ethnic Local Church Grant recipients must be programs initiated by or developed in partnership with one or more United Methodist ethnic local churches. Racial/ethnic persons shall be the majority of those served by the program.

The project must focus on needs identified by ethnic local churches as they address one or more chronic social problems or concerns, such as housing, employment, health care, human rights, education, the environment and racism.

Human Relations Day Grants

Human Relations Day Grant funds are raised through The United Methodist Church's Human Relations Day Special Sunday each year. Human Relations Day is the Sunday immediately fol-

lowing the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The observance will be Jan. 18 next year.

The United Methodist Book of Discipline describes Human Relations Day as a call to the Church to recognize the right of all God's children to realize their potential as human beings in relationship with each other. The Special Sunday supports the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program.

To be considered for a Human Relations Day Grant, a project must be initiated by or developed in partnership with a United Methodist church. The project must focus on needs of non-violent juvenile youth offenders as they address one or more chronic social problems or concerns, such as housing, employment, health care, human rights, education, the environment and racism.

Both Ethnic Local Church and Human Relations Day funding requests will be considered on their own merits with no required minimum or maximum amount. Intent of the grants programs is to provide start-up money.

Therefore, priority goes to first-time applicants. All funding from GBCS must be used for programmatic components and not for salaries, purchase of equipment, purely administrative costs, and direct delivery of services or building construction.

Priority consideration shall be given to programs that are part of a Comprehensive Plan of an Annual Conference.

Grant applications can be obtained at www.umc-gbcs.org/GBCSGrants or from Marvlyn Scott, mscott@umc-gbcs.org.

For more information, contact The Rev. Neal Christie, Assistant General Secretary, GBCS Education and Leadership Formation, nchristie@umc-gbcs.org or (202) 488-5611.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Fellowship Opportunities

St. Paul's Bayou City Women's Chorus To Perform

A Wish for the World is the theme for the Bayou City Women's Chorus' concert at the December 11 meeting of the St. Paul UMC Prime Timers, a senior adult ministry of the church.

The theme will center around angels and the spiritual forces of healing and peace for the planet. The concert will take place at 11 a.m., followed by a \$5 lunch at noon in Fondren Hall. For more information, contact the church at 713-5278-0527 or info@stpaulshouston.org.

John Wesley Presents – A Walk Through Bethlehem

Travel back through time for this recreation of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

Share this unique, hands-on experience with family and friends. There will be a live nativity, camel rides and, on Saturday – snow! For additional information, contact the church at 281-444-2112 or www.jwumc.org.

Prayers and Squares

If you can tie a knot and say a prayer, you can be a part of Prayers and Squares. If you are handy with a needle — or want to learn how to be — you also can help make these prayer quilts.

Prayers and Squares meet in Abraham Station at St. Paul's UMC from 2 to 7 p.m., the first and third Sundays of the month. Some people also participate by hemming and finishing the quilts at home.

The quilts are prepared as a "physical prayer of comfort and healing" for the intended recipient(s). These may be individuals who are gravely ill or who are going through another kind of life trauma.

Once completed, the quilts are displayed on the church's Jones Plaza, giving everyone the opportunity to tie a knot and say a prayer on behalf of the recipient.

All ages, stages, and genders are encouraged to be a part of this prayer and caring ministry. One need not be a member of St. Paul's to participate.

To request a prayer quilt or for more information about how to become a part of Prayers and Squares, contact Rev. Gail Williford at gailwilliford@stpaulshouston.org or 713-528-0527.

Learning Opportunities

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.

Central South District Presents – Strengthening Smaller Congregations

Central South District in association with Union Baptist Association and Antioch

Institute of Houston Baptist University will host this event.

The guest speaker is Dr. Kennon L. Callahan, author of *The Future That Has Come and Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*. The workshop will be Tuesday, December 2, 2008, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center of Houston Baptist University.

Registration fee is \$25 per person (includes training materials, lunch and a copy of, *Small, Strong Congregations*).

To register, contact Sheila Hardman at 713-222-0117.

"The Historical" Jesus Study Series at St. Paul's UMC

Who was this human being named Jesus who walked about Galilee in the first century, the person who showed what God is like and what a human life full of God is like?

This question will be examined by William M. Linden in the Candlelighters adult Sunday School class at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. The eight-part series runs from October 5 to December 7 in S-109, first floor of the Sanctuary building.

Particular emphasis in this series will be placed on the Jewish context of first-century Israel, Jesus' treatment of women as equal with men in ministry, and his opposition to the patriarchal system of his day.

Participants will be introduced to a new way to read the Bible and to think about God — not as the God with rules, guilt, and punishment, but as a God of Justice, compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance.

For more about the class, contact Rev. Shelli Williams at swilliams@stpaulshouston.org or 713-528-0527

Summer Collegium Project 2009

Applications are now being accepted for the Summer Collegium, a Lilly Endowment project in support of small congregations.

Twenty-five clergy and their spouses from all Christian denominations will be invited to spend nine days at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, focusing on Body, Mind, and Soul: Celebrating, Strengthening and Sustaining Clergy Wholenss in Small Congregations.

The Summer Collegium takes place June 24-July 1, 2009, and applications must be postmarked by December 15, 2008 to be considered.

For more information and an application packet, visit our website at www.vts.edu/education/collegium or call Marilyn Johns at 703-461-1760.

Mission Opportunities

Sharing Your Christmas Through Ornament Donation

December 1, 2009 is the deadline for the donation of Christmas decorations for Hurricane Ike victims.

To receive decorations, fill out the application on line at <http://www.txcumc.org/ornamentapplication> or contact Jill Krone at 903-474-2411 or jill.krone@gmail.com

NEIGHBOR HELPING NEIGHBOR

Seabrook United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church of Seabrook, Taylor Lake Christian Church and the Seabrook Alliance have teamed up to form the Hurricane Ike Relief Ministry called "Neighbor Helping Neighbor" to offer much needed assistance to those in the Seabrook community.

Specific food donations are being requested so that food bags can be assembled and handed out to families: The list of food donations is: paper towels, toilet paper (4 roll packages), peanut butter, canned green beans, jelly (no glass), canned mixed vegetables, cereal, macaroni and cheese, canned soup, canned fruit, spaghetti noodles / pasta, spaghetti sauce (no glass), canned ham, dried pinto beans (1 or 2 lb bags), pork and beans, vienna sausage, spam, tuna, canned corn, crackers, rice (regular sizes only), cornbread mix, jello, instant pudding, cake mixes/icing, koolaid, ramen noodles and paper grocery bags.

We are also asking for the following donations of toiletries, pillows and blankets.

Please telephone 281.474.2851 to schedule the drop off of donations.

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