

Cross Connection

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Our Core Beliefs

- Radical Hospitality
- Passionate Worship
- Faith-forming Relationships
- Risk-taking Mission
- Extravagant Generosity
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- Fervent Prayer and Diligent Study of Scripture

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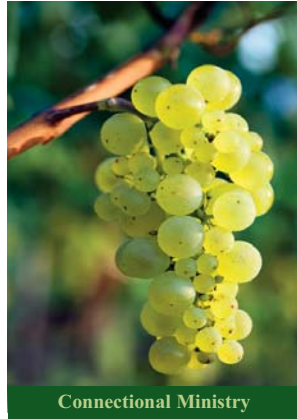
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**Vibrant, growing
congregations
changing lives and
reshaping futures
for Jesus Christ**



Connectional Ministry

God calls covenant people to faithful living that bears fruit. The Gospel of John

Bearing fruit

Bishop Huie's District visits begin this month

reminds us that we are to abide in the true vine and bear much fruit. This is a mark of discipleship, which brings glory to God.

Join Bishop Janice Riggle Huie as she shares *inspiration, information, and invitation* centered upon how the vision and mission of the Texas Annual Conference have been bearing fruit for Christ's Kingdom. District visits begin October 25, 2011, and each visit will include a

session with Laity and one with Clergy, per the schedule below. Those unable to attend in their own District are welcome to attend the appropriate session in a neighboring location.

The Bishop will be sharing preliminary results from the Quadrennial Assessment, for which Greg Jones, Lovett Weems, and Jim Griffith have been providing assistance. Their reports will bring new focus on "Affirmations, Challenges, and Priorities" as

leaders assess strategies, results and directions for the annual conference.

Highlighting the sessions will be the inspirational moments, from the Bishop and Conference Lay Leader Leah Taylor. With time for Questions & Answers, FAQ sharing, and fellowship this year's visits will provide yet another opportunity to connect and dialogue about our vision and mission.

Date	Time	District	Location
Tuesday, October 25	10 a.m.	Southwest Clergy	Sugar Land/Parkway
Tuesday, October 25	7 p.m.	Southwest Laity	Sugar Land/Parkway
Wednesday, October 26	2 p.m.	South Clergy	Clear Lake UMC
Wednesday, October 26	7 p.m.	South Laity	Clear Lake UMC
Saturday, November 5	2 p.m.	Northwest Clergy	Jacksonville FUMC
Saturday, November 5	5 p.m.	Northwest Laity	Jacksonville FUMC
Sunday, November 6	2:30 p.m.	East Laity	Nacogdoches FUMC
Sunday, November 6	6 p.m.	East Clergy	Nacogdoches FUMC
Monday, November 7	10 a.m.	Central North Clergy	Woodlands Christ UMC
Monday, November 7	6:30 p.m.	Central North Laity	Woodlands Christ UMC
Tuesday, November 8	2 p.m.	Southeast Clergy	Beaumont FUMC
Tuesday, November 8	6:30 p.m.	Southeast Laity	Beaumont FUMC
Wednesday, November 9	2 p.m.	Central South Clergy	Westbury UMC
Wednesday, November 9	6:30 p.m.	Central South Laity	Westbury UMC
Saturday, November 12	10 a.m.	North Quarter	Tennison Memorial
Saturday, November 12	4 p.m.	North Quarter	Longview/First UMC
Sunday, November 13	2 p.m.	North Quarter	Texarkana/Williams
Sunday, November 13	5 p.m.	North Quarter	Marshall/First UMC
Thursday, November 17	2 p.m.	West Clergy	College Station/Christ
Thursday, November 17	6 p.m.	West Laity	College Station/Christ

Wildfire Offering Update



Extravagant Generosity

Central South District Disaster Response Coordinator, David Brooks and the Mission Committee of FUMC-Houston Downtown unload a rental truck filled with much needed furniture, supplies, food and clothing for victims of the wild fires near First UMC in Teague, Texas.

\$183,479.59 Donated

See story on page 3



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

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Shared voices of clergy offer help and hope

At times, we all are fragile and vulnerable, needing tenderness and understanding. Chaplains, spiritual/pastoral care counselors, and clergy are often available to people in need around the clock—in communities and congregations and in specialized settings such as hospitals, the military, counseling centers correctional, long-term care facilities and mental health systems—offering comfort and hope to those who are hurting.

October 23–29, 2011 is **Pastoral Care Week** and the theme is “Voices Shared.” Pastoral Care Week is an inter-faith celebration that seeks to promote, honor and support the work of pastoral care ministers, institutions, chaplains and volunteers in communities throughout Houston and internationally.

During this week, Mental Health America of Greater Houston (MHA) is joining this effort to recognize the significant difference being made in the physical, mental and spiritual health of all people by the clergy of all faiths. MHA will release a *Mental Health Series* for clergy and faith communities that will bring greater awareness of mental health and mental illness issues and resources available in the area.

According to MHA, clergy and faith communities play an important role in helping reduce the stigma and shame associated with mental illness by arming themselves, their congregations and their communities with knowledge about mental health issues. In some cases, they have also become advocates for those who need services but cannot manage to obtain services on their own.

“The pews in Houston and Harris County are filled with individuals and families living and struggling with mental health concerns—and the numbers are increasing daily. Many have

Pastoral Care Week 2011



encountered traumas, or live with financial pressures—job loss and home foreclosure. Still others have to deal with a serious illness or the disability of a loved one,” said Traci Patterson, director of communications at Mental Health America of Greater Houston.

But, because of many clergy, Patterson says, “*Some people with mental health problems are not as ill as they were. Some no longer live in the streets. At least one sings in a church choir. Others attend services more often. Life is better. They’re not alone. They have hope. And they are loved.*”

Pastoral Care Week (www.pastoralcareweek.org), now in its 25th year, has grown in participation and proportion every year. Always held the last week in October, the celebration often brings those who work in this ministry together to share stories, learn from one another and address specific pastoral care issues. Past themes have focused on diversity, methods of pastoral healing and peace. End-of-life issues have also been explored and discussed in depth.

To learn more about mental health issues or for free and low-cost counseling resources, contact Mental Health America of Greater Houston at 713-522-5161 or irspecialist@mhahouston.org or visit online at www.mhahouston.org.

Register for the Spirit Journey Retreat

The Work of Prayer
The Prayer of Work

Spirit Journey 2011 is modeled after the Upper Room’s Academy for Spiritual Formation. The retreat is open to all lay and clergy of all denominations.

The theme is: *Our work in the Lord (Opus Dei) is Prayer.* Guest speaker, Barbara Worden will highlight several paths to better center your life on God through prayer as your work, using Benedictine and other contemplative disciplines.

Barbara Worden is a minister in the Evangelical Friends Church (Quaker) and a recently retired Emeritus Professor at the Houston Graduate School of Theology which she and her husband Ronald helped start in 1983.



She also developed HGST’s Master’s level Certificate Program in Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Direction. She received Spiritual Director training at The Cenacle in Houston and has practiced spiritual direction both with seminarians and lay people.

Musician Elnor Boone, a member of Jones Memorial UMC, will lead worship using the Upper Room Worship Book. The rhythm of the retreat will be a Benedictine schedule with worship, rest, study, a time of silence, free time, shared meals, community time, fellowship and the Eucharist, with shared silence from Evening Prayers until Morning Prayers.



The retreat begins with registration at 4 p.m. on Thursday, October 27, followed by worship and the Eucharist at 5 p.m. **To register, contact Beverly Pichon at 936-588-6774 or bnp@consolidated.net.**

*Come To Experience,
Leave Empowered to Serve*



Contributions ease the wildfire recovery process

Even during a time when many churches and church members are feeling the squeeze of unemployment, market losses, price increases, and other stresses of a difficult economy, the people of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church faithfully give when disaster strikes. When wildfires raged against Texas forests and homeowners this summer, individuals across the conference responded with their pocketbooks.

The special offering taken across the conference to help wildfire victims has already yielded funds of \$183,479.59 to help churches help restore families and individuals devastated by the summer fires. "When disaster strikes, I can predict the response of the people in our conference in two words: extravagantly generous," says Rev. Diane McGeehee, Missional Excellence Director. According to McGeehee, grants are already being distributed to churches to feed, shelter and clothe victims and relief workers. Funds have also been used to:

- purchase and install utilities poles to restore water and electrical services;
- purchase or lease gas-powered generators so that functional water wells can be restarted;
- pay for well services to repair the water wells which have melted and

collapsed;

- move donated mobile homes onto cleared land allowing families to move from temporary housing back to their own property;
- fuel church and other transportation vehicles to operate around the clock shuttling victims, donations, and supplies and making site visits to assist in damage and needs assessments
- establish relocation and assistance centers such as the one located in the fellowship hall of Linden UMC.

"People from across the conference also continue to give extravagantly with collections of supplies, food, water, equipment," adds McGeehee, "and time to sort, collect and deliver." Rev. Allen Van Hooser, pastor of First UMC Teague is

with furniture, supplies and food for the Freestone and Limestone Fire Victims," Van Hooser reports. "This is a direct result of our TACCOR mission and relationships. Praise to God and blessings to all of my TACCOR colleagues. "On behalf of the conference, I want to thank you for all of these gestures," says McGeehee. "Many of you



Rev. Paul Kethley, TACCOR board member and NW District Emergency Response Coordinator, delivers ice and talks with Teague FUMC lay leader Jim Joplin.

When wildfires raged against Texas forests and homeowners this summer, individuals across the Conference responded with their pocketbooks.

thankful for the grant money and the assistance that his church and community has received. "David Brooks and the Mission Committee of FUMC Houston sent a truck

even attended ERT training in late September so that you could be ready to respond to the cleanup effort for thousands of homes. Others attended UMCOR's CARE most recent training to better prepare to provide spiritual care in responding to victims of disasters. Your generosity is touching lives and bringing hope. Thank you for serving Christ with such compassion and grace. God is doing great things in and

through us!"

If your church is working with wildfire victims and is in need of financial or other assistance, contact your District Superintendent with the need, the proposed response, and the cost. Your district superintendent can work with you to submit a request to the Conference Office for an assistance grant or to obtain other assistance through volunteers or donations.

Rev. Allison Beyerley of First UMC Jefferson has been asked by FEMA to coordinate a long-term recovery group for 35 families in Marion County. Meetings start Tuesday, October 18, 2011.

Grants Given to Support Caregiving Ministries for Older Adults

United Methodist congregations, annual conferences and UM-related institutions have received grants totaling \$75,000 to support a variety of caregiving ministries that help older adults directly and provide assistance to family members and local churches who minister to seniors.

The grants were administered by the Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries at the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD). Grant funding was provided by the United Methodist Committee on Older Adult Ministries, which is administratively

related to GBOD.

"The Committee on Older Adult Ministries encouraged congregations and conferences to provide training, oftentimes for volunteers and caregivers," said the Rev. Dr. Richard H. Gentzler Jr., the center's director. "With an increasing aging population and the likelihood of federal spending cutbacks, churches will need to train volunteer caregivers and other volunteers who are in ministry with older adults."

The grant program was a way to bring the need for more elder caregiving to the forefront and to assist those

who are willing to be creative and to become more intentional about caregiving, Gentzler said.

A total of 76 grant applications seeking more than \$234,000 for caregiving ministries with older adults were submitted by congregations, annual conferences and UM-related institutions, Gentzler said. The committee approved and funded 45 applications, including 10 for the North Central Jurisdiction, four for the Northeastern Jurisdiction, eight for the South Central Jurisdiction, 21 for the Southeastern Jurisdiction, one

for the Western Jurisdiction and one for the Central Conference.

In the Iowa Conference, the Older Adult Council received a grant for the "Caring Hearts Need Care Too" workshop, which will provide help to family caregivers and local churches addressing issues of caregiving.

Morrison UMC in Leesburg, Fla., received a grant to expand an outreach ministry to seniors who are homebound or living in assisted living and healthcare facilities.

The Ruth Sheets Adult Care Center, a ministry of Edenton UMC in Raleigh, N.C., received a grant to support its Weekday Respite Care program.

GBOD's mission is to support annual conference and local church leaders for their task of equipping world-changing disciples. Visit www.gbod.org or call the Communications Office at (877) 899-2780, Ext. 1726.



Leadership lessons from Church

How much inspiration will fit into two days?

Just ask anyone who attended the Adam Hamilton Leadership Institute held at the Church of the Resurrection UMC in Kansas in September.

"The conference began, ended and was filled with worship and fellowship," says Diane McGeehee, Director of Missional Excellence, who helped lead the team including 15 Hispanic pastors and lay leaders from the Texas Annual Conference as well as pastors and lay leaders from Bellaire UMC, Huntsville First UMC, Friendswood UMC, First UMC Houston, Christ UMC College Station, First UMC Canton, Kingwood UMC, Lake Jackson's Chapelwood UMC, and many others.

"Together with thousands of other pastors and lay leaders, we challenged one another, learned from one another, and were inspired by those who are working with us in the gospel."

The group attended workshops to learn how to:

- work with targeted groups including children, moms and families
- facilitate disciple-making leadership
- leverage technology as a gift for mission and ministry
- foster environments with excellent, awe-filled worship planning and implementation.

"The most inspiring workshops for me were the 'Nuts and Bolts of Local Missions' and 'Entry Points for Missions' workshops," adds McGeehee.

"These workshops provided practical resources and ideas for creating mission opportunities in our local communities. They are ideal for our church members, but also for those in our own neighborhoods who are non-religious and marginally-religious by making it easy and a joyful thing to work together in service to those in need in our local communities. Jesus said that when we serve the least of these God's chil-

dren, we are serving Jesus. In essence, we give people an opportunity to encounter the living Christ through service to the poor when we invite them into ministry with us. How cool is that! These workshops also affirmed my belief that every church should be doing something in their local school."

In addition to worship, fellowship, and workshops, the team gained inspiration through personal challenge from the leaders of all ages who are creatively reaching those who do not know Christ and making of them lasting disciples of Jesus Christ. Adds McGeehee, "Rev. Adam Hamilton reminded the auditorium full of spiritual leaders that, although we know we worship an awesome God, we can often leave the "awe" out of our worship and our service. People are not looking for programs; they are looking for an authentic "awe" experience. That experience can most fully be found in an encounter with the living God in a community of those who are loved by and love God and one another – the Church."

Dr. Kirk Byron Jones, pastor and professor at Andover Newton Theological Seminary compared spiritual work to the faithfulness required of a marathon runner that must pace himself for the long haul. Much like marathon training, care of self is critical if we are to run the race that has been set before us.

"Perhaps one of the greatest things that I took away from the conference was the reminder from Rev. Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, to pay attention to the whispers of God," notes team member Rev. Jim Flagg of Bellaire United Methodist Church. "Sometimes in our busy schedules we need to be urged to reclaim that personal quiet time to hear and discern the will of God for our lives

and the life of the Church."

Adds McGeehee, "Perhaps the most inspiring of all of the leader-speakers were two young people who challenged us to believe in the God of the possible to do impossible things through us, using whatever gifts and talents God has given us.

Seventeen-year old Jeff Hanson has raised more than \$300,000 by selling paintings to help the poorest of the poor. Gracie Schramm, a young teenage girl, sang a song which she had written from her *Showers from God* CD, one of several she has made to raise money for water wells for the poor in Africa. This young woman is using her gifts to change lives in the name of Jesus Christ and inspired us to do the same."

The Conference team returned with new inspiration. Rev. Flagg adds, "Everyone in the group from our church came away with something that could be used at Bellaire UMC. If possible, next year I will return with more laity to join with us in being reminded that when we go through tough spots we can be encouraged that God is not finished with us. In the words of the old hymn, 'Revive us again!'"

Michael Ervin, on staff at Bellaire UMC, had this comment, "I expected to go and learn many things, but I did not expect to go and come back feeling so affirmed about many of the ideas and processes we already have in place. It let me know that, though there is more to be done in effectively communicating our vision to our congregation so that they can own it, we are already on the right path in many areas." Ruth Ortiz, a lay leader with Foundry UMC's Hispanic ministries and wife of Hispanic ministries Pastor Cesar Ortiz, described the training as "an experience that greatly blessed my life and will help me in my ministry!"

News You Can Use From into Ministry Workshop



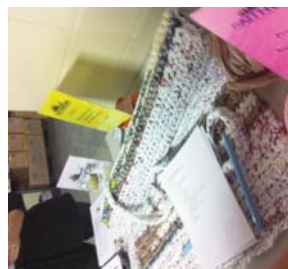
IDEAS

This leadership workshop helps you think creatively about easy and accessible members and communities, reducing your church's worship, but are e-

Getting started

- Consider inviting individuals and families in the church for "Faith Works" day. People could come to the church for works for them. Guests and church members mingle and working together to serve others.

Projects for Consideration:



Sleeping mats for the homeless – using recycled plastic bags, long lengths of plastic twine are made and crocheted into mats that are light weight, easily rolled up and carried, and that keep people sleeping on the streets dry.



Bingo with Chocolate Kisses – groups can go and play bingo at a local nursing home and take chocolate kisses as treats and prizes



Mums P... around le... enhance... the schoo... few idea... and abili... only lim... can do.



of the Resurrection 'Institute'

in the *Entry Points*

workshop was designed to encourage mission leaders to discover how to make service in the local community both fun and effective. By extending an open invitation to church members and community members, these nonthreatening activities can introduce church members to new people who might not be ready to attend church. The goal is to get to know each other through fellowship and service.

invite the community to come to a quarterly or monthly service on a partial or full Saturday and choose the project that interests them. This allows members to get to know each other through fellowship and service.



"The most inspiring workshops for me were the 'Nuts and Bolts of Local Missions' and 'Entry Points for Missions' workshops."

Rev. Diane McGehee



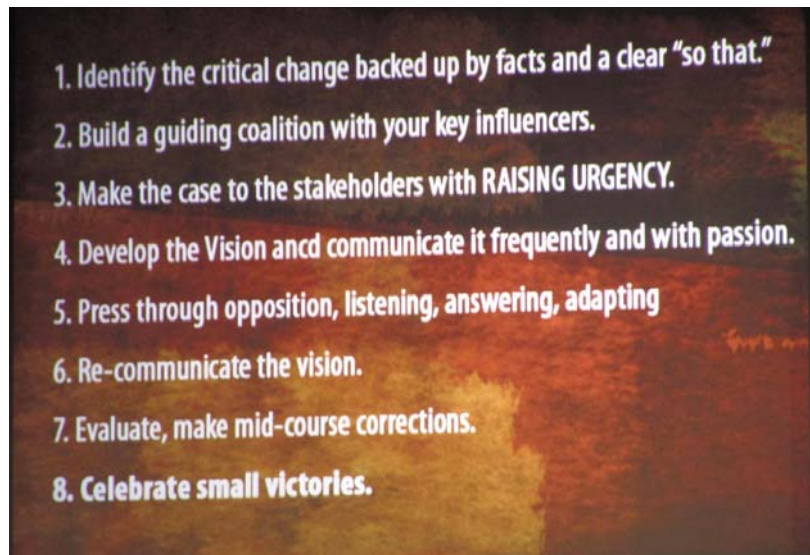
Project – plant mums for local schools to beautify the environment at school. These are just a few ideas – your willingness to be creative is the key to what you can do.



Meals and Games – a group goes to prepare a meal at a local shelter that houses children (safe sanctuary screening is necessary for this one) and takes art supplies and games to play and create with the children.



Backpacks for Hunger – supplies are set out in an assembly line and participants fill hundreds of backpacks for children in the local elementary schools who do not have enough food over the weekend.



Church of the Resurrection leaders shared these key steps to moving vision forward in a church or other ministry.



Charis Program commissions 16 new spiritual directors



Meet the second graduating class of the *Charis* spiritual directors program. During the 3-year program encompassing 450 hours of training, graduates learned to be one-on-one spiritual companions.

By Constance Bovier
Faculty and Board Member
of Charis

Rev. B. T. Williamson was the guest speaker for the graduation and commissioning of the second class of spiritual directors to complete the Texas Annual Conference's three-year *Charis* training program. The 16 graduates, along with their family and friends, came from communities as far north as Tyler, as far south as LaMarque, from College Station and Conroe, from Manville and Marshall, for the event held at First UMC Madisonville.

Newly returned from the UM World Conference in South Africa, Rev. Williamson reflected on his return-trip stop in the United Kingdom. There he visited the Bristol site where, in 1784, John Wesley consecrated Thomas Coke as the first superintendent of American Methodism and sent him forth "to offer spiritual direction in the new world." The reference was especially meaningful in that the new *Charis* graduates are taking their new skills and spiritual growth into all regions of the Texas Annual Conference. Citing the parable of the sower, Rev. Williamson told the graduates that the most valuable gift they have to give others

through their ministry is "to offer them Christ."

Charis Coordinator Becky Oates explained to those assembled that the three-year program encompasses 450 hours of class time, including six three-day retreats at Lakeview Conference Center and 24 Saturday training days generously hosted at First UMC Madisonville by pastor Rev. George Wilson, a graduate of *Charis* class one.

"Spiritual direction is the process of companioning a person or group of persons on their spiritual journey," she said. "It's an ancient Christian tradition that dates back to Jesus himself and to the Desert Mother and Fathers of the first centuries." Describing the curriculum, she spoke of various schools of spirituality, including Benedictine, Ignatian and Celtic. "But it's much more than academic work. We study the convergence of personality and spirituality and we devote considerable time to subjects such as listening skills, inner healing, 30 different prayer experiences and discerning God's presence in the midst of suffering."

The training, she said, prepares participants to sit in sacred presence, in a loving and compassionate way, first with themselves, then with others. "This requires vulnerability – the willingness to do the

inner work of forgiveness, reconciliation and recognizing God's activities in one's own life. As people of spiritual care and contemplative practice, spiritual directors teach *and* model the fine art of noticing God in our moment-by-moment experiences.

"You have accepted the call to a unique ministry," she told graduates, "one that is just beginning to be understood throughout the Texas Annual Conference. Through one-on-one spiritual companioning, leading days of prayer and speaking God's unconditional love, you have the opportunity not only to bring healing and wholeness to other sojourners, but to build up the Kingdom of God."

Graduates came forward as their names were called to kneel at the prayer shawl-draped altar rail, where board and faculty members anointed them with oil and blessed them with prayers. "It was a holy and sacred time," said *Charis* board chair, the Reverend Glynden Bode. "We shared a beautiful sense of community and presence."

Contagious joy marked the reception that followed. Among the comments overheard: "In the beginning I was afraid, with no confidence. But the training made me feel loved and set my heart at ease that I was in the right place." "The *Charis* training was a safe space to be held in the presence of the Holy Spirit."

Mike Heller of Summit UMC in Marshall said, "The word that best describes my change in spirituality over the three years of training is focus. *Charis* has made me a better Christian and given me tools I am using every day to help those around me see

God in their lives."

Clergy graduates typically experience *Charis* training as valuable enrichment for their ministry. Prior to training, however, a common misperception is that seminary provides adequate preparation to sit in spiritual direction with others.

Charis graduate, the Reverend Cynthia Hinson, pastor of St. Paul UMC in Conroe, said that early in her training she struggled to grasp the distinction between pastoral care and spiritual direction. By the end of her third internship year of training, she had gained clarity. "Frequently pastoral caregivers are in ministry with persons at times of crisis or transformation, with a limited number of meetings before making a referral if needed," she explained. "But spiritual direction is an ancient discipline ... of traveling along an *indefinite* journey with a spiritual companion. It is a *being with* instead of a *doing for*. Spiritual direction is not problem-solving, counseling or teaching. It's the process of being with people as they yearn to grow closer to God."

The *Charis* program was developed by a task force of United Methodist spiritual directors, who had received their training through other Christian traditions. Choosing the Greek word for grace as the program name, the founders created a program rich in Wesleyan spirituality and launched training in 2005.

Now, with graduates of classes one and two, TAC offers 52 spiritual directors. "And we're delighted to announce that *Charis* class three, composed of 14 men and women, has already begun their training with an opening retreat at Lakeview Conference Center August 25-27," said Glynden Bode.

"*Charis* is among a modest, but growing, number of United Methodist spiritual director training programs," she added. "We maintain relationships with the Fellowship of United Methodist Spiritual Directors and Retreat Leaders (www.fumsdrl.org) and with Spiritual Directors International (www.sdiworld.org), gaining from the wisdom available through other experienced spiritual directors and training programs. We are deeply committed to helping integrate this ancient spiritual tradition into the fabric of today's churches."

The *Charis* program relates to and is supported in part by the Faith Forming Relationships & Spiritual Formation Committee, Center for Congregational Excellence of The Texas Annual Conference. To learn more about the program or to receive a list of trained spiritual directors, contact Becky Oates, 979-690-9193; or Glynden Bode at 281-222-4385, or glyndenbode@gmail.com.



The *Charis* board of directors and faculty members and Rev. B. T. Williamson, Assistant to the Bishop at the graduation celebration.



Ministry Snapshots

Stopping hunger one quarter at a time

By Greg Gammon
The Burlleson County
Citizen Tribune

Spaghetti, green beans, and garlic bread is a favorite among meals enjoyed by the Bowers family of Caldwell. Dawn and Brad, their children Rylee, 12, and Allison, 6, make a point of having family dinner together and enjoying plentiful food and fellowship. It is a scene played out by many if not most families in the area, but one that would be foreign to over 1 billion people in the world today. Hunger isn't something Rylee or Allison has to worry about, but many children their age throughout the world never know the comfort of regular meals.

Dawn Bowers, in her role as customer advocate with University Title Company in College Station enjoys getting to meet a wide variety of people in the community. In a recent conversation with Sam Humphries of Petal Patch in College Station, Dawn learned of a program that, to her, immediately resonated with another project she works on every year, Vacation Bible School. As a member of the Children's Ministries Council at First UMC in Caldwell, Bowers and numerous other parents and volunteers, undertake a week-long program that aims to bring the message of Jesus Christ to children in the community.

The theme for the 2011 VBS, *Shake It Up Caf e*, used food themes as a tool to illustrate bible messages. After talking to Humphries about the program he had worked with, Bowers saw an immediate opportunity. "His church had an event, and he could not say enough great things about the initiative and the experience. I brought what I learned to the Children's

Council because it fit right in line with our Vacation Bible School theme. In addition, the Children's Council Members and I wanted to make an impact in our own children's lives about missions and showing God's love to others." This is how the FUMC Children's Council, and ultimately the entire congregation of FUMC came to launch a *Stop Hunger Now* campaign.

"It is difficult to think about this program without becoming emotional," says Bowers. "Finding what is wrong with the world is easy to come by; it's finding what is right that is challenging. In a day where mothers in Somalia have to pick and choose which child to feed and/or leave behind, sitting idly by and watching babies die is not an option for me. As a mother and a Christian, feeding children is my job. *Stop Hunger Now*

makes it possible to feed the hungry children of the world."

Stop Hunger Now is an international hunger relief organization that coordinates the distribution of food and other life-saving aid around the world. The organization is driven by a vision of a world without hunger and a mission to end hunger in our lifetime by providing food and life-saving aid to the world's most vulnerable and by creating a global commitment to mobilize the necessary resources. *Stop Hunger Now's* meal packaging program provides volunteers the opportunity to package dehydrated, high protein, and highly nutritious meals that are used in crisis situations and in school feeding programs for schools and orphanages in developing countries around the world.

It is the packaging program that inspired Children's

Ministries leaders Monica Odenbach and Deanie Gold to mobilize. In May, the committee set a goal of \$8000 and the first fundraiser kicked off on June 12th. "I had no idea how the church or community would react to a fundraiser like this, particularly in the midst of a recession," says Gold, "but the response has been beyond what we had hoped."

In the first six weeks of fundraising, nearly 75% of the goal was reached: \$5000 will go toward packaging 20,000 meals (at a cost of 25 cents each), plus \$3000 to ship and distribute the meals overseas. Utilizing a guided program by *Stop Hunger Now*, a group of 40-50 volunteers can package 10,000 meals in just two hours. "We are reaching out to the community at large to assist us in this effort," adds Gold, "and we don't have to stop at 20,000 meals either.

Monetary help as well as hands-on help is needed and we encourage people of all ages to come and get involved with us in this program. The more money we raise over our goal, the more impact we can make on a hungry world."

While packaging meals is the focus of the program, it is not the only benefit. "I want the children of our church and community to realize that they can make a difference in another child's life around the world with just a single quarter," says Odenbach. "I also want them to know that there are children who do not have the comforts that we take for granted. I want them to understand that they can change the world and others' lives." Odenbach hopes the message resonates within the community that "we are lucky and blessed and that we should share our blessings."

If the children of FUMC are any indication, it's an easy message to understand. The plunking of quarters and loose change into a large jug at the front of the sanctuary is a familiar sound these days during the Children's message in Sunday worship services, and Rylee and Allison are always among the children doing the plunking. The sight of selfless giving from children of the church has inspired adults and families to donate as well. Fundraising began through loose change collection, bake sales, and a garage sale, and continues with checks and cash donations from both likely and unlikely sources. What began as a church-wide project has turned into a community-wide effort.

Risk-taking Mission



The Children's ministry of First UMC Caldwell enjoyed play time during Vacation Bible School. They continue dropping loose change in an offering jug while learning the importance of sharing with others through their *Stop Hunger Now* campaign.



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Learning Opportunities

Prayer Seminar

Join popular speaker, pastor and author, Terry Teykl, for a "Prayer Encounter." In his seminar entitled *Call Home; PRAY*, Terry will share thoughts on personal prayer as a way to feel connected to the Father.

The seminar will take place Sunday, October 30, 3-6 p.m. at The Woodlands UMC.

Need more information? Contact Lisa Blanchard at lblanchard@twumc.org, 281-297-5979, or visit the web site, www.thewoodlandsumc.org/news/2011-09-26/terry-teykl-prayer-encounter.

The church is located at 2200 Lake Woodlands Drive.

Applications for Doctor of Ministry in Church Leadership

Wesley Theological Seminary is accepting applications for Doctor of Ministry in Church Leadership Excellence. The application deadline is December 1, 2011 for the May 2012 cohort.

The program provides clergy the enhanced knowledge, skills, and motivation to increase congregational and denominational service, vitality, and growth.

A serious engagement with contemporary secular leadership studies is held in tension with theology as participants examine the biblical, theological, and ethical foundations of ministry through the lens of leadership to enhance their own fruitful practice of leader-

ship. The combined resources of the Wesley faculty and the Lewis Center for Church Leadership bring depth and energy to this program.

For more information, prospective students may visit www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry or contact Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Director of the Lewis Center, at (202) 885-8621 or lovettw@wesleyseminary.edu.

Baby Sign Language – Empowering Parents

The practice of American Sign Language with pre-verbal hearing children uses selected words to help bridge baby's communication needs until s/he develops the physical ability to talk.

St. Paul's School presents Mimi Vance, who will teach parents how they and their child can benefit from even just a few ASL words.

The free event will be at 9:15 a.m. Tuesday, October 25, in the Jones Building on the campus of St. Paul's UMC.

To RSVP for the workshop and childcare during it, please call 713-528-6779 or email spschool@stpaulshouston.org.

Large Church Initiative 2012

The United Methodist Large-Church Initiative is designed for churches with 1,000 members or more and for churches with an average attendance of 350 or more in worship.

Once a year, pastors of large-membership churches from across the country gather for a large-membership church conference, which is sponsored

jointly by the Large-Church Initiative Committee and the General Board of Discipleship. The conference is designed to provide an arena for networking, for sharing ideas, and for giving and receiving encouragement and support for ministry.

Early bird registration for the January 23-26, 2012 event is before November 1, 2011. Registration fee includes all conference sessions, workshops, materials, two lunches, three dinners and the Monday evening concert. Go to www.lci2012.com to register.

Sexual Ethics Training

Clergy Sexual Ethics Training is scheduled for February 2, 2012 at Christ UMC, College Station, Texas.

This training is required of all clergy in the Texas Annual Conference and lay professionals seeking certification or who have not attended training this quadrennium.

The cost is \$15 payable at the door to cover the cost of lunch and materials. Checks are to be made to: The Texas Annual Conference. Participants may fill out the registration form on line, www.txcumc.org and email it to marytumulty@gmail.com.

Lay Speaker Training

Basic and advanced lay speaker training courses will be offered October 29-30 at Lakeview Baptist Retreat Center in Lone Star, Texas.

The cost is \$65 per person. To register or get more information, contact Teresa Fagan, Lay Speaking Ministries

Director at teresaonamission@aol.com or the New Boston UMC office, 903-628-2381.

Fellowship Opportunities

Crestmont Park UMC – Celebrating 51 Years of Ministry

Everyone is invited to join in the festivities for the *51st Church Anniversary* to be held on Sunday, October 23, 2011 at 3 p.m.

Special guests will be Rev. Darrell Houston and the Norris Chapel UMC family. Local choirs and groups and soloists throughout the Houston area will highlight a, *pre-anniversary musical* on Friday, October 21.

For more information, contact Gary Richardson at 281-713-5435.

Trunk or Treat Fall Fest

St. Paul's UMC in Port Arthur, Texas will host a *Trunk or Treat* fellowship event October 29. Everyone is invited for food, games, prizes given for best decorated car trunk, best adult costume and best child costume.

To schedule for transportation to the event or to sign up to participate, contact Rev. Patricia Wells or Doris Hayes at 409-985-9977 or stpaul_revwells@att.net.

Mission Opportunities

First UMC Beaumont says, "Don't Go To Church"

First United Methodist

Church Beaumont is canceling its morning worship services on Sunday, October 23.

The congregation is putting its faith into action by practicing purposeful acts of kindness and service throughout the community. Volunteers from both the church and the community will join together to paint, pack food boxes, clean up yards, build or repair wheelchair ramps, visit elderly and much more.

A total of 20 projects will be held on Faith in Action Sunday. Many of the workers do not attend FUMC Beaumont, but see the value of what we are doing and want to help.

For more information about First United Methodist and their Faith in Action Sunday, contact Phyllis Beaumont, at 409-832-0295 ext. 20, or phyllisbeaumont@firstbeaumont.org.

Blood Drive at St. Paul's UMC Houston

A Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center mobile unit will be at St. Paul's UMC to accept blood donations from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Sunday, October 30. It will be parked on Calumet Street between Fannin and San Jacinto and the church's two parking lots.

To reserve a time to donate, contact Phyllis Brockermeier at 713-528-0527 or pbrock@stpaulshouston.org.

For more information about blood donations, visit the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center's webpage, www.giveblood.org or call 1-888-482-5663.

Send Spotlight submissions to:

thelmaj@methodists.net or call 713-521-9383