



Cross Connection

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

Two Sections, Section A

076000 Volume 154

Number 16

August 24, 2007

CLT clarifies roles, responsibilities to improve communications

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

Sharpening the focus was the primary task at the August 17 meeting of the Core Leadership Team. The CLT adopted leadership models for itself and the nine District Leadership Teams, which should crystallize team member responsibilities and communications throughout the conference.

Also a testament to improved communications was the presence of nine additional clergy and laity to report on transformation in their districts. Each month, at least two District Leadership Teams will share and strategize with the CLT.

(To learn who serves on your district's leadership team, contact your district office. To learn who your district representative to the CLT is or to contact them, visit www.txcumc.org/cltmembers.)

In August, the East and Southeast districts made reports. Next month, the South and Southwest districts are scheduled to report. Each district will present ministry reports twice during the year.

The approved operational models are designed to help the CLT and DLTs equip congregations to live the conference vision, mission, core values and key drivers; to represent the needs of congregations and to evaluate the fruitfulness of programs.

Additionally, a disconnection was bridged by requiring district representatives to the CLT to attend their respective District Leadership Team meetings. Previously, CLT members were not automatically integrated into the dialogue at the district level.

Now, it is one of their responsibilities, according to a detailed job description approved at the meeting.

"One of the words that stood out in the CLT's evaluation of its

baseline. That basically is what we're doing with the vital signs of discipleship – taking a baseline to determine further action."

The Southeast District Leadership Team has met about six times, and an additional task force has met to plan the district's vision casting and goal setting forum.

"We recognize the district needs to own the vision in order for us to achieve the vision," said Rev. Carlos Phillips, pastor of St. James UMC Beaumont and chair of the Southeast DLT. "Our goal is to help congregations clarify their own identity, so that they will have a sense of mission for Jesus Christ – to prepare and equip our people to present Jesus Christ."



First UMC Cleveland's Youth leader, Cindy Parker and Rev. Mike Mayhugh of FUMC Livingston represented the East District leadership team.

work was blurry," said Bishop Janice Riggle Huie in reference to an all-day evaluation and planning session of the CLT in June. "This is our effort to move from blurry to a sharper focus."

Vital signs

Among the praise reports in the Southeast District were a district vision casting seminar to take place in August; a new church start, led by Rev. Conrell Lockett, to minister to the entire city of Port Arthur; and the district's success in reporting Measures of Fruitfulness. To date, all but three of the district's 58 churches are reporting.

"As a nurse, I'd like to point out how important vital signs are," said Minta Clark, Southeast District representative to the CLT. "If your doctor wants to put you on medicine for high blood pressure, he first needs to get a

New wine skins

Rev. Tommy Williams, pastor of Woodville UMC and the East District representative on the CLT,

described the East District ministry context or mission field. The district, which is the largest in geographic area in the conference, has no city with a population greater than 35,000.

"When you go beyond Nacogdoches and Lufkin, the population dips well below that," Williams said. "I look at it not as a problem or challenge, but as an opportunity to do some imaginative things for God."

The geographic expansiveness of the district has encouraged them to employ church parish models or to create "hub" churches and to share more information electronically. The New Wine Skins Group was instrumental in that.

"It started out because we really needed younger men and women to help us technologically," said East District

Continued on page 3

Three proceed in Episcopal endorsement process

By Jill Krone
Texas Annual Conference Delegation, Communications

The TAC Delegation elected to serve at the 2008 General and Jurisdictional Conferences met on Saturday, August 18, 2007, at The Woodlands United Methodist Church. The agenda included hearing brief statements from each of the five candidates for Episcopal endorsement before reducing the number to three who would move forward to an extensive interview process at the September delegation meeting.

dates, and the time-limited question and answer sessions that followed, gave delegates the opportunity to know more about each candidate, their ministry and family history, and their religious background and stance. Gail Ford Smith said, "I appreciate this process because it includes the laity and allows for true discernment from both lay and clergy delegates." Candidates addressed the delegation in their order of election.

**The candidates who will proceed to the next step in the Episcopal endorsement process are:
Rev. Earl Bledsoe, Rev. Jim Foster and Rev. Jim Welch.**

Candidates included: Jim Welch, Jim Foster, Earl Bledsoe, Elijah Stansell, Jr., and Gail Ford Smith. In preparation for this meeting, each candidate was requested to submit a personal and ministry profile to the delegates for review.

Candidates who will proceed to the next step in the process of Episcopal endorsement are: Jim Welch, Jim Foster, and Earl Bledsoe. Each of these three will undergo a more extensive interview process at the September meeting when delegates will also decide the number of candidates and persons to endorse.

Don House, Delegation leader, noted that the process being used is beneficial and enabled the delegation to "make a major step towards becoming a family."

Candidate Interviews

The statements of the candi-

Rev. Jim Welch shared, "I've lived out my ministerial life within this conference. I grew up in the Methodist Church and love the institution. I don't mean just as the body of Christ, but the church as an institution." He continued, "The mission of the church is clear 'to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.'" In his written profile, Welch blames "the continued decline of our UMC" as having "weakened its ability to serve the cause of Christ" and notes a need for Episcopal leaders who can help re-focus energies on the essential mission of the church.

When asked if ministry is a calling or a profession, Rev. Jim Foster replied, "When I was in high school in the youth group at Lakeview, I sensed my calling while at prayer. God seemed to be saying this is what I was to

Continued on page 6

**The Cross Connection
The Texas Annual
Conference**



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.

Resident Bishop
Janice Riggle Huie

Director of Communications
Eleanor L. Colvin
ecolvin@txcumc.org

Editor
Thelma Jones
thelmaj@methodists.net

Web Content Manager
Brant Mills
bmills@txcumc.org

Communications Assistant
Rebecca Garcia
garciar@methodists.net

Cross Connection
5215 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002
713-521-9383

Conference Web Site:
www.txcumc.org

Mission Bend youth win 1st Place at Youth 2007

By Thelma Jones
Cross Connection

The youth from Mission Bend won first place in the Amazing Bible Race at the Youth 2007 event in Greensboro, North Carolina July 11-15. Eleven youth and three adults attended the event this year.

Youth 2007 is the largest youth gathering of the United Methodist Church and is held every four years. During the five days of music, praise, prayer, learning and growth, more than

them to do their best and prayed to thank God for helping them work together as a team. With great teamwork and God's grace, the Mission Bend youth won by one point.

"The continuing goal of our youth ministry is for students to experience the love of Christ in their hearts and to empower them through the scriptures, to relay this passion to the world around them," said Rev.

"The continuing goal of our youth ministry is for students to experience the love of Christ in their hearts . . . and relay this passion to the world around them."

Rev. Jeremiah Booker

Jeremiah Booker, senior pastor at Mission Bend.

The youth ministry participates in many projects and com-

6,200 participants were challenged to go back into their communities and make a difference in God's world and to live out their faith in new ways.

The Amazing Bible Race was one of the ways Youth 2007 challenged young people to seek and find God in the scriptures. It was a scavenger hunt through the Bible, complete with races, obstacle courses,

Bible quizzes, and prizes which included iTunes gift cards, T-shirts, and the grand prize was an Acer lap top computer for the winning youth ministry.

It was amazing how the Lord worked and made things happen for the best. Two and a half weeks before the youth left for Youth 2007, the youth lap top computer crashed after many years of service on MYF and youth mission trips.

There were more than a hundred teams that competed during the three days. The Mission Bend youth ministry had a team made up of 6 boys, 3 girls and one adult. They had the last spot on the last day and it was their only chance to win. They prayed before the race for God to help

community related events. They are involved in at least two mission trips annually and JUMMP (Junior high United Methodist Mission Project) involves middle school students in mission ministry.

This summer, Mission Bend UMC was selected as the host site for the Summer Food Service Program of the Houston Parks and Recreation Department. During this program, the youth volunteered to help with the distribution of free lunches and snacks to the community.

Tammie Mailloux, the Youth Director at Mission Bend contributed to this article.



The youth ministry of Mission Bend UMC show off prizes won in the Amazing Bible Race contest held during Youth 2007 conference.

"I saw the Lord"

Anne Graham Lotz coming to First UMC September 9

By Allen Houk
First UMC, Houston

First Methodist is assisting in developing the Anne Graham Lotz, "I Saw the Lord" bible study. The study



Anne G. Lotz

will be premiered at First UMC, downtown location on September 9, 2007. We will soon realize how significant this eight-week Bible study will be.

Unlike most studies in which we have engaged, this one is 55 minutes per session, suitable even for Sunday school usage. As this program continues its development, the Lotz Committee has made several critical decisions that should enhance the study.

First, in order to accommodate as many persons as possible, both campuses will be open at convenient times for numerous "home study" groups. While the objective is to have groups meeting in member's homes, the potential for a successful kick-off on September 9, possibly involving more than a thousand participants, would overtax the capacity for such study groups.

If such an occurrence takes place, both church campuses would be open to accommodate as many persons as possible.

Do you want to help out as a

leader or a host or as a participant? The material is inspiring and challenging and brings into focus, not only the problems within the church, but solutions to the challenges facing Christianity in America. Fifty-five minutes a week for eight weeks is a marvelous opportunity to become part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

The daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Billy Graham and founder of AnGeL Ministries, Anne has passionately proclaimed God's Word to people around the world for over thirty years.

Her gripping narratives and heart-touching teaching have inspired listeners in arenas and prison cells, stadiums and Bible studies, sanctuaries and seminaries, the United Nations and Amsterdam 2000. Anne is an award-winning and best-selling author. Her nine books include her signature book Just Give Me Jesus and her most recent release, I Saw the Lord.

It is an honor to welcome Anne to First UMC on Sunday at 9 a.m. at our Westchase Campus and at 11 a.m. at our Downtown Campus. Anne will stay on for a special evening session at 6 p.m. at the Westchase campus.

The Woodlands UMC is the site for Disciple Bible Study training event

Disciple studies allow your church the resources necessary to encourage devotions and disciplines within the congregation. The materials can be utilized in churches that are large or small, with persons at different phases of their "walk" and by those desiring renewal of spirit and a deeper faith relationship.

Training for respective studies is encouraged as a way to prepare and strengthen those in your church who will assume leadership roles.

This is the perfect time to share Disciple Studies with your church. This year, Disciple Bible Studies is giving half of every registration fee (for this event only), to the Bishop's Initiative for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Recovery. Registration

is required. Contact www.cokesbury.com and click on the Disciple training icon. You may also call 1-800-251-8591 or visit your local Cokesbury store. Registration forms may be mailed to Disciple Seminar, Attn: Registration, 201 Eighth Avenue South, P. O. Box 801, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

For more information, contact the Texas Annual Conference Disciple Task Force Coordinator, Jill Krone at 903-895-4707.



Web features enhanced

By Brant Mills

Texas Annual Conference Web Content Manager

The following is an overview of recent updates made to the Texas Annual Conference web site to improve your online experience.

Individual Church Console Control

This feature has always been available, but isn't used by many churches. Each church can log into the backend of the Texas Annual Conference website and update things such as the church's information page, church events that will automatically show up on the conference calendar, as well as classified ads and prayer concerns that will show up on the church's detail page on the conference website.

It is a great way to keep others throughout the conference informed of what each church is doing. Everyone can benefit from shared ideas. Information can also be updated or changed if need be. Check your church information through the church locator and be sure it is current. Contact us for more information or to get your login information for this section.

Additional United Methodist Resources

In this section under the resources tab, there are now links to other United Methodist entities including general board websites and communications resources.

Advanced AV Library Resources System

This allows the library staff to display whether an item is available and when it is scheduled to be returned. It also allows for better management and more efficient tracking of these resources.

AV Library Listings

All items in the audio visual library now show up in the listing. Searching is much easier due to the new search functionality described below.

Best search practice: focus on one key word important to your search and only search one field. Choose either title or description leaving the other fields blank or on their default setting – this will give you more results and a better chance of finding what you are looking for.

Church/District Mapping Feature

All churches associated with a district now show on the district

detail pages and are mapped automatically. Church locations are also mapped and can be viewed via the church locator or on the district information pages at the bottom of the listings.

In the church locator, you can see all the churches listed in a district or city by searching for the district or the city and leaving all other fields at their default settings. If you click the orange location marker in the map it will identify that particular church. If you click the address link in this information it will take you to the church detail page.

The church detail page also shows the location of the church in a map. If your building's physical address is listed incorrectly on your church detail page it will cause the map to display incorrect information. If your church address is incorrect, please let us know. It is important the building's physical location address is correct on the site. There are separate fields available for the mailing address and for driving directions if the church's location needs additional elaboration.

New Search Capabilities

The new search allows for multiple key words and more effectively targets relevant information in the body copy of pages and articles as well as headlines. It also show more relevant searches targeted to your key word toward the top of the list, making information easier to find.

Additionally, this feature adds the ability of "content tagging," which allows us to target pages and articles on the back end of our system to show up in a topical search, even when the specific word may not appear in the page.

If you leave the search defaulted to "all areas," the results will be broken down by section so you can see the relevant listings under the maroon headings for churches, clergy, news, pages, classifieds, resources, jobs, events, and newsletters depending on what results are returned relevant to your search. Quotation marks are not supported in the search engine and if you use them, no results will be the result from your search.

The most viewed pages for the previous week are also displayed on the right side of the search results page. *Best search prac-*

tice: focus on one the key word most important to your search. This will give you more results and a better chance of finding what you are looking for. If you are looking for a plural word – try it in its singular form as well. Also, just searching for the first half of a larger word will offer more chances of hitting any potential tense the word may be written in.

Clergy and Churches Updated

All Clergy should be linked to the appropriate church and/or ministry. This includes Extension Ministries. Search for your name in the clergy search and/or church search to be sure both your contact information and your ministry's information are correct.

If there is inaccurate information, let us know. Contact us if you see something that is not correct or is no longer current. (Note: Extension ministries can be found by looking for the minister by name from the clergy search. You can view the complete listing of extension ministers on the extension ministry page.)

RSS Feeds

RSS pulls the content from specific sections of a website and creates a feed which allows users to select the content they want to subscribe to and essentially republish on their own page through a feed reader, news aggregator or other such program. This way, users can target feeds from multiple websites to their personalized page and read the most recent headlines from several sites without having to go to each site individually. If they see a headline that interests them, they can click on that headline and navigate directly to the relevant story or section of that website.

You can also access some feeds from the more advanced cell phones or PDAs so that you can keep up to date on news, sports scores, your favorite blog and more while on the go. Depending on your service contract for data transfers for your cell phone or PDA there are additional fees for this. So, make sure you know what your provider charges and how their pricing structure works before using this feature for phones.

For more information, or assistance with these features, contact Brant Mills at 713/521-9383 or bmills@txcmmc.org.

'All are welcome'

First UMC Somerville displays its Radical Hospitality



The motorists traveling south from Caldwell through Lyons to Somerville, Texas will notice a new sign on Highway 36.

With approval from landowners, Paul and Dannie Machemehel, the sign is a response to the new initiative of Bishop Janice Riggle Huie called, "Transformational Churches."

"We are hoping all of the residents of the Somerville area, as well as the traveling public will know there is a United Methodist church in Somerville to welcome each one with open

minds, open hearts and open doors," said Rev. Sidney Akin, senior pastor of Somerville UMC.

"We feel this thought begins long before a guest comes to our doors. Most of us do a good job of welcoming a guest as they come to visit, but we must go the extra mile in making sure they will be welcome as they enter our doors."

The sign was developed and placed on the highway to make this thought public. All are welcome to First UMC of Somerville.

CLT - roles and responsibilities

Continued from page 1

Superintendent Rev. Keith Whitaker. "Now, we spend some time on technology, but we're spending more time talking with them about the life of the church."

The forward-thinking nature of the New Wine Skins Group and others is moving the East District toward transformation.

"Our district is transforming, just as our conference Model for Ministry is transforming," said Williams. "We know there's a lot more room to grow."

Relationships forged through the hub churches are assisting in that. East District DLT member Rev. Mike

Mayhugh of First UMC Livingston, described his church as another district office. First UMC Livingston shares media resources and human resources throughout the district, and hosts regular meetings of the churches in its hub.

In other business, Bishop Huie recommended reading of "An Invitation to an Upright, Charitable and Discreet Conversation: State of the Church 2007," which will appear as an insert in the September edition of *Interpreter* magazine.

The next meeting of the Core Leadership Team is set for Friday, September 21, 2007.

Greater Houston Leadership School equi

“Making Disciples ... On the Path to Transformation” is the theme of the 2007 Greater Houston Leadership Education School, which will be held Saturday, September 15.

Dynamic workshops will be presented that will educate, equip and encourage those serving the local church. Whether you are a leader of children, youth, adults or you are interested in spiritual growth or worship arts, there is a class for you.

The keynote speaker for the opening worship service is Carol Krau of the General Board of Discipleship. Krau, who will explore baptism as initiation into the life of Christ, will also present workshops. As a staff member of the General Board of Discipleship, Krau works to develop spiritual leadership for Christian education and formation and also serves as team leader for the Congregational Leaders Team.

Youth leaders are invited to hear Rev. Walt Marcum, minister to youth and families at Highland Park UMC in Dallas, present a youth keynote workshop in the morning and an afternoon workshop on confirmation.

A boxed lunch is included in the cost of registration; additionally, there will be displays and vendor booths. The GHLS team prays that this school will inspire and empower participants in their areas of church service.

The school will take place at St. Luke's UMC, 3417 Westheimer, Houston, Texas, 77227.

Visit the Texas Conference web site at www.txcumc.org for online registration through September 9. Registration is \$30 if postmarked by August 31; and \$25 per person for groups of five or more from the same location. After August 31, registration is \$35 per person.

Nursery is not available. For scholarship information, contact Connie Fowler at cflower@mbumc.org or 281-497-4491.

The following is an overview of workshops:

Beyond Mercy: Doing Justice

Rev. David Meeker-Williams
Doing justice is part of being faithful and requires finding a voice and getting organized. We will talk about concrete ways of making a difference by doing both.

Call to be Missionaries

Rev. Richard Laster, Texas Conference Sending Ministry

This workshop will include stories, insights, sights, sounds and inspiration related to finding each person's unique “missionary” post. Also, it will involve sharing of details on how to structure for mission in the local church. We will highlight the core value of Risk Taking Mission.

Communities of Practice as a Model for Adult Christian Education

Carol Krau, General Board of Discipleship, Nashville

Explore theological reflection, practicing the means of grace, and other Christian practices within community as a way to reflect on one's life and “make meaning” out of experiences that inform Christian disciples, both individually and as a congregation.

Connecting Adult Education and Your Congregation's Plan for Discipleship: What I'm Learning

Carol Krau, General Board of Discipleship, Nashville

Participants will reflect on doctoral research conducted in a local United Methodist congregation that is focused on the adult education ministry and the congregation's intentional plan for making disciples. The workshop will emphasize practical implications of the research for the participants' congregations and will be interactive and experiential.

Conversation With Your Neighbor: A Church Model for Engaging in Holy Conversations on Hot Topics

Rev. Kelly Sullivan, St. Paul's UMC, Houston

This is an informative and interactive workshop for holy and compassionate conversation based on a successful church model.

Covenant and Public Life

Rev. Rhenel Y. Johnson, Central South Parish Director

It is amazing how we live our lives trying to be a people of covenant but wrestle with the images and culture of public life. The question is how does a person of faith live out this covenant in everyday life? What connection do we have with the community around us? We will look at how it is possible to live out our

spiritual life and values in the covenant community around us.

Creating a Comprehensive Discipleship Program for your Congregation

Dr. Karen S. Dorris, Texas Annual Conference

What do people need to know, experience and do as they enter that journey that leads from conversion to committed discipleship? This workshop will explore ways that churches can create comprehensive systems to nurture people on this journey.

Creativity and Spiritual Growth

Robin Martin, Chapelwood UMC, Houston

Spiritual creativity nurtures the soul into ways of healing and spiritual transformation. Through creative processes, we walk the path of questioning ourselves and growing into the spiritual person we long to be.

Creative Process for Developing Worship

Melissa Burnham, First UMC, Missouri City

· Matt Robinson, First UMC, Missouri City

How do you move from dreaming up the ideas that make worship great to turning those ideas into a worship script? We will offer concrete examples of coming up with metaphors, images, movie clips and cultural references that not only engage the congregation, but connect them to God.

Creative Worship Experience — Administration of Multiple Teams

Melissa Burnham, First UMC, Missouri City

Matt Robinson, First UMC, Missouri City

So you've moved from the “one person develops worship” model to a team model with plenty of volunteer help. How do you effectively administrate all these teams and volunteers?

Designing Altars — Learning to Create Something New

Leanne Green, Moody Memorial First UMC, Galveston

Tired of using the same parameters year after year, same candles, pitcher, chalice, same everything? Need some new ideas for creating altar designs? This workshop will help even those who feel they aren't creative come up with new and different designs



Bishop Janice Riggle Huie honors deceased conference members at Annual C altar were dedicated to the conference member and given to that person's faith for worship ministry and altar guild members.

while still keeping the altar elements sacred. And it doesn't take a lot of money - create an altar on a shoestring budget! This is a great class for laity who are serving on worship committees and altar guilds.

Equipped for Every Good Work

Vicky Harris, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

Learn how to lead a four-tool process that can help you discover and develop the spiritual gifts, spirituality types, interaction styles, and working preferences of each person in your congregation! “Equipped for Every Good Work” is a process of discovering the gifts, graces, and abilities of the leadership core of your congregation that puts the attention on who we are as called, gifted, and empowered people of God!

Experience Darfur: You Can Do Something!

Mark Bogart, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

A 2004 report by the U.S. State Department declared, “the situation in Darfur is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today.” Beyond civil unrest, the crisis in Darfur is unquestionably one of genocide. Recent estimates place the death toll as high

as 500,000, with nearly 2 million natives displaced to neighboring countries or Internal Displacement Camps. Our discussion will focus on raising community awareness, empowering congregations, and instituting governmental and societal change that will bring an end to this terrible tragedy.

Extemporaneous Keyboard Praise

Phillip Hall, Jones Memorial UMC

This workshop is designed to assist keyboardists enhance their improvisational skills. Participants will actively experiment in modulation techniques, rhythmic changes, and harmonization of traditional hymns.

Faith-Forming Relationships through Spiritual Companionship

Becky Oates, Methodist Spiritual Direction Program, Charis

Seeking a closer walk within your Christian life? Come and be prepared for a Pentecostal experience through understanding how the Holy Spirit works in amazing ways through Spiritual Formation, Spiritual Direction, and by creating a personal space for prayer.

ips congregations for excellence



Conference 2007. Candles used to adorn the family. Altar design workshops are recommended

hold of Genesis and Revelation. This brief introduction may give you some ideas for helping new (or old, disenchanted) Christians take a deeper look at the Bible and its centerpiece.

Jesus Didn't Use Sign-Up Sheets

Connie Fowler, Mission Bend UMC, Houston
Vicky Harris, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston
Nancy Heintz, First UMC, Conroe

Come away from this class with time-tested tools for identifying, recruiting, equipping and sustaining a solid base of leaders for any ministry in your church. Experienced Christian Educators from three different United Methodist churches will guarantee you walk away from this day with at least one resource you can use immediately in your ministry.

Praying with Julian of Norwich

Rev. Glynden Bode

Come find out how relevant Julian [a 14th century English saint, mystic and spiritual director] is for our time and how her spiritual insights are helpful to us today.

Singles Ministry in the Smaller Churches

Sheri Kelley, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

What does Singles Ministry look like in the smaller church? How do you connect with other single adults within your local church as well as those outside the wall of your church?

Singles in Service

Sheri Kelley, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

Viva Pennington, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

What opportunities are out there for single adults to serve? Are there opportunities for singles from other churches to serve together? Come with ideas to share.

Spiritual Self Care

Rev. Shirley Allen Jenkins, Trinity East UMC, Houston

This class will focus on caring for God's temple, the Holy Spirit's dwelling place.

This Gift of Water...

Rev. Mary E. Tumulty, First UMC, Conroe, Praxis with Grace

This workshop will provide tools, resources and theological understandings to equip persons to teach a class on Baptism in their local congregation and help them understand the importance of helping adults and children grow in their faith.

United Methodist Doctrine

Dr. George M. Atkinson

This workshop will be a brief overview of Christian doctrine, with attention to distinctive U.M. emphases concerning the way of salvation.

Women's Retreats

Rev. Gail Williford, St. Paul's UMC, Houston

This workshop will walk attendees through the life cycle of a spiritual retreat. Designed to promote community and deepen a relationship with God, retreats are great places for Christian growth.

Learning the Labyrinth (for new walkers)

Dr. Betty Cartmell, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

Hear about its history, how to handle walking, and different ways of conceptualizing a walk. We will spend time in preparation for walking, and will walk the labyrinth.

Loving the Labyrinth (for experienced walkers)

Dr. Betty Cartmell, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

We will discuss several themes which emerge in labyrinth walks, and explore how we might utilize these for walks—now and/or later.

The Ministry of Fervent Prayer: Creating a Comprehensive Prayer Ministry

Dr. Jerry Webber, Chapelwood UMC, Houston
Nancy Sterling, Chapelwood UMC, Houston

This workshop has two aims: 1) to guide participants in deepening their own experience of prayer, and 2) to provide a broad overview of local church prayer ministry in such a way that participants might be led to expand the prayer ministry of their local congregations.

Financial Peace

Deanna Ooley, MBA, Financial Coach

Financial peace is God's way of handling money. It teaches people how to maximize the use of what they have.

Five Stars of Excellence in Christian Education

Kim Anderson, Trinity UMC, Beaumont

This workshop is for those who need direction in beginning and growing the education program of your church. New resources and program guidelines will be shared.

FOAM for Your Church

Rev. James H. McPhail, Memorial Drive UMC, Houston

The Fellowship of Older Adult Ministries, in keeping with the Center for Congregational Excellence, aims to provide local churches with resources, ideas, structure and goals to start or strengthen your ministry with senior adults. Senior adult ministry is crucial to the health of local churches.

Handles on the Ark

Dr. George M. Atkinson

Some people get burned by the Bible because they can't get



Top: Labyrinth workshops are planned for beginning and experienced labyrinth walkers. This labyrinth meditation took place at a Southeast District event commemorating Hurricane Rita.

Middle: Dr. Karen Dorris, Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence, will share information on discipleship that is sure to help churches transform.

Bottom: A thematic display helps set the tone before worshippers enter the sanctuary at Annual Conference 2007. Greater Houston Leadership School workshops will explore creative worship planning and designing altars.

Patient Partners brighten stay of patients

By Denny Angelle
The Methodist Hospital

Ronald Smith brightens up whenever he gets a visit from Bryan Croft, who is now his best friend at Methodist. Croft, a vice president, has been visiting Smith for a few weeks and is a main reason the patient is doing better.

Smith, from Lufkin, came to Methodist on May 16 with serious heart problems. He has been in intensive care since then, and Croft's regular visits have picked him up, both emotionally and physically.

Croft is a Patient Partner, one of the first in a new program

originated by the Spiritual Care and Education department. The program enlists volunteers from among hospital employees to regularly visit long-term patients who need to regularly see a friendly face.

Patient Partners are encouraged to establish a rapport with

their designated patient, visiting and learning about the patient's interests.

"I was in such a depression I can't even remember the heli-

Croft visits whenever he can, about two or three times a week. The two men talk about anything, Croft occasionally shares magazines or books. "I'm honored and thrilled Ronnie calls me his friend," says Croft. "I'm surprised at how much difference (these visits) have made in his condition."

Patient Partners is an spin-off from the No One Dies Alone program. That program, which began June 1, attracted so many volunteers that many of them are also participating as Patient Partners.

Volunteers undergo a 45-minute training session, and the obligation is at least 30 minutes a week to visit with extended-stay patients.

To sign up for Patient Partners or for more information, contact the Department of Spiritual Care and Education at 713-441-6297.



Bryan Croft, left, a vice president at The Methodist Hospital is Ronald Smith's patient partner. Croft visits Smith, a heart patient, two or three times a week.

copter ride down (to Houston)," recalls Ronald Smith, who was a machine shop inspector before his illness forced him to take an early retirement. "Before Bryan started coming up to see me, I was so down in the dumps ... but man, he has helped me a lot."

Non-profit organization partners with Medicare

Help for senior citizens with Medicare changes



Gateway to Care, a non-profit organization assisting residents access health care service in the Greater Houston area, has teamed up with My Medicare Matters in order to provide an avenue for seniors to work one-on-one with an expert regarding changes to their Medicare.

The new, comprehensive community-based education program is geared to help people with Medicare and their families understand the new Medicare

Prescription Drug Coverage, assess their personal situation, understand their choices, compare plan options and make the enrollment decision that is right for their health and their financial situation.

In addition, this program is able to help screen and refer people to programs that can help with other expenses.

The program is being sponsored by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Access to Benefits Coalition (ABC), with support from AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP, to find approximately 60,000 low income subsidy (LIS) residents in the Greater Houston area that are eligible for extra Medicare benefits.

Partnering with My

Medicare Matters and giving those who need more information about the new Medicare Prescription Drug Program coincides with Gateway to Care's mission of assisting residents access health care services in the Harris County area.

Barbara Prince, My Medicare Matters Coordinator, and Gateway to Care want to be sure there are no questions left unanswered when it comes to choosing the right Medicare plan.

For more information and/or to see if you or someone you love qualifies for this program, please call Barbara for free assistance at 713.783.4616 (Ext. 260).

Three selected to continue in Episcopal endorsement process

Continued from page 1

do — bringing people together in the church to know the love of Christ in their lives." Foster indicated, "I Timothy 3:1-7 defines the qualifications of leadership and has been the touchstone passage for my ministry.

"My calling is to share God's love with people."

Rev. Foster shared what he learned from serving as Provost during three different Episcopacies.

Rev. W. Earl Bledsoe, in his profile, told delegates, "The United Methodist Church today is at the crossroads of a global evangelistic explosion. Yet the Church in the United States is struggling for church growth, creative ministries, and effective leadership."

To the delegation, Bledsoe offered, "We've lost our passion for evangelism and to offer Christ to people. We've become concerned about issues that divide us."

"There is a burning passion on my heart for us to live out our God-given potential to be what God has called us to be." Bledsoe's written statement noted, "I have a burning desire in my heart to help empower districts and local congregations to their fullest potential..."

Rev. Elijah Stansell, Jr. shared a vision for the United Methodist Church in the 21st Century to "reclaim its Wesleyan heritage with a relevancy for today's culture."

Stansell said, "Our society faces many crippling challenges" and he believes that "the church has an obligation to speak with a voice of hope and provide services..." Stansell also noted that the "local congregation is about making disciples, about being a beacon of hope in a community."

When asked about the connection between the church and Hispanics, Rev. Stansell suggested, "we've been trying for a while, but have not been successful. The greatest challenge is getting the right leadership, capable leadership. We haven't yet found how to find or develop it for ourselves."

Of her ministry, Rev. Gail Ford Smith shared, "I went to district camp at Lakeview, but it was at a leadership camp at 13 years old that I felt the call to preach. I heard God's voice as clear as a bell. Amazingly, no one at my home church said women can't preach but continued to nurture me in my call."

She expressed that "It is important that we in the church

model for others. We must care enough about each other to move beyond what is not important. Toleration isn't love and our love and grace has to be authentic." Rev. Smith noted, "The church will prevail to the end of time but the future of the United Methodist Church is another matter. The United Methodist Church has so much to offer and to speak to the world today. I'm passionate about the Gospel and the church."

Following the statements of each candidate, a written ballot was presented to each delegate. The delegation was charged with receiving three (3) candidates with a minimum of 60% vote of the ballots to continue in the Episcopal endorsement process. All three (3) candidates for promotion were determined on the first ballot.

Candidates who will proceed to the next step in the process of Episcopal endorsement are: Jim Welch, Jim Foster, and Earl Bledsoe. Each of these three will undergo a more extensive interview process at the September meeting when delegates will also decide the number of candidates and who to endorse.

Don House, Delegation leader, noted that the process being used is beneficial and enabled the delegation to "make a major step towards becoming a family."

Next Steps

Other delegation business included: the endorsement of Mary Daffin (lay from First UMC, Houston) in her re-election bid to serve on the General Conference Judicial Council; and approval given to alternate delegate, Jill Krone, to sell hand-made tatted crosses to help meet personal financial obligations of serving on this delegation.

Currently, only the General, Jurisdictional and first Alternate delegates receive stipends to offset their delegation travel and expenses.

The next meeting of the Delegation is Friday, September 28 at 4 p.m. at Lakeview Conference Center. Delegates will work into the evening and then have an early start on September 29, meeting until 2 p.m.. In addition to concluding the Episcopal endorsement process, delegates will undertake a review of some of the resolutions to be put before legislative committees.

Hospitality at the heart of ‘open house’ events in Texas

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

“We are one family knitted and joined together in love” is the motto of Riverside UMC in Houston – which is one of many Texas Annual Conference churches planning “Open House” events to show love to their surrounding community.

Each September, Igniting Ministry encourages congregations to celebrate United Methodist Open House Month in

and that Jesus loved them.”

Welcome back

First UMC Nederland will show its hospitality when it hosts a Ministry Fair and supper for all the guests who have visited the church in the last six months. Personal invitation letters were sent to about 50 people to attend the event on the second Sunday in September.

“One of the goals of the

time attendees with a “front porch visit” that presents guests with a DVD that discusses the church’s ministries and has a brief word from the senior pastor.

“The attitude is to grow the kingdom of God, and God will grow our church if we do that,” Miller said.

Beyond September

These activities and countless

Igniting Ministry offers tips for ‘Open House’ activities

The following ideas were taken from the Igniting Ministry web site. For information on increasing Radical Hospitality in your congregation visit www.txcumc.org/congregationalexcellence or www.ignitingministry.org.

House warmers – Extend welcoming beyond ushers and greeters. Station “house warmers” – people who meet the others in the aisles and pews as they prepare for worship. They offer conversation and introductions to help everyone feel at home in the worship area.

Community Worship Services – Plan worship services during the month to reach out to others in the community. Consider structuring services around issues and themes that are important to your community. Announce the events with door hangers, invitations and perhaps personal letters to the community.

Diversity – If your congregation is ethnically diverse, celebrate that gift! Invite members to dress in native attire, to pray in their own languages, to introduce songs or hymns from their native countries, or to educate the congregation about their homelands’ religious traditions.

Eight Out of Four – For small-group activity, have your welcoming team organize nights out for groups of eight people, including at least two newcomers. Designate hosts to choose the first activity (dinner, sporting event, concert). Invite sign-ups and ensure that newcomers are included. Each group goes out four times; rotate hosting duties and activity choice among members.

Saturday Night Live – Stage a comedy dinner show, using church talent. Include a tour of the facilities and make sure each newcomer is introduced to at least five other people.

Greet and Meet – Plan social opportunities. For example, a Church Cafe between Sunday School and worship with

refreshments and a host/hostess to introduce newcomers to members. Offer tours of the facilities and allow teachers to give a quick description of classes and study material.

Serve the Servants – Invite and recognize workers and volunteers in the community, such as police officers, hospital workers, firefighters and their families.

Education Sunday – Honor public- and private-school teachers, administrators, bus drivers and other school employees, along with your church’s daycare staff and teachers, and their families during a worship service.

Carnival/Craft Fairs – Include church information and an informed greeter during fall fairs, carnivals and garage sales to which the community is invited. Promote your church’s outreach activities, introduce new ones and provide newcomers with opportunities to get involved.

Sporting Events – Consider volleyball and golf tournaments or churchwide bowling night and invite friends to join a team. Serve refreshments at the church.

Welcoming Weekends – Invite guests and/or newcomers to a Friday-night free dinner, contemporary music concert and introductions (don’t forget name badges). Begin Saturday with breakfast and a mini-Bible study and conduct theme-specific discussion groups, children’s sessions, a picnic lunch with a storyteller. Have members agree to pick up guests and bring them to Sunday’s worship service and introduce them during the service.

For more tips, attend one of the upcoming Welcoming Congregation trainings.

North District: September 8, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., First UMC in Atlanta. RSVP: 903-796-8247. Cost: \$10.

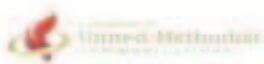
South District: October 14, 2:30-5 p.m., Bay Harbour UMC in League City. RSVP: 281-334-1100. Cost: \$20.



Start by hosting a teen open house this September.

Igniting Ministry

For welcoming ideas and free resources visit www.ignitingministry.org or call 877-281-6535.



This September, the denomination’s annual Open House Month will focus on welcoming and inviting teens in local communities to The United Methodist Church.

A UMNS photo by United Methodist Communications

coordination with the Back-to-school airing of UMC television messages.

Hosting special events, worship festivals or making other efforts to welcome those in your community, presents opportunities to intentionally recognize Christ in everyone – and to remember that guests are looking for Christ in others.

The 140 members of Riverside UMC welcome about 10 visitors monthly. The church has set an Open House calendar that includes an Old School Sunday, when favorite hymns of yesterday will be sung; a Back-to-school Day for students and educators; a Women’s Sorority Day; a Men’s Day and more.

In reference to Women’s Sorority Day, Rev. Marilyn White, senior pastor of Riverside UMC, said members already are inviting sorority sisters and that the church will extend an invitation to young ladies in sororities who attend the neighboring University of Houston.

“We are committed to making disciples for Jesus Christ and we know that we can’t do that by just staying in this building,” White said. “We want to let our neighbors know we love them

Ministry Fair is to show people how they can connect to the church and to find out how we can better serve them,” Rev. Toney Miller, associate pastor of First UMC Nederland.

Among Miller’s responsibilities as associate pastor are pastoral care and evangelism. Participating in the annual conference Church Transformation project is helping First UMC Nederland in both those areas.

“The information I’ve received has given us some new direction in the evangelism program,” said Miller, who has served for five years in Nederland. “Some of the things (in the Church Transformation Workbook) we actually hadn’t thought about. As quickly as we can, we’re implementing ideas ... We’ve developed the greeters ministry, and some of our contact strategies were changed because of the information we received.”

Presently, Miller oversees visitor follow-ups. After the first visit, he and a member of the evangelism team send a handwritten note to the guest. The senior pastor and a different evangelism member send notes after a second visit. And, the goal is to always follow up with third-

others are important to ensure that newcomers feel welcome. Igniting Ministry resources describe an “Open House” as an opportunity to emulate Jesus’ welcoming spirit with a special emphasis on inviting and welcoming newcomers.

According to Igniting Ministry, the welcoming outreach of an Open House may start in September with “United Methodist Open House Month” and can carry into the holidays as hay rides with hot cider, appear during winter as a chili night, celebrate spring with an Easter egg hunt, then welcome all to a mid-summer barbeque.

An “Open hearts” welcome mat or entry banner is one quick-fix to make any event more warm and welcoming.

For more information on becoming an official Welcoming Congregation, visit www.txcumc.org/congregationalexcellence. To take a first step in evaluating your congregation’s sense of Radical Hospitality, utilize the Texas Annual Conference Church Transformation Workbook, which is available at the same above web site.



Spotlight on local church activities

Official Texas Historical Marker Dedication And Centennial Celebration

The Brookeland United Methodist Church, located at 1117 Old Highway 8 North will celebrate over 160 years of Methodism in the Brookeland, Sabine County, Texas area.

Saturday, September 15, 2007 at 2 p.m., Brookeland UMC will celebrate the present church's 100 year anniversary and receive an official Texas historical marker.

Join in this important historical event in the life of the Brookeland UMC and the Brookeland community. Music will be provided by the Rayburn Country Dulcimers.

Refreshments will be provided. Memorial gifts will be available for purchase following the dedication. For more information, contact Gloria Davis Garrett, Church Historian at 409/698-3215.

Clergy Excellence offers Pre-Retirement Seminar

Have you thought of retirement? You are of an appropriate age to start now to give these issues serious considerations. We would like for you and your spouse to be informed and the best way would be to attend a Pre-Retirement Seminar sponsored by the Texas Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the Board of Pensions.

This seminar will be held at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center, beginning at 10 a.m. Wednesday, November 14, 2007 and ending with noon lunch on Thursday, November 15.

There will be presentations by The General Board of Pensions, The Social Security Administration, financial, tax and legal advisors. There will be time for your questions, inspirations, relaxation and light-hearted counsel on healthy, happy lifestyles.

The deadline for enrollment is October 1, 2007. For additional information, call Rev. B. T. Williamson or Marty Gordon at 713/521-9383, x 322.

First UMC, Missouri City Saturday, September 15 (9 am – 3:30 pm)

It's About Friendship – Women's Retreat – The United Methodist Women of our church have organized this third annual women's retreat focusing on friendship. The keynote speaker is Joy Carol, award-winning author of *The Fabric of Friendship*. Breakout sessions include yoga; crafts; jazzercise; financial planning for women; and nutrition tips. Registration is \$30 and includes breakfast, lunch, a tote bag loaded with goodies. To register, contact First UMC Missouri City at 281-499-3502.

Caregiver Support Group –

The Health & Wholeness Ministry at First UMC Missouri City is now forming a support group for those caring for others affected by Alzheimer's Disease or dementia. In Houston and the Southeast Texas area, approximately 120,000 individuals are living with Alzheimer's disease or some form of dementia. Over 70% of people with Alzheimer's disease live at home, where 75% of their care is provided by family and friends.

If you are a caregiver, friend or family of a caregiver, please join us for a monthly meeting that will provide a forum for learning, socializing, discussing, and supporting one another.

The Caregiver Support Group will be facilitated by trained volunteers. For more information call 281-835-6302.

New Hours for the Texas Conference Archives

The Texas Conference Archives, which houses records that date back to 1838, have new office hours. The new hours are Monday and Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Archives office is in need of a copier. If your church is getting a new copier and your old one is in good working order, the Archives could use it.

Call Dr. Faulk Landrum at 903-589-4116 or e-mail flandrum@lonmorris.edu.

Church community center dedicated in memory of two youth

By Kaylynn Bright
Sloan Memorial UMC

Two beloved children of Sloan Memorial United Methodist Church are making a big impact in the community. Nathan Billings and April Emmers were recently named as honorees of the *Sloan Memorial UMC Helping Hands Community Life Center*.

Six year old Nathan and 14-year old April lost their lives in a 15-passenger van accident in Alabama returning from a T.D. Jakes conference in Atlanta, Georgia, on August 6, 2005.

The building was dedicated in their memory August 4. Family and friends gathered for the momentous occasion, decked out in their "purple-pride" Sloan Memorial T-shirts. The event included hymns and prayers, led by Pastor Develous Bright. It



April Emmers

concluded with a riveting balloon release. Nathan's and April's light was sent out into the greater Houston-

Galveston area, through television stations KPRC Ch.2 and KRIV FOX 26, that were on hand to capture the moment.

Building organizers said the center opened in 1987 as a clothing distributing center. Food distribution began a year later.

Today the center is governed by a Board of Directors and serves a multi-ethnic group of people who live within Jensen Drive, Clinton Drive, Lyons

Avenue and Gregg Streets. Food is received from the Houston Food Bank, Sloan's

Annual Souper Bowl Sunday Food Drive, and the Church's budget. Emergency assistance is also provided for those traveling in-between cities needing assistance. Directors say 329 regular clients are served per month.

Gone, but not forgotten

Nathan, a life-long, member at Sloan Memorial UMC, was known for being fun-loving, free-spirited, fearless, and focused. He was a top honor student at Edgar Glover Elementary School in Fort Bend County and was also a gifted pianist. His mother, Bonita Billings, says "He didn't have a mean streak in his bones. He never got angry, not even with other children."

Besides his doting father, Author Billings, Nathan's sidekick, was Spider Man. "He never left home without him," his sisters Bethany and Bailey fondly recall.

Last year, Sloan awarded academic scholarships to graduates in honor of Nathan. His mother says Nathan would have been so proud of that and the building dedication. The building provides a kind of relief for her. She and her husband, Arthur, have been named honorary board members of the center.

April was a active member of the Fountain of Praise Church, where Rev. Remus and Mia Wright serve as pastors. April frequently visited SMUMC with her aunt and uncle, Harold and Linda Emmers, and their children, Harold II and Ashley. April, a student at KIPP Academy in Houston, was active in athletics and was loved by everyone that she encountered. Her father, Michael Emmers says, "We just want to thank the church for helping April's name to live on."



Nathan Billings



From left to right: Rev. Develous A. Bright, Relia Scott (grandmother to Nathan Billings), Bonita Billings and daughters Bethany and Bailey; along with Michael Emmers, his wife Jackie and their son Michael stand in front of the Helping Hands Community Life Center.



Bonita Billings, her mother Relia Scott and daughters are interviewed by news crew at Sloan Memorial UMC.