

Practices to help protect church resources

By Dr. Elijah A. Stansell, Jr.
Texas Annual Conference Treasurer

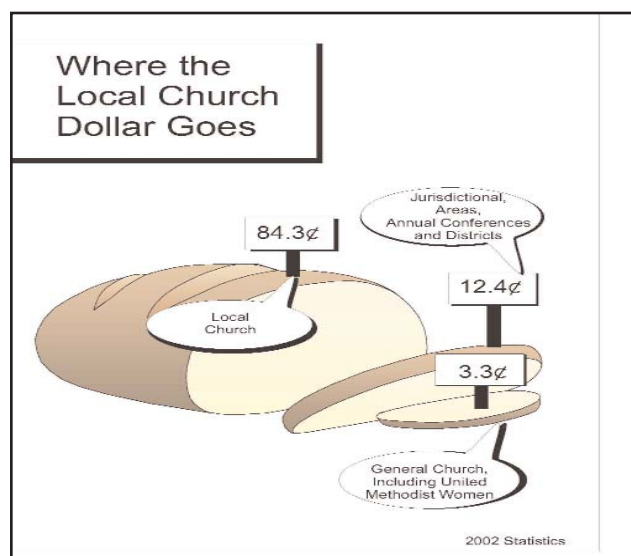
As the 2006 year comes to a close, we are prayerful that each congregation will do all that it can to meet 100% of its local church apportionment assignment. It is also crucial that the church's leadership assesses the effectiveness of its internal controls.

In the October issue of *The Inside View*, Dennis Belton, Director of Internal Audit for the General Council on Finance and Administration, presented 11 questions to assist church leaders to strengthen their internal control systems to better protect the assets of the church. Implementing safeguards that address the items will promote an appropriate level of internal control.

The questions, presented as a checklist, can assist church

leaders in assessing where their local church stands.

- Does the church carry a blanket fidelity bond that covers all church employees and volunteers?
- Does a different individual handle (a) custody of assets, (b) authorization of transactions, and (c) recording of transactions?
- Do at least two people not belonging to the same immediate family count the church offerings?



A breakdown of your apportionment dollars.

- Is the use of offering envelopes encouraged by the church? Do the money counters compare the amount on the envelope with the contents?
- Are the checks received endorsed as soon as possible?

sible?

- Is the offering held in a safe while at the church? Is it deposited in the bank as quickly as possible?
- Is the mail and incoming contributions received by persons who are not responsible for accounting records?
- Does the church use a purchase order system? Does an authorized person pre-approve all purchases over a certain amount?
- Are invoices for goods and services approved by an authorized person? Are numbered checks used to make all disbursements? Does an

authorized person review the supporting documentation prior to checks being signed?

- Is the bank account reconciliation prepared by a person who is not involved in writing checks?

To protect the church's assets, it is important that there is a separation of duties that will prevent any one person or group of persons from being in a position to perpetrate and conceal errors or irregularities.

It is our hope that these preventive steps will provide assurance to contributors that the local church promotes integrity in its financial system.

Advent - a season of flashbacks and previews

By Safiyah Fosua and excerpts from The General Board of Discipleship website

Advent is a time to wait for the coming of Christ, God's gift to the world. In Jesus, God's love is revealed and God's word is spoken.

God lives with human beings in a tiny child, dirt poor, and in a man who comes preaching God's presence. In Christ, we are given the free gift of God's grace: love unearned and undeserved. At Christmas, we celebrate the down-to-earth, in-the-flesh, love of God in Jesus Christ.

Advent is also a time to prepare for Christ's second coming, when God will dwell with human beings and the



world will be transformed in God's gracious love. It is a time to look around and to see in our own lives the astonishing gifts of God, which come full-term in Jesus Christ.

First Sunday of Advent

The journey begins with a preview. The Advent journey begins by remembering that the Son of Man, proclaimed to be King of Kings last week will, one day in the future,

return in glory (Luke 21:25-36). He is the righteous branch (Jeremiah 33:15) sprung up from Jesse's root.

Second Sunday of Advent

Our attention turns to the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:1-6), the forerunner to the Christ promised by the Old Testament prophets (Malachi 3:1-4). Though we meet John as an adult, we flashback to his father's song of rejoicing (Luke 1:68-79), as we remember the circumstances of his birth. In the gospel reading, John is not a child. He is an adult, preparing for the appearance of Jesus in his adulthood.

Continued on page 4

Conference archives set new hours

The Texas Conference archives, located in the Moody Academic Building at Lon Morris College, have new hours. The facility is open from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. on Tuesday and Thursday and at other times by appointment. This is a minor change from the old 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. hours. Dr. Faulk Landrum, retired Texas Conference elder, serves as archivist.

The archives recently received transcripts of the diaries of Rev. T. T. Booth, who served circuits in East Texas from 1879 to 1910. The diaries record, on an almost-daily basis, the activities of Rev. Booth. The bound book of transcripts is a gift from Rev. Gus Browning, retired Texas Conference elder and his wife, Jacquelyn Odom Browning. Mrs. Browning is the great-granddaughter of Rev. Booth.

Additionally, the 12 districts that went out of existence at the last session of the Annual Conference have sent their records to the archives, and these are available to churches and individuals across the conference for research. The archives' phone number is 903-589-4116 and the e-mail address is flandrum@lonmorris.edu. You can also reach Dr. Landrum at home at 903-589-3747 or by e-mail at flandrum@juno.com.

Texas Conference students reap benefits from United Methodist loans and scholarships

From the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation

On the United Methodist calendar, November 26 is the day set aside to observe *United Methodist Student Day*.

This year, more than 3,000 students received loans or scholarships to attend undergraduate or graduate school this fall. These loans and scholarships are made possible by the generous gifts from local churches and other United Methodist organizations.

Out of the 3,000 recipients, 112 were from the Texas Annual Conference. Their names and churches are listed below:

Blueridge UMC

Faith Johnson
Christophe Parker
Jacque Thornton

Crestmont Park UMC

Jamie Chinn

Pirtle UMC

Michael Clements

Grace UMC (Manvel)

Nancy Cobbs

First UMC (College Station)

Gabriel Cooper

First UMC (Longview)

Lacey Craig
Alan Edwards
Melanie Edwards

William Gulette
Chaney Haralson

Russle Memorial UMC

Chealsey Crosby

First UMC (Hallsville)

Emily Darby
Kevin Darby

Clear Lake UMC

Monique Davis

Kingwood UMC

Lauren Degraffenreid
Natalie Nazzal

Brooks Chapel UMC

Jairus Elder

Mt. Zion UMC

Lillian Ferguson

First UMC (Fairfield)

Amy Filis

League City UMC

Cara Forsythe

St. Peter's UMC

Scott Frederickson
Jennifer Greene
Keith Switzer

First UMC (Teague)

Kathryn Gage

Holy Covenant UMC

Todd Garcia
Stephen Simmons

John Wesley UMC

Edward Gibson

Temple UMC (Port Arthur)

Sarah Glaze

Ebenezer UMC

Leashondri Harden

Covenant Glen UMC

Courtney Hardy
Ryan Harvey

Newman Chapel UMC

Regina Hayes
Avery Taylor

First UMC (Pasadena)

Catherine Hejtmanek

First UMC (Jefferson)

Austin Jones

First UMC (Mont Belvieu)

Victoria Hook

Salem UMC

Kyra Jackson

First UMC (Nederland)

Jenna Pope

A & M UMC

Janice Kerlee
Kirsten Harvey
Sallie Mertz

First UMC (Dayton)

Luke Landrum

Abundant Life UMC

Jasmin Larue

St. Paul UMC (Port Arthur)

Wrenshia Loyd

St. Paul UMC (Chilton)

Destinee Mays

First UMC (Village Mills)

Catherine McConnell

Tomball UMC

Kelly McIntosh

Trinity UMC (Houston)

Morgan Mitchell

Highlands UMC

Marjie Mitchell
Elizabeth Mobley

Foundry UMC

Allison Patrick

Houston Trinity UMC

Eiryne Paz
Kathleen Paz

Aldersgate UMC

Aliece Porterfield
First UMC (Overton)
Emily Prien

Highland Park UMC

James Qazilbash
Kelli Williamson

St. John's UMC

Morgan Rasmus
Ryan Rasmus
Christopher Wilson

Rose Hill UMC

Ruth Shirley

Atascocita UMC

Gary Suderman

The Woodlands UMC

Wesley Swan

First UMC (Conroe)

Anna Taylor

Pleasantville UMC

Ashley Taylor

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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Advent celebration

Continued from page 1

Third Sunday of Advent

We *flashback* to Zephaniah's descriptions of the coming Messiah, who will deal with Israel's oppressors and turn their shame into praise and renown (Zephaniah 3:19). John's powerful images of the coming Messiah's winnowing fork and unquenchable fire (Luke 3:17) help us see *previews* of Zephaniah's Messiah (3:17), yet to come.

John the Baptist serves as a bridge between the promises of the Old Testament prophets (Zephaniah 3:14-20), and the New Testament ministry of the Christ (Luke 3:7-18).

Thus far, Advent's focus has not been upon the manger but rather upon the actions of the coming Christ and of John, his forerunner.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Our hearts and our ears are

ready for the promises made to the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2a-5a), for Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46b-55), and for descriptions of the shared stories of pregnant Mary and pregnant Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45).

The past four weeks remind us in *flashbacks*, of the stories surrounding Christ's birth, and, in *previews*, of his glorious return. After such a carefully planned journey, we are now eager to sing Christmas carols and to hear Luke's narration of the Christmas story (Luke 1-2:20) on *Christmas Eve*.

We are ready for the pageantry and mystery as we recite the age-old story of Christ's birth and prepare to receive Christ into our hearts in new and fresh ways.

Transformation is risky

Consultant reviews progress of pilot churches with CLT

By Eleanor L. Colvin

Director of Communications, Texas Conference

Transformation recently topped the November agenda of the Texas Annual Conference Core Leadership Team meeting.

Church transformation con-

room that has the holes fashioned out for windows, but does not have frames or panes in the window. Yet, Bento Navesse has mothered three churches.

embarked on a journey of transformation. During that time, consultant Don Nations has made two visits to each of the pilot churches.

Two months was enough time for one churches to have an authentic change-of-heart that now positions them to transform.

Two months was enough time for others to move full-speed ahead on establishing a ministry plan and making physical improvements to their campus to make it more welcoming.

Yet, for others, in two months, there has not been

maintenance as opposed to maintenance and ministry.

“Finances, facilities and forms – that is where they spend all their time,” Nations said. “Finances, facilities and forms isn’t ministry – it is merely the foundation. We have a building, but we cut all our programming so we can support the building or support the pastor. They are asking, ‘What can we afford?’ The answer is: Not very much.”

Nations expressed concern for the small membership churches, many of which do not significantly impact

their communities because their focus is inward and is on survival.

That situation is not unique to the Texas Conference, but is indicative of the state of Methodism nationwide.

Nearly half of the congregations in the United Methodist Church are small churches with less than 83 people in worship.

“Eighty-three members in worship won’t support a full-time pastor,” said Bishop Huie. “The cabinet is discussing if we should establish a threshold – where we say, without a certain number in

worship, we won’t appoint a full-time pastor.”

Alternatives to a full-time pastor would include part-time pastors, student ministers, certified lay ministers and establishing cooperative parishes in urban areas.

Nations is encouraging the pilot churches and the conference at-large to take a hard look at the things that prevent growth – especially the problems that are most difficult to address.

“In some of your districts race is still an issue,” Nations said. “We as United Methodists need to say that is not who we are. We expect there to be race issues in the community, because we expect the community to act like pagans. We don’t expect Christians to act like pagans, and, we certainly don’t expect pagans to act more like Christians than the Christians.”

“We all belong to one church – it happens to have local expressions. We need to be more connectational and less attached to place and space.”

Nations will continue a one-on-one consulting relationship with the nine pilot churches for a total of three years. In January, 25 more Texas Conference churches will begin consulting with Nations and DNA Consulting in an effort to bring about widespread transformation in the conference.

Finances, facilities and forms isn’t ministry - it is merely the foundation. Don Nations, DNA Consulting

sultant Rev. Don Nations was on hand to provide the team with its first update regarding the nine pilot transformation churches. But first, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie focused the group on risk-taking mission and service during a devotional discussion centered on the Gospel scripture of the Widow’s Offering (Mark 12) and the Bishop’s travels to Mozambique for the Council of Bishops meeting.

One thing that stood out to the Bishop was the ability of Mozambican people to spread the Gospel, even in the absence of resources. The people focus only on what must be done as opposed to the obstacles that pose a challenge to their mission or ministry.

For example, Bento Navesse, the 40-year-old congregation with which Bishop Huie worshipped while in Mozambique, is modest in structure – wooden benches inside a concrete, cinder block

“Which means they started three congregations before they had windows,” said Bishop Huie. “How can we unleash the resources that are needed to do God’s will in the world? It’s a different question from what can we afford.”

Like the widow in the gospels, the offerings of the people of Mozambique often require stretching and sacrifice. All churches in Mozambique collect two offerings – one for the operation of the church and the other for saving souls.

“It is an honor to give the offering,” she said, as she described one family who brought an offering of a wooden frame for the church’s window. “I’ve witnessed extravagant generosity in some new and powerful ways.”

First round report

Two months have passed since nine churches officially



Members of Bento Navesse Church in Mozambique enter the sanctuary with praise and thanksgiving.

any noticeable transformation.

“I have been from one end to the other of your conference,” Nations said. “You have some great people, pastors, superintendents, some dynamic situations and some very challenging and trying situations.”

To their detriment, many churches are solely focused on

Scholarship recipients celebrate Methodist Student Day

Continued from page 4

St. Lukes UMC

Andrew Thompson

First UMC (Houston)

Kelly Tomlin

Grace Fellowship UMC

Travis Tynes

Pollard UMC

Brittany Van Fleet

Cypress Trails UMC

Amanda Verhaeven

Boynton Chapel UMC

Chendra Washington

First UMC (Palestine)

Brian Wharton

Lindale UMC

Michelle Wheeler

First UMC (Lufkin)

Blake Williams

Chapelwood UMC

Tuesday Williams

Bryan UMC

Matt Wiseman

Pleasant Hill UMC

Otis Wright

Chad Young

Klein UMC

Mary Young

First UMC (Brenham)

Charles Young

Christ UMC

Jennie Averyt

Jeff Dunnigan

Kendall Pace

Kelly Sebesto

First UMC (Madisonville)

Rachel Bailey

Cheatham Memorial UMC

Mary Barron

Moody Memorial UMC

Amy Bertolino

Wesley Tabernacle UMC

Lygia Blount

First UMC (Huntsville)

Denise Braun

Blueridge UMC

Malcolm Brown

Latoydra Cleveland

ReSheena Grant

Jermey Hicks

Wesley UMC

Christina Adams

Trinity East UMC

Peter Agbo

St. Stephens UMC

Christie Alford

Mt. Zion UMC

Kamora Allen

Windsor Village UMC

Antoine Adams

Regina Crenshaw

Windsor Village UMC

(Continued)

Lillie Ferrell

Brittany Kelley

Gregory Lyons

Brittany Nunn

Gloria Owens

Danielle D. Thomas

The youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow in our churches and communities. Give generously on their behalf. If your church has a conflict with the designated Special Sunday, you may select an alternate date for United Methodist Student Day.

Upcoming Events



at 325-893-4776 or tkennedy@mcm.edu.

Christmas Celebrations

December 2-4, 2006

Take a trip back in time, *Walk Thru Bethlehem*

John Wesley United Methodist Church offers an opportunity to reconnect to the true meaning of the Christmas holiday. A yearly event for the past 13 years, *Walk Thru Bethlehem* is an authentic recreation of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

Share this unique, hands-on experience that serves as a wonderful educational encounter for both children and adults. See the live camel and donkey, and visit local craftsmen as they ply their trade.

Children, youth, and adult groups are welcome. So, travel back in time with us and take a **Walk Thru Bethlehem**. Call the church at 281-444-2112 for more information.

December 3, 2006

Aldersgate United Methodist Church will perform three musical performances during the holiday season. A Christmas cantata and drama entitled, "*One Quiet Night*," will be presented on December 3 at the 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. worship services and offered again on Tuesday, December 5 at 7 p.m.

For more information, call the church office at 409-925-2552.

December 9, 2006

"Women Standing in the Presence of God"- A Christmas Celebration

Enjoy a morning of fellowship and praise at a brunch hosted by Trinity East Celebration Chapter from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Guest speaker will be Rev. Ethelene Green of Major Chapel UMC.

For reservations and additional information, contact Vera Flournoy at 713-631-7627 or Alene Williams at 713-434-0308.

November 28 Through January 16, 2006

Living with Loss is a supportive opportunity to share grief experiences and re-examine spirituality in the wake of loss.

Facilitated by Rev. Terry Thompson, Minister of Congregational Care and Rev. Dan Miller, a chaplain at the Houston Hospice, a support group will meet at St. Paul's United Methodist Church on Tuesday nights from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The support group is provided free of charge; however, registration is requested. To register, call Rev. Thompson at 713-528-0527 or terryt@stpaulshouston.org.

January 27, 2007

McMurry University will provide a mini-conference for the **2007 Sikes-Melugin Lectures**.

The lessons are entitled, *A Warmed Heart* and *A Holy Life: Lessons for Today's Christians from John Wesley*.

Starting at 9:30 a.m. with a gathering in the Wind-Jammer Lounge, McMurry Religion faculty will present lectures on these and other topics to be announced:

Wesleyan/Anglican biblical hermeneutics
Free-will/predestination in Calvin, Wesley
Christian Perfection . . . or how Wesley drew on the Eastern Fathers

The lectures are open to all persons, particularly clergy, lay speakers, Sunday School teachers and persons interested in Certified Lay Minister trainings. Specific information about registration is forthcoming.

If you need additional information, contact Dr. Tim P. Kennedy, University Chaplain

Support UMCOR advances in honor of World AIDS Day

From the United Methodist Committee on Relief

In June 1981, scientists in the United States reported the first evidence of a disease that would become known as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or AIDS. Twenty five years later, the AIDS epidemic has spread to every corner of the world. Around 40 million people are today living with HIV and over 25 million have died of AIDS.

World AIDS Day is traditionally observed December 1. United Methodists are encouraged to observe this event on or near that day.

This year's international theme: "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise" relates directly to the eight United Nations Millennium Goals to "Keep the Promise" to fight the sources of hunger and poverty in our world. To read more about the worldwide response to AIDS, administered through the UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, go to www.unaids.org.

United Methodists are responding to the global epidemic locally and globally.

\$8 Million of Hope

One way United Methodists are answering this crisis is through the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund. Heeding the biblical commands to care for the widow and the orphan and visit the sick, the 2004 General Conference delegates established The United Methodist Church Global AIDS Fund, with a goal of raising at least \$8 million by 2008.

Funding supports education, prevention, care, and treatment programs for people living with HIV/AIDS.

The Global AIDS Fund does not overlook the crisis in the United States. About one million people are infected in the United States and more are added to that number each day. The plan specifies that 25 percent of what each annual conference raises should be used in that conference for AIDS work, either locally or in global projects.

Preventing AIDS

This critical work is starting with the next generation: infants infected by HIV at birth. Pregnant women have a

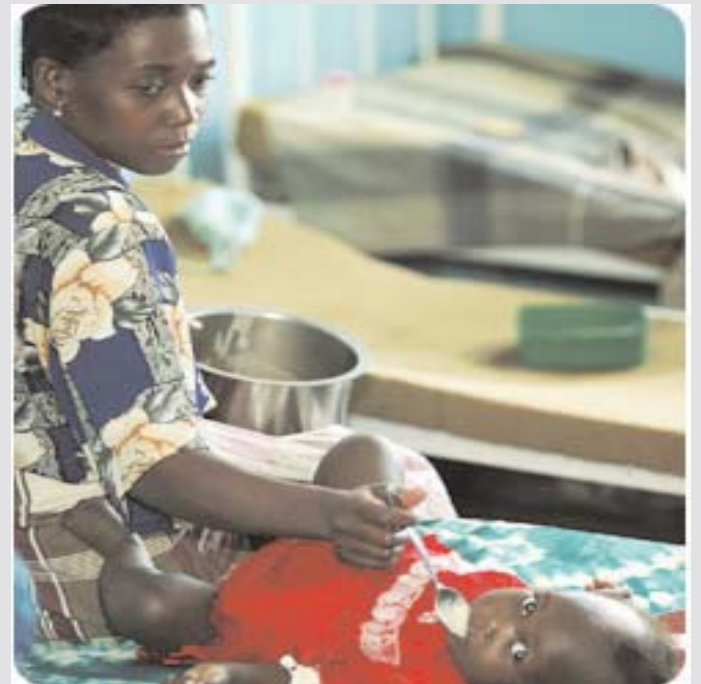
7,000 children in Zimbabwe are under the care of several orphan trusts that UMCOR supports. In this program, children orphaned by AIDS remain in their homes and assigned caregivers regularly visit them and attend to their needs.

World AIDS Day is traditionally observed December 1. United Methodists are encouraged to observe this event on or near that day.

AIDS Awareness and Children

Impacted by HIV/AIDS in Africa: Advance #101218. This AIDS educational program educates communities

one in three chance of transmitting HIV to their infants. United Methodists are



The Chicupe Rural Hospital in Mozambique is taking the lead in establishing the church's response to AIDS, focusing on education, advocacy, home-based care and prevention.

Photo by Mike DuBose.

working to provide a life-preserving drug, Nevirapine, which prevents the transmission of HIV from mother to child in Zimbabwe and seven other countries. The church also supports critical programs and services to care for orphans of AIDS.

How to Help

Help keep the promise! In honor of World AIDS Day, give generously to one of the following AIDS-related programs:

Global AIDS Fund: Advance #982345. Help United Methodists keep the promise to raise \$8 million for AIDS education, prevention, care and treatment overseas and in the United States.

AIDS Orphan Trust: Advance #982842. About

and supports community care programs for orphaned children, health coordinator training, as well as promotional/educational literature.

Enabling AIDS Ministries in the USA: Advance #982215.

This program facilitates development and strengthening of HIV/AIDS ministries by providing grants for education, compassion, and advocacy for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Healthy Homes, Healthy Families Kit Program: Advance #982315.

Prepare an infection control and basic care kit that contains 22 essential supplies needed to take care of an ailing loved one and prevent the spread of infection.