



Cross Connection

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

Label Area

Two Sections, Section A

076000 Volume 155

Number 02

May 16, 2008

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

'Spotted Owls' spot success

Legislation passes that will streamline ministry candidacy process

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

The Texas Annual Conference "Spotted Owls" and their supporters throughout the conference and connection have led the United Methodist denomination into a new era.

The TAC Clergy Recruitment Ministry Team in the Center for Clergy Excellence ignited a grassroots campaign this spring to support General Conference legislation to streamline the steps to ordained ministry.

There have been 14 quadrennial ministry studies in the last 16 quadrennia. And, in spite of recommendations by some that the matter be referred by the General Conference for a 15th quadrennial study, the Spotted Owls' grassroots effort generated momentum nationwide – indicating that the church is ready for change.

Delegates to the General Conference affirmed that, by voting 796 to 24 to overwhelmingly adopt the petition.

"Congratulations! Because of your efforts, the path to ordination will now be shorter, simpler, less discouraging to current candidates, and more inviting to all people considering God's callings — particularly young adults and people from ethnic minority groups," wrote Rev. Carol Bruse, associate director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, to members of the Spotted Owl Society. The name "Spotted Owls" metaphorically describes the scarcity of clergy under the age of 35.

Bruse counted Dr. Lovett Weems, distinguished professor

of church leadership and director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, among those that paved the way for this day in the denomination. Weems recently co-authored The Crisis of Young Clergy with Ann A. Michel.

"Lovett Weems' work alerting the church about the shortage of young elders – and the work of Bishop Huie and many other progressive leaders over the last few years – really prepared the soil for our seeds," Bruse said. "They planted and tended. We got to share the joy of watching the seedlings sprout."

What will change?

For starters, the initial steps of candidacy will be shortened. People will be able to enter the discernment process for candidacy after one year (instead of two years) of involvement in a United Methodist church, and, may now enter the process through their campus ministry.

The legislation also will allow annual conferences and boards of ministry to develop other resources. Discernment resources The Candidacy Guidebook and The Christian as Minister will be optional.

The probationary period would also be shortened by one year – from three years to two years. And, there would be a change in language – the probationary period would be known as a period of "provisional membership" or "residency." Additionally, the changes would allow probationary or residency

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Top Photo: Bishop Janice Riggle Huie takes a break from the General Conference action to visit with spotted owls supporters, Rev. Jennifer Jackson, Lay Delegate, Ruth Palmer, Rev. Carol Bruse and Rev. Taylor Meador Fuerst.

Middle Photo: The Spotted Owl Society finds a perch in the gallery of the Higher Education and Ministry's Legislative committee.



The Cote d'Ivoire Choir—total praise at its best. More on page 5.



The mission of the Texas Annual Conference is *to equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.*

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



Global Health Initiative affirmed along with poverty-fighting partnerships

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

The General Conference enthusiastically affirmed the denomination's Global Health Initiative aimed at eliminating the diseases of poverty – HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, measles and malaria.

With a vote of 825 to 29, the petition was passed on the May 1 consent calendar.

"This marks another milestone...Jesus calls us to heal the sick, and for more than 160 years United Methodists have

During his address, Gates discussed a trip to Zambia that personalized the issues of malnutrition, poverty and lack of health care. He said there are approximately 540 doctors in Zambia to serve a population of 12 million. To illustrate further, Gates asked those in attendance to imagine the state of health care if the 500 delegates sitting in the front half of the arena were the only ones comprising the medical corps to care for Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.

Gates recounted that on this Zambian trip to "the hardest-to-

Foundation, emphasized that the Nothing But Nets campaign goals are multi-faceted.

"There are two goals: \$10 to send a net and save a life, and \$100 million," Gore said. "Both of those today are equally important."

Both goals will manifest in lives saved. Gates calls the initiative "a humanitarian issue" above all else.

"People are dying, and we can save them. That ought to be enough," Gates said. "Those with malaria are not national security issues, not markets for our exports, not allies in the war

"You are 12 million people armed with the notion that the world is your parish, which means you're the most powerful weapon there is against disease."

Bill Gates, Sr.
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

been doing that," said Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, noting that partnerships will underscore the initiative's success. "We are confident we can transform the world and bring wholeness and healing to places around the world, which neither our partners could do alone nor we can do alone."

The affirmation includes a denominational pledge to raise \$75 to \$100 million in support of the Global Health Initiative.

Partners serve world parish

On the same day of the vote, Bill Gates Sr., Co-Chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation addressed the General Conference and reaffirmed the commitment of the foundation to partner with United Methodists to eradicate malaria.

"You are 12 million people armed with the notion that the world is your parish," said Gates, "which means you're the most powerful weapon there is against disease."

The foundation entered the Nothing But Nets partnership in 2006 with a \$5 million grant, and has continued to expand its involvement.

reach places in the hardest-to-reach countries" 23,000 mosquito nets were delivered via bicycles to an area that is about the size of Italy and Sweden. Now, the number of Zambians covered by nets has risen from 20 percent to 80 percent.

"I see so many signs of hope, so many reasons to be optimistic," Gates said. "A decade ago the global fund did not even exist, and in a short time it has become the most important source of funding for Malaria research."

Gabrielle Fitzgerald, senior program officer of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, also has hope.

"Malaria was eradicated in the United States in the 1950s, so we know that it can be done," Fitzgerald said. "No one should be dying of malaria any longer. We are thrilled to be here and partner, because it goes to so many core strengths of the United Methodist Church."

The goals

During a press conference following Gates' address, Elizabeth McKee Gore, executive director of partnership alliances at the United Nations

on terror. They're human beings who have infinite worth in their own right without reference to us. They have mothers who love them; children who need them and friends who cherish them; and, that, is enough."

Zimbabwe Annual Conference Bishop Eben K. Nhwatiwa knows the truth of Gates' statements, and expressed gratitude for the partnership.

"On behalf of all the central conference bishops here and those who could not be here...On behalf of those who've received the nets...We say thank you," said Nhwatiwa.

Nhwatiwa has first-hand knowledge of malaria's impact, as he has lost a child to the disease and has delivered mosquito nets alongside Bishop John Schol of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

"You may not have been to [Zimbabwe], but your healing hand, by preventing the spread of malaria, has already been there," Nhwatiwa said of Gates and those who support Nothing But Nets. "Children and adults are sleeping, well covered by the nets...and your healing presence is there."

Global Health Initiative to Tackle Diseases of Poverty

The following excerpts are from the petition that affirmed the Global Health Initiative. To read the complete petition, visit www.gc2008.umc.org and click Legislative Tracking.

Whereas, The people of The United Methodist Church have a long history of responding to social need...

Whereas, today a child dies every thirty seconds from malaria and where more than 42 million people are living with AIDS, a focus on global health is more urgent than ever before...

Whereas, we are prepared to respond to the Wesleyan admonition to "do good" in recognition that we have the hope, the people and the power to facilitate change...

Therefore be it resolved that the 2008 General Conference affirm the Global Health Initiative Campaign to Fight Malaria as an entry point into the broader struggle regarding global health issues.



'A daughter of the United Methodist Church'

Liberian President Sirleaf invites Methodists to continue partnership to end poverty

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Texas Annual Conference
Director of Communications

The first democratically-elected female president of Liberia and first female president in all of Africa recently addressed the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is a United Methodist, discussed the future with hope that is possible when Methodists and Liberians continue to partner.

is people centered," said Innis, as he recalled an encounter when officials required him to stop for the president's motorcade on the road to Monrovia. "Who am I to say no? I stopped...[When she saw my car,] she stopped the entire convoy and walked very neatly to her bishop and said, 'Bishop, I am very happy to see you...and I will see you in Fort Worth.'"

Servant leader

Sirleaf started her address by saying that Bishop Janice

family."

The president's address illuminated issues that plague nations worldwide: scarce natural resources, violence, youth delinquency, hunger, disease and the growing gap between wealthy and poor countries.

"These challenges are not new, but they present new urgencies," she said. "Liberia under my leadership, thus, shares with you a commitment to a common, but very significant response – the reduction of poverty."

Reducing poverty, she asserted, is not merely a matter of finances, but one of access. Access to education, health services, and choice, Sirleaf said. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the 41 most impoverished and indebted countries, she said, is less than the combined wealth of the world's seven richest people.

Sirleaf cited other unfathomable statistics: nearly one billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their name; 400 million

people have no access to clean water and 270 million have no health services.

"In Liberia, 63 percent live on less than \$2 a day," she said. "And, 47 percent live in absolute poverty on \$1 a day."

But there is hope. The first democratically elected woman president in all of Africa said in the 1980s there were four democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. Now there are 18.

"In the space of one generation, democracies are now 1/3 of sub-Saharan Africa," she said. "I am proud to say, we have moved Liberia from a failed state; from that awful flicker on your television screen to a potential post-conflict success story. Liberia is on the way back. Africa is on the way back. There is indeed light at the end of the tunnel."

"Across the globe, we have many of the same concerns. . . Poverty doesn't know any boundaries, any skin color, any country."

Rev. Bettie Hightower
St. Timothy's UMC

General Conference Clergy Delegate

In an introduction of President Sirleaf, Bishop John Ennis of the Liberia Annual Conference called the president a "daughter of the United Methodist Church," in that she was educated in the Methodist schools of Liberia.

In traditional African attire, Sirleaf stood as the embodiment of hope. Having started her career in banking, Sirleaf rose to the rank of Minister of Finance of the Republic of Liberia. She later was integral in curbing the mismanagement of government finances in Liberia.

In addition to being a change agent in Liberia, Sirleaf was named among 17 people internationally to investigate the Rwandan genocide. She also has been regarded as an expert on women's roles in peace building.

"This is your daughter, whom you educated," Innis said. "You ought to be very proud of her."

The bishop also noted that Sirleaf is the mother of four sons and the grandmother of seven.

"She is a people person, she

Riggle Huie's invitation to her on behalf of the Council of Bishops was "a special honor."

"I understand that I am the first African leader, and indeed the first female president to address the General Conference of the United Methodist Church," Sirleaf said. "Second, I am a United Methodist. I, therefore, feel at home – very, very at home with you – members of my United Methodist



President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia is the first female elected to the position in all of Africa. President Sirleaf was invited to speak at General Conference by Bishop Janice Riggle Huie on behalf of the Council of Bishops.

Universal message

The president's wisdom, strength and clear communication of global issues were among the qualities that stood out for clergy delegate Rev. Bettie Hightower.

"She nailed it, and made it clear how similar our concerns are as we live as United Methodists," Hightower said. "Across the globe, we have many of the same concerns... Poverty doesn't know any boundaries, any skin color, any country."

Her strength to persevere is also admirable, Hightower said.

"It takes a resilience that keeps on going anyway," Hightower said. "And, yet, offers up, who we are as women, not duplicating what our brothers offer, but being authentically female and recognizing that's a part of who we are as leaders."

To view President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's message online, visit www.gc2008.org.



Learning to serve

‘Best practices’ of risk-taking mission and service shared in conference workshops

By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference

This year’s annual conference will downsize workshop offerings in order to super-size their impact. The six featured workshops all center on the annual conference theme – Risk-Taking Mission and Service – and are designed to equip people serve those in need around the world and at home in the conference’s backyard.

“The mission focused workshops at Annual Conference this year will allow people to connect locally and globally with mission opportunities and experiences,” said Rev. Cynthia Harvey, director of the Center for Missional Excellence. “Risk-taking mission has always been a cornerstone of our work in the Texas Annual Conference. Our hope, this year, is to deepen our understanding of what it means to love God and neighbor through risk-taking mission.”

Workshops will take place at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, May 27, throughout The Woodlands campus.

Hands and feet of Jesus

Annual conference attendees who have a desire to “do something now” may participate in one of three hands-on mission projects. All materials will be provided.

“Habitat walls” will be constructed in the parking lot next to The Loft at The Woodlands UMC. These walls will become part of Habitat for Humanity homes being built in the greater Houston area.

Two other assembly activities will happen in The Loft. People may put together health kits, with hygiene essentials that are a-dime-a-dozen in the states, but hard to access elsewhere.

The wash cloths, toothbrushes, soap and more that comprise these kits help meet some of the most basic hygiene needs of people worldwide. The sewing kit projects will prepare patterns and fabrics needed to create baby blankets for impoverished

children.

Health and sewing kits generally are sent to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Sager-Brown depot in Louisiana for distribution to places in need throughout the United States and internationally. Given the recent disasters,

“Some of these projects really do not cost anything. Some of these are ideas that people can just give their name to. Mission is not a matter of money, it’s a matter of people’s time.”

Mann said these items are likely to be shipped out quickly.

“Between the earthquake in China and the typhoon in Myanmar, the need is absolutely desperate,” Mann said.

She added that conference mission teams also take these types of kits with them during their travels.

“What we wanted to do is to show people how easy it is to get their churches involved in mission that is part of UMCOR and part of what Partners in Mission teams are doing,” Mann said. “We’re not only showing how easy it is to do in their own churches, but we’re also interfacing within our connection.”

Connecting globally

Those interested in supporting mission and ministry projects throughout the world should attend the workshop led by Shawn Bakker, associate general secretary for the Advance for Christ and His Church with the General Board of Global Ministries.

The Advance is an accountable, designated giving arm of the United Methodist Church that ensures 100 percent of each gift is used for its intended mission or ministry. Bakker, who will be commissioned as a deacon in the North Texas Annual Conference this year, helps lead

the Advance in its mission to do work that fulfills both physical and spiritual needs through a variety of partnerships worldwide, to reach mutual goals that make a life-changing and long-lasting impact.

“Through the Advance, people can connect with their pas-

date. Basketball tournaments, auctions, “dribble-a-thons,” communion rail offerings, concerts and more have borne fruit conference wide and yielded more than \$1 million in donations.

This workshop will further explore the Nothing But Nets initiative and the TAC commitment to deliver insecticide treated mosquito nets to Cote d’Ivoire in November.

Susan Silvus
St. Luke’s UMC, Houston
Executive Director of Mission Outreach

To help celebrate the abundant blessings of this project to date (and those soon

to come), the Cote d’Ivoire conference’s Union Choir will participate in this workshop. This promises to be a spirit-filled celebration that will inspire both those who have and have not yet supported the initiative to find new ways to show their Extravagant Generosity.

To date, more than \$20 million has been raised worldwide since the Nothing But Nets campaign began in 2006. The United Methodist Church is a founding partner of the anti-malaria campaign, which fights the disease by purchasing and distributing insecticide-treated nets in Africa.

The Nothing But Nets workshop is slated for the Loft Worship Gym.

A life of outreach

The featured speaker of this year’s annual conference is Rev. Peter Storey, who is now professor emeritus at the Duke Divinity School. Storey, who is the former president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and past president of the South African Council of Churches, was Methodist Bishop of the Johannesburg/Soweto area for 13 years.

A native South African with a 30-year track record in urban ministry, Storey served as direc-

tor of a 24-hour crisis intervention service in Sydney, Australia and as senior minister of Methodist missions in Cape Town and Johannesburg. In the 1960s, Professor Storey founded a network of crisis intervention centers in South Africa and served as chaplain to Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners on Robben Island.

In the 1980s he became a national leader in the church struggle against apartheid and co-led an ecumenical delegation to the United Nations, the U.S. Congress and Europe, urging intensified pressure on the apartheid regime in 1984. He was later appointed by President Nelson Mandela to help select the nation’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Additionally, he has authored many publications, including *With God in the Crucible: Preaching Costly Discipleship, Revisioning our Wesleyan Heritage in a New Southern Africa, and Listening at Golgotha.*

Storey’s address and workshop presentation are highly anticipated by many who have previously heard the teachings of this world renowned leader. His workshop will take place in the sanctuary.

60 minutes for mission

Participants will spend one solid hour learning about great mission projects in the “30 Great Mission Ideas in 60 Minutes” workshop.

Susan Silvus, executive director of outreach ministries at St. Luke’s UMC in Houston, is a member of the team coordinating this workshop. Silvus said about 12 to 15 people will discuss mission projects in their local church.

“These are projects they do that work,” Silvus said. “We want people to take away proven ideas of local missions that they can take back to their churches.”

The presentation will offer a diverse representation of mis-

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Prepare to praise!



Cote d'Ivoire choir members lift their hands in praise during a concert at Jubilee UMC during their 2007 Annual Conference.

Don't miss the passionate worship of the Cote d'Ivoire Annual Conference "Union Choir," as they minister throughout the Texas Annual Conference gathering.

The choir will help open annual conference on Monday at 1 p.m., with an incomparable praise. The group will also sing during the 7 p.m., Monday night worship featuring Rev. Peter Storey, and during the

Wednesday Sending Forth service at 10:45 a.m.

The Laity Luncheon and the Nothing But Nets workshop (both on Tuesday) will provide more opportunities to be musically blessed by the choir delegation, which represents the more than 20,000 choristers of Cote d'Ivoire.

Special thanks go to Christ UMC in The Woodlands for providing housing for the 60-

member delegation during their stay. Many thanks also to churches that are hosting the choir for concerts and meals, such as Rose Hill UMC, Fair Haven UMC, Moody Memorial First UMC and Windsor Village UMC.

Prepare to be blessed!
Prepare to praise!

Learning to serve

Continued from page 4

sion projects from churches in different geographic regions of the conference, with varying sizes and resources.

"Some of these projects really do not cost anything," Silvus said. "Some of these are ideas that people can just give their time to. Mission is not a matter of money, it's a matter of people's time."

60 Minutes of Mission will take place in Wesley Hall.

Resolutions

This panel discussion will explore the resolutions up for vote at this year's annual conference.

Resolutions were submitted by the Conference Committee on Archives and History, related to the historical status of churches and the retirement of the Conference Historian.

The Methodist Children's Home submitted a resolution

regarding the covenant relationship between the home and the annual conference. The Conference Fiscal Office submitted resolutions related to how apportionments are calculated and the need to pay retired clergy mileage expenses.

The Sending Ministry team also submitted a resolution to re-direct Advance Special funds from 1990-91 that were designated for school construction in Burundi to educational partnerships in Cote d'Ivoire. The social climate of Burundi will not presently allow for such construction and the current partnership with Cote d'Ivoire has named educational support as a priority.

The resolution panel discussion will happen in Asbury Hall.

'Spotted Owls' spot success

Continued from page 1

requirements to be fulfilled in settings beyond the local church.

Lay delegate Ruth Palmer, who served on the Ministry and Higher Education Committee, said the group was unified in their effort to simplify and shorten the process with integrity.

"This is going to help us. We're losing too many young clergy because the process is so complex and so long," Palmer said. "The benefit to the whole church is we get young clergy who are better trained and more enthusiastic. They enter into ministry with higher enthusiasm and not so worn out by the process."

Rev. Vincent Harris, who serves as a member of the Executive Committee of the TAC Board of Ordained Ministry, agreed that removing some obstacles to ordination would help lower the average age of clergy, which is currently

age 57.

"This really enhances our opportunity to be creative in how we work," Harris said. "I think it will be a really good opportunity to recruit and enlist younger clergy; especially, as we face the retirement of many of our older clergy."

No more studying?

While the adopted legislation represents a significant advancement, there is still much to be done. Because of this, the General Conference approved a new ministry commission to be appointed by the Council of Bishops. The commission will be comprised of 25 percent young people under age 35 and a mix of elders, deacons, local pastors, laity and bishops. One of its mandates is to further explore streamlining the process leading to ordained ministry.

DVD designed to help churches bear fruit available at conference

**By Eleanor L. Colvin
Director of Communications
Texas Annual Conference**

The anticipated *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* DVD featuring vibrant ministries from throughout the bounds of the Texas Annual Conference will be released and distributed during the upcoming annual conference gathering.

Based on the book by Bishop Robert Schnase of the Missouri Annual Conference, the DVD illustrates the concepts that the TAC has come to know as its Core Values: Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Faith Forming Relationships, Extravagant Generosity and Risk-Taking Mission and



Service.

Lay and clergy leaders were corporately introduced to the practices during Bishop Huie's first Episcopal Address to the Texas Annual Conference in 2005. The values were formally adopted at the 2006 session of the annual conference. And, churches have been living into them since that time – some, more fruitfully than others.

Hence, the reason the annual conference has developed teaching tools to support those who need help in discerning what Radical Hospitality, Extravagant Generosity or the other values look like in action.

Designed to complement the *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* teaching tour, which Bishop Huie led this winter, the DVD can be used in Sunday School, worship, small groups and more. Tour participants got a sneak preview of the DVD, and annual confer-

ence attendees will take home copies.

Each local church will receive two copies of the DVD via the senior pastor and a lay delegate.

To pick up your church's copy, visit the *Five Practices* distribution table in The Woodlands UMC atrium and visit the onsite multi-media display to take a closer look at the state-of-the-art resource.

In keeping with the annual conference mission, this DVD was created to equip congregations to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.

As Bishop Huie suggested during the teaching tour, successfully implementing the *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* could very well lead to a renaissance of spirited, faith-forming, disciple-making churches like the church in Acts 2.



Helping heroes

Bear Creek UMM express extravagant generosity through benefit golf tournament

By Rev. Burt Palmer
Bear Creek UMC

A clear example of the practice of Extravagant Generosity articulated in Bishop Robert Schnase's book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, can be found in the Bear Creek United Methodist Men's annual golf tournament.

Six years ago the men of Bear Creek United Methodist Church began a fund-raising golf tournament to benefit the various ministries in the church. The first two years were successful in helping the choir and youth program fund aspects of their ministries.

While planning the third annual tournament, they found out that one of their own young men, a Marine in their congregation named Casey Owens, was severely injured in the war in Iraq. An explosion took both of Casey's legs, and caused numerous other injuries. Not knowing if Casey would even survive, the folks at Bear Creek UMC and many others around

the world started praying.

Over the next few months, Casey would face many challenges. One of which would be the financial challenge for him and his family. His mother and sister stopped their lives to be by his side. The many trips back and forth to Walter Reed Hospital, as well as many other expenses left the Owens family in need of help.

The Bear Creek United Methodist Men and all the folks at Bear Creek embraced this family and this cause. It was clear to them that with God's help they would be able to bless this family in this critical time of need.

With the help and generosity of 140 players, approximately 100 volunteers, and countless sponsors and donors, Bear Creek UMC was able to bless Casey with \$55,000. God is good!

Blessed to be a blessing

Through this process of helping Casey, the men at Bear Creek were introduced to an

organization called Impact Player Partners, which is also known as Impact A HERO. Because of the success in helping Casey and wanting to help others like him, the United Methodist Men decided to partner with IPP for the next two years, focusing on benefiting men and women who have sacrificed so much for all of us.

The relationship between the Bear Creek Men and IPP has solidified. Through their annual fund-raising golf tournament and their relationship with Impact Player Partners, the UMM and congregation of Bear Creek UMC has been able to donate \$90,000 to IPP and help these heroes who have paid such a high price to provide the freedom each of us enjoy each day.

This year, the annual golf tournament was held at the Pine Forest Country Club in West Houston on May 12.



Photo: Casey Owens, a Marine and member of Bear Creek UMC was the recipient of help through the fundraising efforts of the United Methodist Men's ministry in the church.

The golf tournament was sponsored by the partnership of the United Methodist Men of Bear Creek and Impact Player Partners (IPP). \$55,000 was raised for Owens and his family.

UMCOR responds to natural disasters

By Rev. Clay Whitaker
Texas Conference Disaster Response Consultant

The following information was gleaned from the UMCOR Hotline. Officials are claiming the death toll in Myanmar could hit or exceed 100,000.

In addition to the Myanmar tragedy, Texas United Methodists are concerned about our U.S. neighbors who were tornado victims.

Please note that both these tragedies (Myanmar and U.S. tornadoes) have UMCOR advance numbers through which people can give financial help.

Tropical Cyclone Nargis
By Eva Pineda Hansen/DCA-ACT International

UMCOR is working with its partner, Church World Service to bring emergency relief to thousands of people affected by Tropical Cyclone Nargis which tore through the Irrawaddy Delta on May 3, before slamming into Myanmar's (Burma) largest city of Yangon. According to a Reuters news report, the current death toll is 22,500 with a further 41,000 missing.

The tropical storm devastated city streets with overturned

cars, fallen trees and debris. Many villages in the Irrawaddy Delta were flattened by the fierce winds and rain. On Haing-gyi Island, along the country's southwest coast, an estimated 20,000 homes have been destroyed, displacing several hundred thousands of residents. Many are without food, water, shelter or power.

UMCOR is supporting Church World Service and its partner agencies and anticipates working with additional partners to provide relief and recovery assistance for the people of Myanmar. Immediate relief operations and comprehensive damage assessments are underway. Please pray and give to Myanmar Emergency, UMCOR Advance #3019674, to help in the relief effort.

Tornadoes strike Suffolk, Virginia
By Patricia Chappell, VDEM/Courtesy of DNN

UMCOR is helping the Arkansas, Mississippi and Virginia Annual Conferences respond to several tornadoes that whipped through the southern states on May 1-2.

The deadly storms damaged or destroyed several hundred homes and knocked out electrical power. An estimated 200 people were injured in



People collect water on a street in Yangon after Cyclone Nargis slammed into Myanmar's main city.

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Terrace UMC technology fair is a success

By Thelma Jones
Cross Connection Editor
Texas Annual Conference

“Put God first, accept the technology He gives, use it wisely and enjoy it abundantly” was the theme for the first ever technology fair hosted by Terrace UMC in April.

The aim of the fair was to connect the high-tech generation in the community to Terrace UMC.

The event offered something for everyone. Activities abounded, giving the fair the air of a 3-ring circus. Exhibits

could be found inside and outside the fellowship center, seminars in the sanctuary gathering area, and games in the youth building.

One of the major electronics exhibitors was Best Buy. More than a hundred participants were in attendance. Door prizes were donated by Best Buy and Verizon. “The prizes were fabulous,” said Harold Kaufman, chair of the committee for the Tech Fair. The top prize, a laptop computer, was won by Tim Heinrich Jr., who was looking for one for college. Thank God

for taking care of our needs, as He often does for us.”

The Academy for Lifelong Learning (ALL) exhibit was popular with seniors in the church. ALL offers classes such as, “Seniors on Computers” and “Genealogy 101.” Other seminars included the latest help with photography, ID theft, and blogging. Blogging was explained as web 2.0, where websites are web 1.0. Blogging is interactive and its use by churches to share God’s word is expanding rapidly.

In keeping with being a

good steward of God’s resources and showing concern for the environment, a *Green Technology* presentation was given by Goodson Honda West. A Honda Hybrid was the focal point of the presentation. It rated 40 to 45 miles per gallon of gas.

The Youth Building buzzed with activity as youth and the young at heart got their fill of Wii and X-Box which was available on two 50-inch plasma televisions. One youth member of Terrace said, “The Tech Fair was a great success for the

youth and children’s ministries. We saw many new faces and many old faces we had come to miss.”

Guitar music and singing was provided during lunch by Michael Moore and Debbie Kincaid, leaders in the contemporary worship service at Terrace UMC.

Spread the word. Terrace UMC is exciting and has gone high tech.

Harold Kaufman of Terrace UMC contributed information for this article.



Top Left Photo: The power point presentation on *Green Technology* was of interest to this group of participants.

Top Right Photo: Rev. Cathy Meyenberg (far right) and Karen Dees, a Technology Fair committee member prepare a photo screen show of Terrace UMC and its ministries.

Bottom Photo: In the Youth House, making use of the “Rock Band,” which consisted on a microphone, guitar and drums was one of the highlights for youth and teens.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Mission Opportunities

St. Paul UMC Fundraiser for Mission Trip

The youth of St. Paul's United Methodist Church will conduct their first mission trip to Bolivia this summer.

To help raise funds for the trip, they will hold a "Spring Fling" fundraiser luncheon and auction on Sunday, May 18, beginning at 12:15 p.m. in the church's Fondren Hall. Among the items to be auctioned are a wedding in St. Paul's modified English gothic sanctuary.

For more information, contact Tiffin Wilsford, Director of Youth Ministries, 713-528-0527 or tiffin@stpaulshouston.org, or Emily Everett, Assistant Director of Youth Ministries, 713-528-0527 or Emily@stpaulshouston.org.

PIM Offers Team Leader Training

Partners in Mission is offering team leader training for anyone who is planning to organize a mission team through their church or district. The next scheduled training is at Christ UMC in College Station on May 31.

This training is designed to help leaders learn to find connectional projects either through Partners in Mission or through other avenues and teaches them how to find and recruit their team.

Interested parties can call the church hosting the event to sign up or they can contact the Partners in Mission office.

The training fee of \$15 covers the manual, a snack and lunch. Call Partners In Mission to set up a date. You can contact them at 713-521-9383 or through their website <http://www.partnersinmission.org/>.

Fellowship Opportunities

F.O.A.M. Conference Luncheon

Save the date of **Monday, May 26**, to attend the Texas Conference Fellowship of Older Adult Ministries Annual Conference luncheon at The Woodlands UMC in Aldersgate Hall. Dr. Helen Appleberg, ordained Episcopal Priest and scholar with Sealy Center on Aging, Department of Geriatrics UTMB in Galveston, will be the keynote speaker.

The luncheon is from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and the cost is \$14. Checks for the lunch should be made payable to F.O.A.M. and mailed to Marlys Barry, St. Luke's UMC, P.O. Box 22013, Houston, TX 77227-2013. Direct any questions to 713-502-5008.

BMCR Luncheon

Black Methodists for Church Renewal will host its Annual Conference luncheon on Tuesday, May 27 at The Woodlands UMC, in the Loft building in the Worship gym. In support of the annual conference theme of risk-taking mission, this year's BMCR luncheon will include a service project. Retirees, ordinands and those being commissioned will be recognized.

Tickets are \$25. A vegetarian option is available. The deadline reservation is May 20. For reservations, contact Eleanor F. Colvin at 713-695-2469 or efcolvin@sbcglobal.net or Frances Dunlap at 281-999-5114 or f.dunlap@sbcglobal.net.

Small Membership Church Committee Dinner

The Small Membership Church Committee of the Texas Annual Conference will hold its annual dinner during Annual Conference on Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 5:30 p.m. in the Aldersgate Room at The

Woodlands UMC.

Rev. Edward A. Kail, President of the United Methodist Rural Fellowship will be the guest speaker. Reverend Kail works with church leaders to foster the revitalization of the church in God's mission.

Musical entertainment will be provided by the Clear Creek Bluegrass Band of Trinity, Texas. The cost is \$10 per person. Seating is limited to the first 100 persons. Payment should be sent to Sue Sullivan, 6312 Chaparral St., Texarkana, Texas, 75503.

A small membership church is defined as one with approximately 300 or less members, with average worship attendance of 100 or fewer.

A.D. Players Perform at Strawbridge UMC

The Fine Arts Committee of Strawbridge United Methodist Church will host one of the nation's most innovative theater companies, the A.D. Players, as they will perform the play, "Paragraph," by Jeannette Clift George. This free performance will be at the Strawbridge United Methodist Church Sanctuary on Thursday, May 22 at 7 p.m.

Funny, moving, and very real, "Paragraph" is a contemporary story with a timeless message of hope for teens, youth, and adults alike. Everyone is invited to this free one-hour production.

Now in its 41st season, A.D. Players offer a statement of hope in the theater marketplace through mainstage productions, a children's theater series, the National Touring Company, and the growing Theater Arts Academy.

For more information, call Strawbridge at 281-360-4500.

UMCOR responds to natural disasters

Continued from page 6



The vivid reality of how lives are impacted is clearly conveyed in this photo taken shortly after tornadoes touched down in Lafayette, Tennessee.

Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA

Virginia and seven people were killed in Arkansas.

UMCOR is in contact with the respective conference directors to assess the damage, help with the long-term recovery plans, and is providing assistance to help meet emergency needs.

Arkansas has received the brunt of numerous tornadoes that tore through the south since February 5 leaving little breathing room for recovery. In

Suffolk, Virginia and Mississippi, there is extensive damage as several houses were destroyed and commercial structures are considered to be complete losses.

Please help us support these annual conferences and other southern states affected by these storms with your gifts to **Domestic Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance # 901670.**



Don't Forget!

There will be no distribution of the Cross Connection for the date of May 30 or during the week of Annual Conference.

There will be a special Annual Conference edition of the paper June 6.