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Lay speakers academy 2007

By Jill Krone

Texas Annual Conference Communications

Four Texas Annual Conference Districts are helping prepare laity for ministry. Carrying on the great history and tradition of Lay Speaking Academies, the Central North, Central South, South and Southwest Districts are coming together to provide an avenue for educating and encouraging laypersons wishing to grow in their faith and service to the local church.

The academy is scheduled for July 20, from 5-9 p.m. and on July 21, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Courses will be held at Riverside United Methodist Church, 4920 Cullen Boulevard in Houston.

There are two classifications of lay speaker – the Local Church Lay Speaker and the Certified Lay Speaker – both require the recommendation of the pastor, and the yearly reaffirmation of the local church council or charge of the church in which individual membership is held. Either level is for the active, professing member of the

local church who has a heart for developing a stronger personal



faith walk and for serving by their witness to the Christian faith through spoken communication, church and community leadership, and care-giving ministries.

To become a local church lay speaker, a person agrees to a one-year, renewable commitment and completes the Basic Lay Speaker Course.

This year, the Basic Lay Speaker Training Course is offered in English or Spanish lan-

guage.

The Certified Lay Speaker commits to a three-year certification that includes completion of the prerequisite basic program and a minimum of one advanced course.

Persons enrolling in the Advanced Course or wishing to recertify as an Advanced Lay Speaker will choose from the following offerings: Lay Speakers Lead Bible Study, Lay Speakers Tell Stories, Lay Speakers Lead Worship, Lay Speakers Lead Prayer, Lay Speakers Cultivate Christian Community, Lay Speakers Grow Spiritually, and Lay Speakers are Servant Leaders.

The wide variety of classes offered will help meet the training needs of persons seeking to serve in vast areas of ministry.

In Deuteronomy 10:12, we learn what God asks from us. *And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him,*

Continued on page 2

St. Paul choir to sing Evensong prior to residency at Ely Cathedral

By Donna V. Adair

Director of Communications, St. Paul's United Methodist Church

St. Paul's Choir will sing an Evensong service at 4 p.m. Sunday, July 1, in the Sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main at Binz/Bissonnet.

The Amarillo Canticles composed by David Ashley White were commissioned by the Choir for its forthcoming residency at Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, England. The service *Responses* are by Richard Webster, and the anthem, *Hail Gladdening Light*, is by Charles Wood.

The Choir will be at Ely



The Music Department staff at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Houston.

Cathedral from July 9 -15. While they are away, the Houston Children's Chorus will provide music for St. Paul's 9:45 and 11:05 morning worship services on July 8, and the Salvation

Army's Harbor Light Choir will provide worship music at 8:30, 9:45, and 11:05 on July 15.

The service of evensong, also known as evening prayer, is remarkable both for the centuries-old liturgical tradition it represents and for the atmosphere of contemplative devotion that enables it to remain deeply meaningful for worshipers today.

The liturgy traces its origins to the daily rites of the medieval church and has been said or sung regularly in its current form since the 16th century.

Senior high camp is a spiritual success

By Eleanor L. Colvin

Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

Senior high students from all nine districts gathered in June for the first-ever all Senior High Camp at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center.

The Age-Level and Camping ministry team within the Center for Congregational Excellence made the innovation in an effort to attract more high school students to camp and to be more intentional about encouraging students to consider Christian vocation. The Senior High Camp was held early in the summer as opposed to integrated in each multi-age level camp during the summer,

people.

"Perhaps it was for such a time as this God called you," Dorris said while sharing Esther's story. "That seems to be the calling line for so many of us. I think that's what God whispers in our ear every time we're called to do something ethical, make a moral decision, to show our integrity and honesty ... Maybe you were called to have courage."

Dorris continued by explaining God's call on the lives of all Christians.

"A call is not reserved for those in ordained ministry," she



Youth lift their hands in praise during one of the many worship services at Senior High camp.

so that high schoolers could still get summer jobs and or participate in other activities that often prevent them from attending camp.

Approximately 450 youth enjoyed a week of workshops, worship and fellowship that inspired them to consider how God is calling them to live for him in their daily lives.

Dr. Karen Dorris, director of the Center for Congregational Excellence, addressed the group on the Thursday of camp. Dorris used the biblical story of Queen Esther to discuss the many ways in which God uses

said. "God calls each one of us. God calls teachers, doctors, nurses, accountants ... to be people of faith and love, demonstrating the life of Jesus Christ in our time.

"My friends, God is calling you. My prayer is your ears are open and your hearts are receptive."

Open minds, open hearts

High school junior Emily Shives of Lakewood UMC aspires to be a cosmetologist, and trusts that God can and will use her.

"God calls random people to



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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Sing Across the Walls!

Texas Cooperative School of Mission:
grounded in Christ and growing in mission

By Charlene Fowler
United Methodist Women - Communications

The Texas Cooperative confrontation with current



School of Mission is scheduled for July 12-15, 2007 at Lon Morris College. Participants are encouraged to embrace this year's theme, *Come Sing Across the Walls!*

How do we sing across the walls?

Walls isolate and separate for economic, social, political and religious purposes. What

issues, spiritual growth and general leadership development. The schools are a connectional resource that helps Conferences prepare for the mission schools they will host later in the year.

The primary focus of the school is the work of the Women's Division and those places in the General Board of Global Ministries where historic work with women, children and

We sing songs of hope that have the power to bring down walls of hatred and injustice.

can a song do? Bring hope and courage. We are called to sing a song of hope and freedom across walls. Jesus Christ sets us free to be whole persons. We sing for the freedom of all people, not just ourselves. We sing that God loves everyone and invites the most unexpected people to the feast. We sing the songs of hope that have the power to bring down walls of hatred and injustice.

School of Mission study leaders, School Deans, Assistant Deans and Conference UMW officers from the South Central Jurisdiction traveled to Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas to attend the annual West Gulf Regional School of Christian Mission.

The regional schools provide a setting for mission education,

youth is lodged. Regional schools enable United Methodist Women to explore and to accept their responsibility in the church and in society.

The Texas Conference leaders spent time with noted teachers and writers of the studies. Many well known names, teaching at the WG Regional School, were S.T. Kimbrough, Andrea Hatcher, Dana Jones, Wanda Holcombe, Steve Goldstein and Bishop William Morris.

Studying together current issues such as: "Globalization: Its Impact in our Lives" and "Israel/Palestine" brought participants a better awareness and understanding of today's complex world and the Christian's call to work for global justice. Daily worship centered on Psalm 24 and the study themes

By The Center Connectional for Resources

In an effort to more efficiently serve pastors and church leaders, Charge Conference packets will now be available online.

Charge Conference season begins in August, and churches should not look to receive the printed documents via mail or at a district meeting. Instead, districts will provide each charge with instructions on how to access the more than 30 items that comprise the Charge Conference packet.

"For quite some time the district administrative assistants have wanted to get the information online, so that it will be available whenever people need it. Many secretaries have said, 'We can do this better,'" said Information Technology Manager Ivan Krowl. "Many pastors have been asking for this service for some time, and we're delighted to give it to them."

The documents will be updatable PDFs, which will allow respondents to type directly into the document. The completed documents should

then be printed for submission at Charge Conference. After which, district offices will process the documents as they have in the past.

"This way, the information will be readily available; you can't lose it; you can fill in part of it and come back to work on it later," Krowl said.

One goal is to ultimately have information entered into the online forms automatically linked to and updated in Shelby, the



DOVE System or any required database.

Krowl noted that most of the Charge Conference packet items are relatively small documents, however, there is an item on church audits that is about 38 pages. So, there will be obvious financial savings in terms of printing and postage.

"That's hundreds and hundreds of pages of paper that don't have to be printed now," Krowl said.

Users will have the option to print reference materials or to simply access them online as needed.

District offices will provide instructions and lend support to all those learning to use this new system.

Lay Speakers School 2007

Continued from page 1

to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul... Lay Speaker training provides one way of meeting these requirements of our Lord.

When the training is completed, laity should be prepared to undertake and offer leadership initiative, give assistance and support to meetings for prayer, study and programs, and to conduct or assist in services of worship, including the presenting of sermons when requested by the pastor, district superintendent, or the lay speaking committee. Lay speakers also provide much-needed leadership for congregational and community life, and in care-giving ministries of the local church.

Registration information is available online at

<http://www.txcumc.org/layspeakers07> or by contacting the event registrar, Sharon Krowl, at 281.499.3700 or sharon@southwestdistrict.org. The early registration fee, for registration prior to June 29, is \$35. There is a \$40 fee for those registering after this date. Meals and materials are included with your paid registration.

Lay Speaker Training continues to be a way for persons to remain well-informed and committed to the Scriptures as they live out their faith dedicated to serving their community and the United Methodist Church. Consider how you are called to serve. Become a Lay Speaker and see just how far God can utilize your witness in ministry today!

Spiritual Directors train for service in Texas Annual Conference

By Constance Bovier

Charis Spiritual Director Training Program

The *Charis* Spiritual Director Training Program of the Texas Annual Conference reached a celebratory milestone in early May, 2007, when its pioneering Class 1 concluded its second year of training with a retreat at Lakeview Conference Center. The twenty-two students, which include both lay and clergy, now anticipate their third and final year, which will begin in August and culminate with graduation in

incorporating United Methodist spirituality – making *Charis* training both substantive and transformational.

The Reverend Tom Bain, pastor of Needville UMC and Orchard UMC, who has been involved with the program since its formative period, says that he answered a personal calling to encourage spiritual direction within the Conference and also to help the Conference rediscover

spiritual formation and spiritual direction – “particularly to smaller churches away from larger cities.” She points out that United Methodists in the Houston area or near other large cities often have access to spiritual retreats and other spiritual growth opportunities that are seldom available to those living in rural areas. “It is my hope that *Charis* graduates will be able to help educate congregations of every size, all over the Conference, about the benefits of spiritual direction, the value of prayerfully journeying in Spirit with another caring person.”

The Nature of Spiritual Direction

Charis graduates will be prepared to offer spiritual direction to groups and to individuals in one-on-one relationships. Bain describes the ministry as “sitting with one or more persons and giving them gentle guidance in experiencing God in the ordinary stuff of life. It’s not counseling or teaching, but *listening*, helping people to reflect upon their own relationships with God.”

Reflecting on her own experi-



The Charis Advisory Board and faculty: (back row, left to right) Program Coordinator Becky Oates, Board Chair, Rev. Tom Bain, Rev. Glynden Bode; (front row, left to right) Connie Bovier, Myrna Dudley.

ngoing process of relationship with the divine. Many persons find a monthly hour with a spiritual director so beneficial to their personal development that they continue such a relationship throughout their lives.

Although many clergy and laypersons function as spiritual friends and counselors, a trained spiritual director is specially prepared for this work. The *Charis* curriculum spans a broad range of academic study and experiential activities to inspire spiritual growth for students as well as preparation for the ministry.

The first two years of training explore the history of Christian spirituality, from the rich traditions grounded in Biblical teachings and early church history to the modern manifestations of spirituality available to seekers today.

A psychological dimension of *Charis* training introduces the relationship between personality and spirituality and acquaints students with inner work for the purpose of expanding self-awareness, increasing healing and dealing with personal issues in order to more effectively companion others on the spiritual journey. The final, practicum year, focusing on the art and practice of spiritual direction, includes an internship in which students offer spiritual direction under the guidance of the *Charis* faculty. Throughout training, students also experience a wide range of prayer and meditation styles.

Training is conducted by the *Charis* Advisory Board and Faculty which, besides Bain, includes the Reverend Glynden Bode of Spirit’s Call, a new extension ministry, Rose Hill UMC, Tomball; Connie Bovier of Bay Harbour UMC, League City;

and Myrna Dudley of St. Peter’s UMC, Katy. Becky Oates of Strawbridge UMC, Kingwood, serves as *Charis* Program Coordinator. In addition to this team, visiting faculty from United Methodist and other faith traditions offer expertise in specific areas.

Applications for next Class

Oates says that *Charis* will soon begin accepting applications for its second class to begin training in August, 2008. She recommends that anyone who considers applying for Class 2 begin meeting regularly with a spiritual director, which will help clarify the spiritual direction relationship and facilitate the discernment process.

As *Charis* Class 1 moves into its third year, students will be seeking directees with whom to practice their developing skills. Those who wish to support this ministry by becoming a directee with a *Charis* intern, or who wish to know more about the program may contact Becky Oates at 281-360-1942 or havenofrest@earthlink.net. For additional information about this ministry, including a worldwide seek-and-find listing of spiritual directors, visit the website of Spiritual Directors International: www.sdiworld.org.

“Spiritual formation and spiritual direction are familiar and exciting for a relatively small number of United Methodists. These are relatively new concepts for some, and completely unfamiliar territory for others,” said Bain. “Pay attention,” he urges. “Watch and listen for opportunities to learn more and be involved. Spiritual direction is a whole new dimension of growth for the Texas Annual Conference.”

The Charis curriculum spans a broad range of academic study and experiential activities to inspire spiritual growth for students as well as preparation for the ministry.

August, 2008. At that time, graduates will move into ministry throughout the Conference, equipped to serve as spiritual companions for others.

Annette Breazeale, First UMC, Gilmer, is one of three students who commute about four hours from the far northeast corner of the Conference to Livingston UMC, where *Charis* training is conducted on the second Saturday each month during the school year. With more than ten years of service in Conference spiritual formation activities, Breazeale remembers the conceptual discussions of the former Committee on Spiritual Formation about the need for reclaiming the ancient Christian art of spiritual direction, about creating a training program for spiritual directors that would embrace Wesleyan spirituality. “Many clergy and laity were going outside our faith tradition to find spiritual directors and to seek training if they were called to this ministry,” she said.

From those early conversations begun with the committee, the *Charis* program was developed by a core group of spiritual directors who had already received training from other denominations. The *Charis* program has benefited from this breadth of experience – borrowing and strengthening elements of other training programs, while

Wesleyan spirituality.

“John Wesley’s own roots went back to very early Christianity,” Bain says. “He particularly drew upon John Cassian and others of the ancient church. Now the *Charis* program is rediscovering those roots and Wesley’s vision for the church. As United



Class 1 of the Charis Spiritual Director Training program held its year-end retreat at Lakeview Conference Center.

Methodists, we are called to recover the idea of sanctification, which we’ve let slip over the last century.”

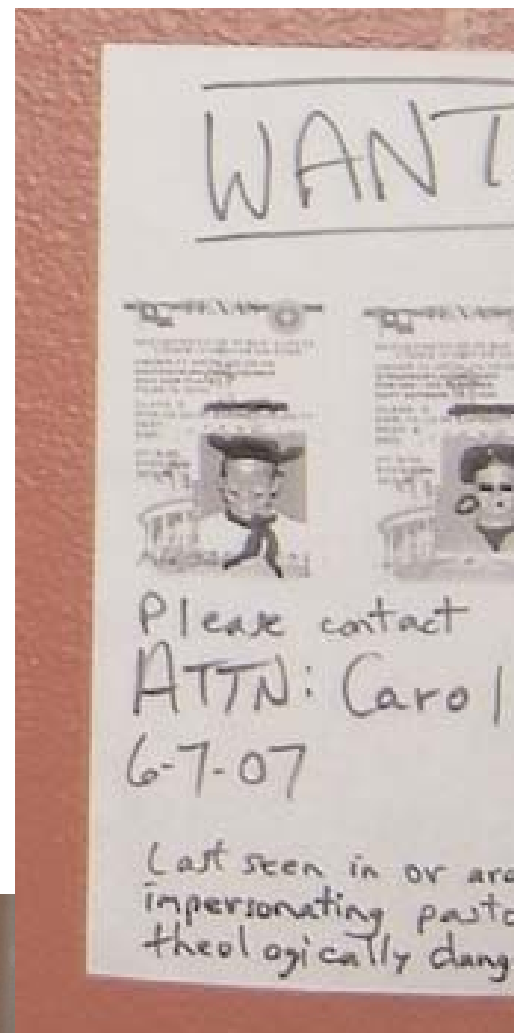
In considering how graduating *Charis* students will move into ministry, Bain envisions members of Class 1 working intentionally in group spiritual direction within churches and communities. “This goes back to the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual formation, which was the purpose of the Methodist classes, bands and societies.”

Breazeale concurs that *Charis* graduates will have a responsibility for spreading the word about

ence as a spiritual directee as well as a spiritual director in training, Breazeale sees the spiritual director as “an attentive, prayerful listener who helps directees deepen their walk with Christ and discern their calling or direction for their lives. The director also helps provide tools for growing spiritually. Both laity and clergy need a listening ear in a safe, non-threatening environment where they can be honest. And spiritual direction offers all that.”

Unlike pastoral counseling, Stephen Ministry or psychotherapy, all of which typically address crises, spiritual direction is an

Reflections from pastoral internship

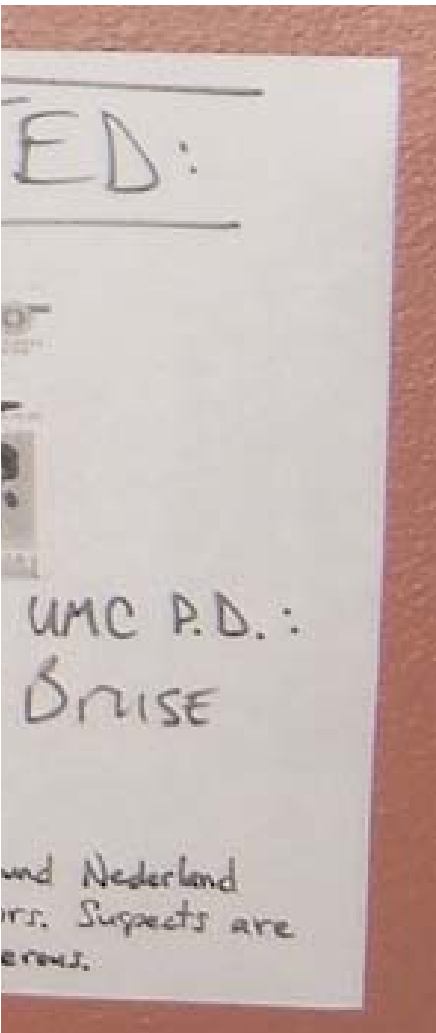


Above, interns take a break at Lakeview Conference Center.

Signs welcome interns Adam Straznicki and Michael Anderson in Nederland.

Monica Wallace, Preston Morgan (right) and Malcolm Ervin (above right) take turns sharing recent experiences in only 10 words.

Project members



Pastoral internship project intern Preston Morgan interviewed his colleagues during the recent mid-summer retreat and tour of the intern's host churches.

Questions posed:

1. What are two things you like about the internship so far?
2. Why did you decide to participate in the Pastoral Internship Project?

(All answers are straight quotations)

Patrick Hoffman:

The opportunity to experience work at a mission and in the Church.

The relationship and fellowship with fellow interns.

No answer to the second question

Monica Wallace:

I enjoy the fellowship with others experiencing the same kind of call as me and the opportunities to do ministry outside of the role of the laity.

[I want to know] whether or not my call is into pastoral ministry.

Adam Straznicky:

1) Understanding the pastor's job in its entirety from learning the hours to meeting expectations is important to me.

2) The people at Wesley UMC are fantastic, and I have enjoyed their care and generosity.

I wanted to experience the Church this summer.

Ethan Prall:

I love working with my pastor, Michael Mayhugh.

I like learning about the political and non-youth related aspects of churches (i.e. adult ministry).

I decided to participate in the internship so that I can discern whether I should work inside or outside the institutional church.

Grant Barnes:

I really enjoy the pastoral care side of the job.

I also like the opportunity to participate in the service, and discover where I am in worship.

I applied for this internship to help myself figure out if I'm cut out for pastoral work, and if so, where I fit into ministry.

John Stephenson

I really enjoy being involved in all aspects of pastoral ministry.

I also like developing relationships with conference staff, pastors, and other interns.

I was pretty sure I wanted to become an elder but desired the opportunity to experience different aspects of ministry for further discernment.

Michael Anderson:

I have enjoyed searching how the church works. I also have enjoyed how Methodist tradition and doctrine work.

I am doing this internship in order to learn if being a pastor is for me.

Jeremy Wester:

I like the chance to experience a church going through huge changes. The church is going through a new pastor, a new building, a new church service, and a new time for the services.

It is a joy to work with Robert to learn and experience ministry in the church.

I chose to do this because I wanted to experience the prac-

tice of ministry and be exposed to the local church.

It has been an amazing program revealing the realities and nuances of ministry within the Texas Annual Conference.

Preston Morgan:

I really enjoy working with Bellville UMC because the feeling that everyone is family reminds me of both of my old churches, Madisonville UMC and Christ UMC in College Station.

I also really enjoy working with Robert Stutes because not only does he teach us about ministry, but he allows us to participate in and experience ministry that we create ourselves. Watching ministry is cool, but watching God do ministry through your own actions is amazing.

I chose to take the internship because I wanted to discern whether or not being a pastor was what God has been trying to tell me he wants me to do. This program is perfect for candidates or candidacy-potentials.



Instructional Reading Assignment

We read Parker J. Palmer's "Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation" to be discussed at the mid-summer retreat. Palmer describes a process for analyzing and identi-

fying one's life to discover his/her "life's calling." Palmer warns that not following one's life's calling is dangerous and that understanding and pursuing one's life's calling for vocation leads to unparalleled personal fulfillment. Palmer also describes the spiritual charac-

teristics of a true leader and the influence a true leader can have on those around him/her, and the author continues by describing many ways a leader can spiritually and emotionally fail the people he/she serves. We will read "Answering God's Call for

Your Life: A look at Christian calls and Church vocations" by Robert Roth to be discussed at the reflection retreat at the end of July.

For more information about Palmer's book, visit [http://www.amazon.com/Let-Your-Life-Speak-](http://www.amazon.com/Let-Your-Life-Speak-Listening/dp/0787947350/ref=pd_bb_s_sr_1/002-8465588-9142435?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1180845141&sr=1-1)

[Listening/dp/0787947350/ref=pd_bb_s_sr_1/002-8465588-9142435?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1180845141&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Let-Your-Life-Speak-Listening/dp/0787947350/ref=pd_bb_s_sr_1/002-8465588-9142435?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1180845141&sr=1-1).

The face of a Christian

Deer Park UMC member overcomes adversity, with grace and love

By Eleanor L. Colvin

Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

Julie Aftab believes that true beauty comes from within and comes from God.

A member of Deer Park UMC, 21 year old Julie suffered acid burns all over her body that led her on a journey of more than two dozen reconstructive surgeries to do everything from replace an eye to rebuild an ear canal, and a journey that affirmed the true source of her life and beauty.

"I wanted her to share her story of faith with us, because I think it is so eye-opening to the rest of us," said Jan Ervin, who worships with Julie and invited her to speak during chapel at the Texas Annual Conference office. "Here's a girl who's been to hell and back still has faith to believe and move forward.

"Because of the trivial things that we think are problems, we falter in our faith and here she is solid as a rock in hers."

Journey with Jesus

It started one day while she was working in her birth country of Pakistan. A man approached her, noticed the cross she was wearing, and asked if she was a Christian.

"You're too pretty to be a

Christian," he said after hearing her reply.

Julie says he questioned her beliefs, and asked her several times if she was "sure" she was a Christian.

Then, he made her an offer she had to refuse. I will marry you, he said, and after you change your religion to Muslim, everyone will treat you like a queen and you won't have to work. She said no. And, her life changed.

"You are so proud to be a Christian," Julie recalled the suitor saying. "I will see if your Jesus can save you.' I didn't know what he was talking about."

Hours later the suitor returned to her job and splashed acid on Julie's face and body. As she screamed, she said, he held her head back and poured acid in her mouth.

"My inside was burned more than the outside," she said. "I don't know how God gave me my life back."

Reclaiming her health and life was no easy process. Versions of her story spread throughout the community, which made it difficult for her to return home or seek refuge at a

hospital. Muslims picketed the hospital, saying that she spoke against their faith. Others burned her family home, assaulted her brothers and shot at her and her mother while they were walking to church.

"The said I was a bad girl – a hooker," Julie said. "I told God, I don't care what they said. I care that you know who I am."

Meanwhile, doctors advised her parents to take her home, because she wouldn't live. Her parents wouldn't give up, and took her to a different hospital.

There, she was pronounced dead. And in one movement of one toe, her mother saw hope.

"I believe she's alive," her mother said. "She's suffered for God and he's going to give her life back."

Although the doctor didn't agree, her mother's persistence prompted him to order that Julie be placed on oxygen.

After 30 minutes, she gasped, and her life began again.

"I don't need anything," she said. "I just want to tell the world of your (God's) love for me. You give your son, you took a bullet for me, and you love me."



Senior high camp a huge success

Continued from page 1

do things,” Shives said. “He wants everyone to honor him.”

Even before the message on calling, camp counselors say you could see the spirit moving all week.

“You go to worship and watch them, and it brings tears to your eyes,” said Phillip Aaron, a counselor from Matagorda UMC. “You really feel their spirit and that they’re giving their lives to Christ. They help to touch other kids.”

Camp Counselor Johnnie Cooper of First UMC Rosenberg agreed that God is at work in the lives of youth in the Texas Annual Conference.

“It’s so refreshing, when you hear all the bad things, and you come here and see kids have hope,” Cooper said. “These youth are positive, alive and energized!”

That energy, prayerfully, will continue to bless the church and kingdom of God.

“We hear how many preachers say they gave their lives to Christ or decided to go in ministry at Lakeview,” Cooper said. “We realize they are the future of the church. Without this place how will we make more ministers?”

“(The message) served as a reminder about why we’re here. You can’t be a good Christian sit on your behind and not do anything. We have God’s hands to work.”

Infinite possibilities

Not only is Lakeview helping to shape more ministers, it’s also developing a few good future athletes and coaches like Jarred Gibson and Bryan Deveney, who both attend Wesley UMC in Huntsville.

Both said they aspire to be coaches and know God can use them. Good coaches make teams feel like families, they said, while adding that a coach’s most important job is helping shape the character of students. Both teens clearly know a lot about character, and learned even more at camp.

Among the workshops that stood out to Gibson, who will attend Sam Houston State University in the fall, was “How to Get Drunk in College.”

“The leader asked deep questions like, how do you know you’re a Christian and on a scale of one to 10, how close do you think you are to God,” Gibson said, adding that they were encouraged to not impulsively blurt out a

number, but to consider what practices get them that close and what’s stopping them from being closer.

“When at church camp, you get really close – a seven. At home, you may slip away to about a five. The way I see it, it’s impossible to be a 10. At 10 you’re Jesus, and no one’s Jesus but Jesus. You could get to 9 ½.”

Deveney, who is 15, agreed that church camp is great, because it helps them develop a closer to God at camp.

“We’re around all Christians here – at home, not everyone’s a Christian,” said Deveney, who has come to camp “pretty much every year.”

Passionate worship

For A&M UMC youth Jennifer Gutierrez and Kirsten Tesh, worship was a highlight of the week. This was the first summer camp experience at Lakeview for both of them.

“When I found out I was going to be with people from my church, I thought it was kind of sketchy,” Gutierrez said. “But it’s cool because I got to meet lots of new people.”

Gutierrez and Tesh enjoyed the excellent storytelling used in worship and the ability of worship leaders to draw them in, use

Senior High Camper

humor and “get serious” when necessary to explain things.

“Wednesday night’s worship was really, really powerful – we talked about battling your giants,” said Gutierrez, who is 16. “Sometimes I pray and pray and still can’t let something go ... We wrote a word on the bottom of our shoe, and my word was forgiven.”

“One of my giants has been knowing that I can find my way back with the help of God. One of my giants has been knowing I’m strong enough to do it.”

Worship was also a blessing for Tesh, who added that the small group circle gatherings, during which they lit candles and prayed about “stuff” was great too.

“I struggle with my worries and letting go of my worries and just being with God,” Tesh said.

Both young ladies learned throughout the week, that wherever they are, God is with them and loves them. And, through that relationship, he calls them.

“(The message) served as a reminder about why we’re here,” Tesh said. “You can’t be a good Christian and sit on your behind and not do anything. We have God’s hands to work.”

“I like what she said: ‘It’s this kind of time you’re called for.’ ... Sometimes you don’t know where you’re going, but you may be on the way to doing something amazing and awesome.”



Leisure time is enjoyed as much as the worship and workshop times.



Debt reduction grants available through BOM

By Rev. Kay Johnson
Board of Ordained Ministry

The Texas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry is offering a *one-time debt reduction grant*. This grant is not for Doctorate Degrees, i.e. D. Min., Ph. D., etc. It is for the level of Master of Divinity. Upon the review and approval of The Board of Ordained Ministry and the availability of funds, a maximum of \$5,000 dollars may be

awarded.

To qualify, you should be: a member in good standing in The Texas Annual Conference, a graduate of a United Methodist seminary and have current proof of seminary indebtedness from an educational lending institution with the proper address and a copy of your diploma.

Qualifying individuals can

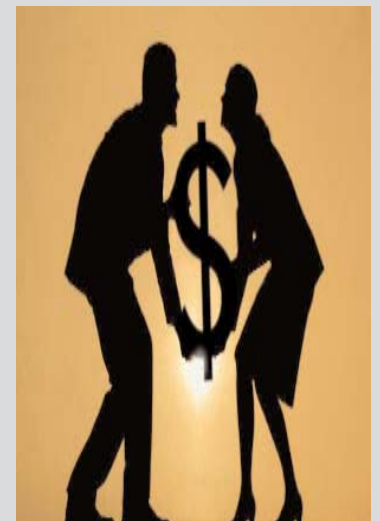
get an application from his/her District Superintendent’s office.

Send applications along with the required documentation to: Rev. Kay G. Johnson, Special Grant committee, Board of Ministry, Rose Hill UMC 21022 Rosehill Church Road, Tomball, TX 77377.

All grants will be sent directly to the lending institu-

tion. The deadline to receive completed applications with documentation will be June 30, 2007. No faxes will be accepted. The envelope must be postmarked June 30, 2007.

Any questions regarding the grant may be sent to pastor@rosehillumc.org or call 281-351.5356.



Behind the red nose --- a clown who cares

By Mary Brolley, Communications Coordinator
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Evolution of a balloon bug: Bernice Gregory constructs a gift for a physical therapy patient at The Methodist Hospital.



Ber Ber Believes (Bernice Gregory, center) has company: from left, Patrick Pickens, Sonja Lee, daughter Nancy Gregory and husband Amos Gregory.

Bernice Gregory loves both of her jobs.

Monday through Friday, the 17-year employee of The Methodist Hospital is a physical therapy/occupational therapy technician, helping therapists set up for and monitor patients during treatment. She is a “spotter” as patients improve their strength and balance after illness, surgery or injury.

On weekends, Gregory dresses up to become her alter ego, Ber Ber Believes, a cheerful, gregarious clown.

She got into clowning accidentally. She was slated to attend a drama workshop when she realized it was actually a clown workshop. In her first try, she learned to make balloon animals, do magic tricks, put on her makeup.

There was a learning curve. “My first (clown) face was hideous,” she says matter-of-factly. “And it took me an hour to do. Now I can do it in 15 to 20 minutes.”

And that’s not all. “I can get dressed in the back of a moving truck,” she brags.

Gregory is an auguste clown, so-called because she may wear outfits of certain fabrics and

bright colors and do certain things “in character,” but not others. “There’s a hierarchy of clowns,” Gregory says. “There are whiteface clowns, then auguste clowns, then tramps and hobs.”

She works two or three engagements a month, from kids’ birthday parties to parades to hospital events to her favorites — church gatherings. Her husband Amos is supportive, frequently accompanying her to the events. To liven up the act, he converted a riding lawnmower into a small wooden train that can carry eight to twelve children and adults.

After clowning for more than 10 years, Ber Ber is a business. At times Ber Ber and Co. includes up to eight people, including Bernice’s daughter Nancy. After pulling up in a brightly colored truck, the group unloads a veritable carnival, including that little train.

“Sometimes we’re so busy that we have to split the team between two locations,” Gregory says. “Once, we were working two church events at the same time; I just went back and forth between the two of them. It was

crazy, but fun.”

Although Gregory’s mother told her, “You were born a clown,” others have expressed surprise when they learn of her side job. “Some people think I’m too serious to be a clown,” she says.

Others, seeing her dressed up, try to get her to break character. But she won’t. “Once I’m in character, I’m in character until I take the outfit off,” she says. “I even have a clown voice — it’s much higher than my real voice.” She finds playing Ber Ber “exhilarating.” “I become a whole different person.”

Clowning around on the weekends has made her better at her weekday job, she says. “It’s made me more efficient, more compassionate and comforting to others.”

Sometimes, to distract a patient who’s in pain during therapy, Gregory’s co-workers tell the patient, “She’s a clown.” If a patient wants, she will even produce a balloon animal in a matter of seconds.

If the patient seems confused or surprised, Gregory explains that she’s a professional clown. “You know, red nose. Big red shoes.”

“It helps them relax,” she adds. “A good clown not only makes you laugh—she helps you release emotions and express your deepest fears and desires.”