

# Cross Connection

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## What's Inside

- 1**
- CLT Focus on Transformation
- 3**
- Second Training Class for Charis
- 4**
- Faith Kidz Ministry supports Church Growth
- 6**
- Lovelady Circuit Offers Vaccine Immunizations
- 7**
- Northwest District Youth Scores Big with Fundraiser
- 8**
- Ubuntu Journey 2008
- 8**
- Living Water UMC uses new movie for Outreach Ministry
- 8**
- Spotlight on Ministries
- 8**
- St. Paul UMC hosts Fellers Symposium
- 8**
- First UMC Somerville Celebrate Members Ministry

## CLT closes year with transformation conversations

By Eleanor L. Colvin  
Director of Communications  
Texas Annual Conference

In the last Core Leadership Team meeting of 2007, the group looked forward by taking a look back. The focus: living out the call to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, while holding true to the Wesleyan heritage.

Central North District Representative Oscar Garza led a devotion that centered on the book *John Wesley for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and Romans 12:1-2: Therefore, I urge you, in light of God's mercy, to



Martha Scott, a member of the North District leadership team presents the district's report while Jerry Massey looks on.

offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship...[NIV].

"I challenge each of us to find ways to be better Methodists," Garza said. "This world has a lot of needs. We're not going to solve them all, but I am sure we'll do the best we can."

One CLT member who has worked diligently to be a "better Methodist" is Southeast District and Small-Membership Representative Minta Clark of Devers. Clark recently resigned from the CLT because of health concerns. Southeast District Superintendent Rev. Richard Burnham described Clark's health issues as serious, yet man

*Continued on page 2*

## Charis starts second class for 'spiritual director' training

By Constance Bovier

The Charis Spiritual Director Training Program is now accepting applications for Class 2,

and laypersons to serve as spiritual companions – "holy listeners" – for others on the faith

training with Charis Class 1 in May, 2008, calls the program "the most important part of my life outside my personal relationship with God."

Another student, Lisa Mage of Cypress UMC, says, "My first two years of Charis training have flung open doors and new pathways of thinking, listening, seeing, praying and ultimately loving others and God. I have grown in confidence to my calling and my desire to serve as a spiritual director for others who hunger as I do for an ever deeper connection with God."

Foundational to the spiritual life of the Texas Annual Conference, the Charis program includes both academic study

and experiential activities. Training is held monthly on the second-Saturday, at Livingston UMC and biannual retreats at Lakeview Conference Center. Students explore the history of Christian spirituality, the relationship between personality and spirituality, varieties of prayer and meditation, and the art and practice of spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction is an ongoing process of relationship with the divine, complementing, rather than competing with, pastoral counseling, Stephen Ministry and psychotherapy. Although some clergy and laypersons possess gifts as spiri

*Continued on page 3*

**"I have grown in confidence to my calling and my desire to serve as a spiritual director for others who hunger as I do for an ever deeper connection with God."**

Lisa Mage  
Cypress UMC

which will train from August, 2008, until the spring of 2011.

This three-year program, sponsored by the Texas Annual Conference, equips both clergy

and laypersons to serve as spiritual companions – "holy listeners" – for others on the faith

journey, helping directees discern the movement of God within their lives. Ann Paxton of First UMC, Conroe, who will complete her

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.

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

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# CLT closes year with transformation conversations

Continued from page 1

ageable and optimistic.

Regarding Clark's selection for the CLT, Burnham said, when Bishop Janice Riggle Huie asked him to recommend a lay person to represent the small membership church, Minta Clark was the obvious choice.

"She had been serving on our [council on ministries] with an insightful-ness, perspective and attention that I thought would translate well to this work," Burnham said. "I've been very pleased with her work on this committee.

"How often have we heard that small voice saying, 'From someone from a church with 10 people in worship, let me say...'"

The entire CLT affirmed that the sacrifice and service of Minta Clark will be missed, and all wish her health and wholeness.

Additionally, the meeting focused on the North and Northwest district reports on how they are living out the Model for Ministry.

## Teamwork works

Among the highlights of the North District report was the North Texas Community College Wesley Foundation. Unlike most traditional Wesley Foundations, the NTCC fellowship was started by a group of churches that collectively provide the financial support and human resources needed to support the ministry.

"We've started from scratch, and we have 50-60 kids...I say kids, but they're not all kids – the average age of students is 26," said Jerry Massey, North District representative on the CLT and one of the original NTCC Wesley Foundation supporters. "This has given us a reason to work together. I don't think we had a reason to work together before. We knew each other, but we didn't know each other as Christians."

In the North District, 22 of

the original 25 transformation churches are still in the process. Twenty of those churches are Welcoming Congregations. District Superintendent Jerry

highlighted in the North District is the training of Certified Lay Ministers. Neff acknowledged that his district already is "very lay driven" and noted that there

Superintendent Nick Scholars. "We've allowed the church to slide along and not grow ... we've got to be about the business of doing that."

To facilitate that growth the district is focusing some attention on new church starts. While lifting up the new worshipping community of Dayspring UMC, led by Rev. Jeff Olive, Scholars noted that the last new church start in that area was planted 12 years ago. There already are plans for two more new church starts in

the Northwest District.

Another growth tool that the district employs is deploying resource people. The purpose of the resource persons is to go into the local church and assist people in implementing new ideas. Resource people are available to aid those who hear awesome ideas at workshops and trainings, and then get home and wonder: "How do we get that done?"

Additionally, Rev. Karen Jones of Liberty Springs UMC, leads a seminar for Worship Ministry Teams and church leaders called "Worship Typology." The session teaches leaders to assess peoples' preferred styles of worship. The purpose, Jones said, is to help churches "meet the unmet spiritual needs of the community or even within the church."

Jones also offered an encouraging word for all those struggling with transformation. Her mother is a member of the Iowa Annual Conference, which is taking the steps toward transformation that the Texas Annual Conference took two years ago.

"They're watching us," Jones said. "I think that sometimes we don't think past ourselves, and don't realize the impact of what we're doing. We're doing a bigger thing for the entire United Methodist Church. And maybe, some of the stumbling we do will make it easier for those who follow us."

Remember to e-mail comments, questions and concerns to the Core Leadership Team at [clt@txcumc.org](mailto:clt@txcumc.org).

**"I think that sometimes we don't think past ourselves, and don't realize the impact of what we are doing. We're doing a bigger think for the entire United Methodist Church. And maybe, some of the stumbling we do will make it easier for those who follow us."**

**Rev. Karen Jones**  
**Northwest District Leadership Team**

Neff said the churches are creating welcome centers, in some cases by removing the back pews of the church; being receptive to new people and new visitors; and posting new signs.

The churches aren't the only ones increasing visibility – the superintendent is also making himself seen.

Neff said he meets with all full-time pastors monthly, and meets with part-time pastors as

are only four ordained associate pastors in the entire district. "We are praying this will start a new revival in some of our small churches," Neff said.

## Grow into transformation

In the Northwest District there are 26 transformation churches – more than any other district. An aspect of transformation that the entire district will be able to participate in will be the



**North District Superintendent, Rev. Gerald Neff says that the North district is very "lay driven." He sees the training of certified lay ministers as a proactive measure for church growth.**

they are available.

"I stole that shamelessly from my Brother Nick Scholars in the Northwest District," Neff said, "because, too often, we as District Superintendents are reacting, instead of acting proactively."

Another proactive measure

new ACTS groups.

ACTS, which stands for Area Churches Together in Service, was designed to mobilize laity.

The ultimate goal is growth. "We've got to grow the church and pay apportionments 100 percent and that's it," said Northwest District

# Faith Kidz create Christmas cards that will support church's growth

By Patty Prince  
Faith UMC Orange



Left to right: Ashton Brock, Sabrina L., Mason M, Kayne Williams, Alexis Kelley, Rev. Kevin Kissel and wife, Sharon hold up Christmas cards made from their artwork.

With crayons in hand, the children from Faith United Methodist Church of Orange created pictures of what Christmas meant to them – small pictures that are having a big impact on their community.

Some drew angels. Some drew brightly lit stars in a night sky. Others drew wise men bearing gifts.



Learning by creating. Faith Kidz ministry share God's love and hope with others by creating unique Christmas cards.

Ultimately, their individual drawings painted a common vision: to share the love, hope, and joy of Jesus Christ through Christmas cards made from their artwork. The children from Faith Kidz, a Wednesday evening children's ministry of Faith UMC in

Orange, sold 600 cards in one week.

Faith Kidz Director Karen Kissel, who is the wife of Rev. Kevin Kissel, transformed the children's drawings into unique Christmas cards. As a budding graphic designer, she used her artistic talents to enhance the children's artwork with decorative borders, colorful back-

grounds and special touches.

On the inside of each 5x7-inch card is a scripture and inspirational message relating to the child's artwork.

For example, if the child drew candles or stars, the

scripture related to the "light of Christ," Kissel said. Information about the Faith Kidz ministry and the church website are featured on the back of the cards, as another method of evangelization.

"I don't think they had a pic-

ture of how big the project would be – they just started making their creations," Kissel said. "(When we told them) 'You're sending the message of Christ out to people... Every person who sees this will get a special blessing from you,' their eyes just lit up."

The children may not be the only ones surprised by the reach of the ministry.

"I didn't realize the capacity it has to touch people – the children, church members, people who purchase the cards and the recipients," Kissel said. "As I dwelt on it, I realized how far-reaching it is. The message can be taken around the world even – depending on where peoples' relatives live."

In addition to sharing the story of Jesus worldwide, the Faith Kidz decided to touch their local community by designating that all proceeds from the sale of their Christmas cards be used to help provide a new playground at Faith UMC's future church campus on North MLK Drive in Orange.

The cards are priced at \$6 for a set of eight. To view or purchase Faith Kidz Christmas cards, visit [www.faithumc-orange.org](http://www.faithumc-orange.org).

Eleanor L. Colvin, TAC Communications Director, contributed to this report.

# Charis training for spiritual directors

Continued from page 1

tual friends and advisors, training is highly desirable and increasingly emphasized within churches of many denominations.

In recent years, spiritual direction within the UM church has been supported and encouraged by the growing Fellowship of United Methodist Spiritual Directors and Retreat Leaders ([www.fumsdrl.org](http://www.fumsdrl.org)).

Within the Texas Annual Conference, as church leaders and congregations grow in recognition, understanding and acceptance of this specialized ministry, the mission of the church will benefit. "I believe that a healthy United Methodist church should reach out to address the concerns and needs of this world," says Mage, "but that it only can do so effectively, with true Christian love, by taking care of inner, personal spiritual needs, concerns and longings."

The Charis board of directors, faculty and Class 1 unanimously invite men and women who sense a calling to this ministry to request an application and begin prayerful discernment. "God has given me a passion to help others understand the wonderful love of Christ," says Charis student Dan Barcus, a

member of St. Stephen's UMC in Houston. "And I know there are others within the United Methodist Church who have been searching for an opportunity to participate in a program like this."

Another student, Barbara Dyar of John Wesley UMC, Houston, offers these words: "I pray that the members of Class 2 will be able to catch the vision, embrace the wildness and the mystery and throw themselves into the training with all their hearts."

For more information or to request an application packet, contact Charis Program Coordinator Becky Oates: 281-360-1942 or [havenofrest@earthlink.net](mailto:havenofrest@earthlink.net). The deadline for applications is February 15, 2008. While it is not necessary to have a current relationship with a spiritual director to apply to the program, those accepted into Class 2 will be expected to establish and maintain an ongoing relationship with spiritual director.

To learn more about spiritual direction or to locate available spiritual directors in your area, visit the website of Spiritual Directors International: [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org).

## Lovelady Circuit Offer Flu and Pneumonia Immunizations



The State Health Department of Crockett, Texas partnered with the Lovelady Circuit to offer flu and pneumonia vaccines to the community. "Though membership and resources have dwindled through the years, we are still able to demonstrate the love of Christ through service and mission," says Rev. Connie Swanson.

# Northwest District youth raise more than \$8,000 for Malaria

By Brant Mills  
Web Content Manager

The Northwest District held "Net Games 2007" - a district-wide youth rally for missions to benefit Nothing but Nets on Sunday, November 4, at Jacksonville First United Methodist Church.

Over 100 youth from 11 churches were in attendance. More than \$6,200 was raised.

Richard Luna, Associate Pastor at Pollard UMC in Tyler headed up the event said he and his youth started talking about a rally over the summer. "I sent letters to pastors and all the youth leaders that I know of in the district," Luna Said. "We had a lot of support."

Leaders from several churches got involved. Among those

participating was Josh Blizzard from Lanes Chapel UMC, who coordinated the games; David Filis from Fairfield UMC helped with the games and recreation. Marla Frederick from Chandler UMC was the speaker, and youth, adults and clergy from Jacksonville First UMC hosted the event and provided food.

Prior to this event, youth

groups held different types of fundraisers including an Italian luncheon, special offerings and presentations made during worship and at Bible studies, concession stand proceeds, selling cookie jars, baked goods, cross necklaces, and even selling eggs door to door.

"A challenge was made to get \$10 per member at one church,

and they came pretty close," Luna said. He added that they didn't have a stated monetary goal. He was initially thinking they could raise around five-thousand dollars, and then he saw the numbers coming in. "But now I'm thinking we can do ten [thousand], and I hope we can exceed that" Luna continued. "Our goal is to create awareness in every church we are a part of."

Churches who took part in the youth rally were, in alphabetical order, Chandler UMC, Elkhart First UMC, Fairfield UMC, Frankston First UMC, Grace UMC from Palestine, Jacksonville First UMC, Lanes Chapel UMC from Tyler, Mineola First UMC, Pollard UMC from Tyler, Stewart Memorial UMC from Buffalo, and Winona UMC.

## Netting Even More

Following the "Net Games" event, youth from Pollard UMC added approximately \$2,500 to the total from sponsors with their "Take it to the Net" relay basketball dribble on November 11. They dribbled the 3.5 miles from their church to Marvin UMC in Tyler wearing a special jersey and passing about every 200 yards. The tip-off was at 2 p.m. and the final shot at Marvin was done about 3:40 p.m.

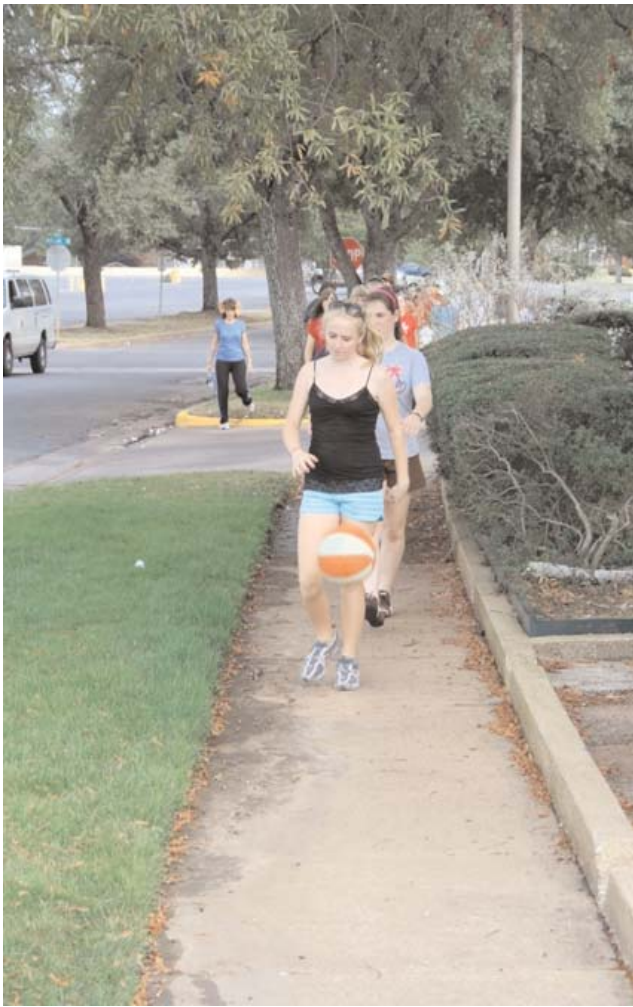
When asked about reasons for participating in the event, eighth-grader Jackson Driggs responded "I did the dribble 'cause it sounded like a fun way to make money for 'nothing but nets'. I think it was great and helped a lot." Also offering her thoughts, twelfth-grader Laura Viergever said "It was fun. It did a lot of good, apparently."

Vans were painted and decorated to share the message with the community as they passed homes. Residential neighbor-



Northwest District Net Games 2007

Youth all over the district participated in the event held to raise money and awareness of the Nothing But Nets program, a mission initiative of the Texas Annual Conference.



**“When we ‘take it to the net’ in basketball, we are trying to score a basket and change the outcome of the game. This event changed the outcome for families in Africa as they are now given a chance to battle the threat of malaria.”**

**Rev. Richard Luna**



**Northwest District youth participated in a rally for missions, an event whose proceeds benefitted the ‘Nothing But Nets’ initiative.**

hoods were taken along the route where it was possible.

The idea for the dribble also came from Luna, and was scheduled just as basketball season was getting started in the local school systems. “When we ‘take it to the net’ in basketball we are trying to score a basket and change the outcome of the game. This event changed the outcome for families in Africa as they now are given a chance to battle the threats of malaria. I am proud of our youth in accepting the challenge and in keeping the cause. They have made a difference today.” Luna said.

Are they through? “No, I’m sure we will be looking for other

opportunities to create awareness and encourage giving for Nothing But Nets.

Some new ideas are forming for the Spring of 2008!” Luna said. Future events are being discussed and include a Spring “March on Malaria.” For more information about Nothing But Nets and to see additional photos from these events please visit the conference website at [www.txcumc.org](http://www.txcumc.org) or Pollard’s youth page at [www.pollardumc.com/pollardyouth/](http://www.pollardumc.com/pollardyouth/).

If you have a story idea or an upcoming event please contact us and let us know.



# Ubuntu Journey 2008

Six women from the Texas Annual Conference will experience the uniqueness of the program

By Thelma Jones  
Editor, Cross Connection

When you visit the web site for Partners in Mission (PIM), one of the things you notice right away is the statement at the top of the page: *“Committed to mission by proclaiming, serving and witnessing in love the Gospel of Jesus Christ through hands-on mission work projects to persons in need throughout the world.”*

Kathie Mann, Director of the Texas Annual Conference PIM is committed to doing just that. In February 2008, she will lead a team of 14 women on an Ubuntu eXplorers journey to Kenya. Last year she led her first Ubuntu eXplorers trip to Zimbabwe. This will be the second time Mann will lead a mission group of United Methodist women from across the nation.

Ubuntu is and Zulu word and proverb that means, *“I am human because you are human.”* The

Women’s Division and Mission Volunteers office of the General Board of Global Ministries formed a partnership that enables women from the United States to build friendships and experience mission for one to two weeks in Zimbabwe, Uruguay, Cambodia, Sierra Leone or Cote D’Ivoire.

The goal of the program is to enable women from the United States to understand and share together the daily life, struggles, culture, challenges and opportunities of women from one of previously mentioned countries. It gives members from the 1-million member United Methodist Women a first-hand look at the programs and projects supported by their annual giving of approximately \$20 million.

Mann attended a training workshop in April in Stamford, Connecticut in preparation for the

2008 mission trip. Team leaders met with leaders from the host country to discuss plans and make preparations for the upcoming trips. In addition to Kathie Mann leading the trip, five United Methodist Women from the Texas Annual Conference will make the journey. Lee Thornton (Aldersgate UMC), Rev. Sherrill Corson (Mission Milby), Carole Gard (Moody Memorial UMC), Chris Sallis and Jordie Chaluprik (Clear Lake UMC) will be participants in this trip.

For more information on Ubuntu eXplorers Journeys, contact the PIM office at 713-521-9383 or visit the General Board of Global Ministries’ web site, [www.gb-gm-umc.org/umw](http://www.gb-gm-umc.org/umw).



Top Right: Rev. Carolyn McCall present donations to the children at a bush school in Zimbabwe.

Middle Left: Zimbabwe women introduce the UMW team to dishes that are symbolic of the region and their culture.

Middle Right: The eXplorer team is greeted by the women’s group in Zimbabwe with drums, dancing and music.

Bottom Left: The teams work together on various projects; getting to know one another as sisters in Christ.



# “Why Did I Get Married?” sparks couples outreach opportunity

By Enid Henderson  
Living Water UMC

“Why did I get married?” is just one of the many questions film maker Tyler Perry’s latest movie has sparked amongst couples. Pearland’s Living Water Church recently aimed to answer this question and more, when it used the premiere of

“Why Did I Get Married?” as a couples outreach opportunity.

In a unique way to attract couples to its anticipated relationship series, “Giving You the Best that I’ve Got,” Living

Water purchased all 254 seats in advance of the movie’s first showing at Pearland’s Cinemark Theater.

Members were encouraged to invite couples they thought could benefit from the upcoming relationship series. Like the characters in the movie, the series addresses issues such as communication, commitment and community.

“We wanted to come up with a creative way to provide practi-

cal tools that can transform lives as well as reach disconnected people,” said Ed Jones, pastor of Living Water Church. Jones says he has always been committed to empowering families and relationships with the tools and opportunities needed to be whole and healthy.

In 1997, Jones founded Living In Families Effectively (LIFE), a non-profit organization committed to making an impact against the growing trend of

marriage discouragement, dissatisfaction and divorce.

Jones estimates that more than 200 couples have benefited from LIFE’s couple empowerment sessions on the first Friday of every month and the annual marriage retreats. The group also offers support and provides referrals to relationship coaches, counselors and therapists for couples.

Living Water Church is a new United Methodist Church in

the Pearland area, and is worshipping in Don Jeter Elementary School on Sundays at 10 a.m. The church’s vision is to empower families one by one.

To learn more about the ministries of Living Water Church or to hear highlights from the relationship series, visit [www.thelivingwaterchurch.org](http://www.thelivingwaterchurch.org).



**Top Left:** Rev. Ed Jones and his wife, Sylvia are all smiles as they welcome church members and guests to the premiere of Tyler Perry’s new movie.



**Top Right:** This happy couple is ready for the movie to began.



**Bottom Left:** A group shot of individuals enjoying the show. The event was planned as a way to attract couples to a bible study focusing on relationships entitled, “Giving You the Best that I’ve Got.”



**Bottom Right:** Members of Living Water UMC enjoy the movie. The church bought all seats in the theater for the movie’s first showing.



# Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

## Fellers Symposium to address health, healing, and religion

By Donna Adair, Director of Communications  
St. Paul United Methodist Church

### Fellowship Opportunities

#### Trinity East hosts Christmas celebration

Trinity East Celebration's ministry will host a Christmas event: "The Christmas Gift: "Jesus, The Reason for the Season." Guests are invited to attend, Saturday, December 8, 2007 10 A.M. – 12 Noon

Guest speaker will be Mrs. Elnora Holland. Bring a friend or meet new friends.

You will enjoy a wonderful morning of fellowship with other women, a delightful brunch, singing, praising, testimony and prayer.

Please RSVP to Sinnie G. Washington at 832-677-8531 or email Carolyn Jones at [cdjay@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cdjay@sbcglobal.net)

#### Aldersgate UMC presents Holiday Play

The Drama Ministry and Chancel Choir of Aldersgate United Methodist Church presents "The Christmas Shoes," a play adapted by Steve and Beverly Forgy; created by Donna VanLiere & Eddie Carswell, arranged and orchestrated by J. Daniel Smith

The event is scheduled for Friday & Saturday, December 7 & 8 at 7 p.m. A Sunday Matinee showing is scheduled for December 9 at 2 p.m.

The location of Aldersgate United Methodist Church is 13217 FM 1764, Santa Fe, Texas in the New Family Life Center. Admission is free. For more information contact the church office at 409-925-2552.

### Learning Opportunities

Clergy-led Advent Studies at St. Paul's Begin November 27

St. Paul's United Methodist Church will present two Advent studies this season.

Rev. Shelli Williams will present "Behold the Mystery: Studying

the Mysteries of Advent" on Tuesdays from November 27 to December 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Rev. Gail Williford will present "Heart Whispers: Benedictine Wisdom for Today" on Thursdays from November 29 to December 20, also at 6:30 p.m.

'Behold the Mystery' will look at some of the mysteries of this season – the Annunciation, the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, and Emmanuel, God with Us – through which we are drawn closer to God even as God comes nearer to us.

The study led by Rev. Williford will be based on a book by the same name by Elizabeth Canham.

The author will guide readers to a daily rhythm that balances work and rest, study and play, and prayer and compassion.

The book, will also be used for a study during Lent 2008, and will be available for \$15 at the first class meeting.

Class members will be expected to read the text and the Bible and also engage in their own daily journaling.

To register for either class, contact Kat Jordan at 713-528-0527 or [kejordan@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:kejordan@stpaulshouston.org). There is no registration fee for either study, only the purchase of the text for Heart Whispers.

#### The Miracle of Christmas

The real miracle of Christmas happened in a manger in Bethlehem long ago.

Through a little baby born in a lowly stable, God's will, God's idea, God's intention, God's word, God's purpose and God's love became flesh and blood and lived among us, full of grace and truth.

Join Atascocita UMC in a four week Advent study presented by Dr. James W. Moore at Atascocita UMC starting Monday, November 26 through December 17. For additional information, contact the church office, 281-852-1000.

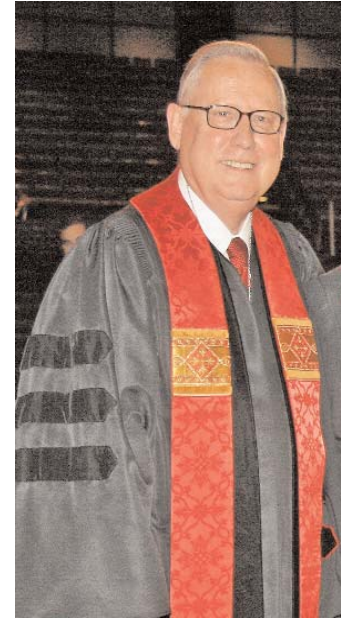
Dr. Harold G. Koenig will be the featured speaker at the Institute for Religion and Health's first John E. Fellers Symposium on Thursday, December 13, from 1 to 4 p.m. in Fondren Hall of St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

The symposium focus will be "Health, Healing, and Religion."

Koenig is a founding co-director of the Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health at Duke University Medical Center and a Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine at Duke University School of Medicine.

Panelists following Koenig's presentation will be Andrew Achenbaum, Ph.D., of the University of Houston; James Lomax, M.D., of Baylor College of Medicine; Susan Miller, M.D., of Weill Cornell Medical School; and Lois Ramondetta, M.D., of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

A former editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine and of Science and Theology News, Koenig also has published extensively in the fields of mental health, geriatrics, and religion.



The symposium is named in memory of Dr. John E. Fellers, a former president of the Institute for Religion and Health and a former senior minister at St. Paul's.

His research on religion, health, and ethical issues in medicine has been featured on more than 50 national and international television news programs, and he has published more than 300 scientific peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and has more

than 35 books in print or in preparation.

The symposium is named in memory of Dr. John E. Fellers, a former president of the Institute for Religion and Health and a former senior minister at St. Paul's. Dr. Fellers worked with great passion to support the development of a compassionate healthcare system that addresses the suffering of the community.

The Institute of Religion was founded at the Texas Medical Center in 1955 with the goal of supporting the religious and spiritual aspects of health and healing within the Medical Center's institutions. In the 1980s the Institute redefined its mission and played a crucial role in establishing a theological dimension in hospital-based bioethics programs. In the Fall of 2002, the Institute's name was changed to the Institute for Religion and Health, and a new mission has been articulated that calls for the integration of religion and spirituality in the healing process. Research projects through the Institute study the role of faith in the work of healing

## 50 years of service and still counting

### First UMC Somerville celebrate members commitment to ministry

By Thelma Jones  
Editor, Cross Connection

The First United Methodist Church in Somerville, Texas honored members who have served the church for more than 50 years. The member with the most years of service was Mr. Billie Wight

Mr. Wight joined First UMC Somerville in August 1927, and

is still an active member. He joined with 8 other members with 50 years or more. These members were honored with a luncheon in the Family Life center with other church members and guests.

As a part of the service, each honoree was asked to mention a

special memory in their life in the church. It was the highlight of the year for the church and will be remembered for years to come. A certificate was presented to each of the "50+ years" members to keep in memory of this day.

"May we all have the opportunity to serve the Lord and our community and make a lasting contribution that will never be forgotten as these special members of our family have," said Rev. Akin. "God Bless them all even more than he already has, they certainly have served him with their lives. I pray we all can be inspired by their faithfulness and commitment to help make Somerville UMC what it is and show us what we all can do with the Lord as our Savior."

Rev. Sidney Akin contributed information to this article.



Members of First UMC Somerville who belong to the "50+ Years of Service" club.