

Cross Connection – March 10, 2016

Houston to Host World Methodist Conference this August: Mobilizing Volunteers Now

For the first time in 35 years, the global denominational conference is coming to America – and Houston, so help the Texas Conference provide volunteers and southern hospitality.

When 5,000 Methodists from around the globe hit the city limits of Houston for the World Methodist Conference August 31, the Texas Annual Conference will be rolling out the red carpet, along with legendary Texas traditions including Bluebell ice cream, Mariachi bands, some star-spangled American décor to celebrate the occasion. Additionally, hundreds of TAC volunteers are being recruited to make this historic conference run smoothly.

Some four years ago, Host Coordinator Rev. B.T. Williamson, Assistant to the Bishop, pitched Houston as an ideal destination for the conference, and has been helping coordinate the details ever since. “This is the quinquennial global gathering of the Methodist/Wesleyan family,” notes B.T., “and it will bring a mix of countries and cultures together to preserve and share a common faith heritage and work on behalf of social justice for all.” The conference provides a voice for the concerns of the denomination while promoting Christian unity. Previous conferences were held in Africa and Korea.

According to Jan Ervin who is assisting B.T. with the arrangements, The Methodist Hospital will be providing first aid for the conference and has funded many grants to enrich the event. **St. John’s UMC** Pastor Rudy Rasmus will be among the keynote speakers. In addition, attendees will enjoy a variety of dance demonstrations during Cultural Night, featuring the break dancing ministry from **St. Luke’s UMC Gethsemane** Campus, lyrical dancers and even some hoe-down moves from the square dancing team of Texas A&M University.

“Special music will be provided by Christian artist “Gungor” from California and the choir from **Windsor Village UMC,**” adds Jan.

Volunteers Attend at No Cost

“Volunteering is your ticket in,” shares Jan. Volunteer coordinators will be responsible for each of the activity areas and those coordinators should be contacted if you are interested. There are six main areas where volunteers from across the conference are needed:

- **Registration & Hotel Volunteers** – Will Reed (will.reed@servantsnow.org) & Frankie Watson (frankiewatson@sbcglobal.net)

On Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at the Hilton Hotel Americas, 20 people per day are needed in four-hour shifts: 8 am-noon, noon-4 pm, 4 pm–8 pm. They will help assemble bags, hand-out registration bags, may help some with registration depending on the demand, and greet arrivals and direct them at the hotel.

- **Volunteer Support Services** – Carol Bruse (cbruse@westumethodist.org) (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday - at least 2 people per shift, 4 hour shifts: 8 am-noon, noon-4 pm, 4 pm–8 pm at the Hilton Hotel Americas) The Host Hospitality Room at hotel which will be epi-center of the volunteers, storage of personal possessions location,

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volunteer vests will be stored, where food and drinks will be available and parking passes handed out. Training will be held at the hotel prior to the conference.

- **Airport Greeters** - Linda Christians (lchristians@stlukesmethodist.org)

Bush International Terminals or Hobby Airport

Greeters will meet and distribute a “Welcome Bag.” Special thanks to churches/groups volunteering in this area thus far: **Klein UMC, BMCR & CME** .

- **Sponsored Lunches** – Pat Sparks (psparks@stpkaty.org)

A total of \$54,000 is needed for meals during the three days for the World Methodist Conference. Notes Pat, “The cost is \$1,500 per sponsorship which will pay for five tables of delegates along with 10 members from the sponsoring church who can join them for a unique time of dialogue. The churches can split the cost with the minimum amount being \$500 (this amount will allow for 3 members from each of the sponsoring churches). We need a total of 36 sponsorships to cover the cost and we have less than 10 sponsorships so far.”

- **“100 Project”** - Chap Temple (chappell@cumcsl.org)

Local churches will volunteer to host a “preacher” on Sunday, September 4, 2016, and any family he or she may have with them, to attend their church service to preach. Each local church will arrange transportation from hotel to church and back either to hotel or to airport for pastor and family. The local church may also have to arrange for overnight lodging and meals depending on where the church is located.

- **Prayer Ministry** – Michelle Hall (mhall@cumcsl.org)

Several months prior to World Methodist Conference, volunteers will begin praying about the business that will be conducted during the duration of the conference. Prayer volunteers may even go on-site to the hotel to pray over the chairs that delegates, both clergy and lay, will be occupying during the conference. Special thanks to the churches that have volunteered thus far: **Cedar Bayou UMC and Grace Fellowship**.

Call to Action

To enlist as a volunteer contact one of the names listed above. Perkins School of Theology is offering Continuing Education credits for participants; contact Charles Millikan for more information (cmillikan@houstonmethodist.org or 281.412.9377)

Rev. Chap Temple says the “100 Project” is based upon a famous quote from John Wesley who once said, “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on Earth.” Explains Chap, “Our goal is to place 100 of the world Wesleyan leaders who will be here for the World Methodist Conference in 100 of our pulpits in the Greater Houston area and as far as Nacogdoches and College Station on the Sunday following the conference, September 4. Both the leaders and the congregations involved will not all necessarily be United Methodist—some will be AME, CME, Nazarene, and other Wesleyan groups. If a

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congregation is interested in hosting, their only obligation is to make arrangements to pick them from the Hilton Americas, get them to their church, and feed them lunch. A small honorarium would be nice but it is optional.” To get on the list, contact: chappellt@christchurchsl.org .

Adds B.T., “We are hopeful that other churches in the Houston area will sign on for the unique opportunity to have a visiting global pastor in the pulpit on Sunday. Bishop Huie and I appreciate the volunteers and sponsors that are signing on to make the World Methodist Conference 2016 an impactful event. The Texas Annual Conference is excited about hosting this conference and hope our churches will be involved so that they realize what an awesome opportunity this is to have Christians from all over the world coming to the Texas Annual Conference.”

Up Close Series: Meet Your General Conference Delegates

In this ongoing series, learn more about the delegates representing the Texas Conference at the mid-May General Conference. This edition spotlights longtime lay leader Sue Sullivan and Rev. Ben Trammell of Faith UMC in Richmond.

As the clock ticks closer to the 2016 General Conference, delegates are preparing by reading resolutions and other background material and praying for God’s special anointment on this historic event. Congregation members from across the conference elected a roster of lay and clergy leaders to represent them at this event, but might wonder what is going through the minds of their delegates. What motivates them to put in so much of their own time to be a part of this event? This issue shines the spotlight on longtime lay leader Sue Sullivan from Texarkana in the North District and also features a [video interview with Rev. Ben Trammell](#), pastor of Faith UMC in Richmond in the Southwest District:

Sue Sullivan, Lay Delegate to the 2016 General Conference

Why did you want to participate in General Conference?

I have served in the local church, district and annual conferences and General Conference committees, boards and agencies. I have served as a Jurisdictional Delegate 2004, 2008 and 2012 and General Conference Delegate in 2012. I feel I have the experience to bring the views of the laity of the UMC. As a Certified Lay Minister, I also understand clergy perspective on many issues. I want to participate in General Conference to engage in planning for the future of our denomination.

Why do you think General Conference is important?

As a connectional church body, General Conference provides a time for us to come together to evaluate where we have been, where we are now, and where we hope to be in the near future.

What is your greatest hope for General conference?

I pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us and unite us in our Biblical understanding of what it means to be United Methodists. My hope is that we will address the declining membership and worship attendance and seek strategies for spiritual and membership growth.

What is your greatest hope for the UMC?

The theme for 2016 General Conference is Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and

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teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This scripture is my hope for the UMC.

How is being a delegate in General Conference part of your calling?

My prayers include offering myself in service to God. I trust that He provides opportunities for me to be obedient to His calling. Being a delegate to General Conference is an honor and privilege, and it requires prayer, study, teamwork, and faithfulness to the Scriptures.

Urban and Suburban Churches Covenant Together to Fortify Larkin Community School

God's hand is at work through several congregations who are forging a successful new model of ministry on behalf of young children.

Thanks to several UMCs with a strong heart for *Investing in the Young*, a daycare in one of Houston's oldest neighborhoods has remarkably transformed from *fledgling* status to *flourishing* – with a waiting list. The metamorphosis is the exciting result of an urban and suburban church creating an innovative partnership that brings great excitement to Rev. Collin Taylor of **Grace UMC, Houston Heights**. "I'm in the middle of this project that I think is a model for the future of the UMC," explains Collin. "The story started before I arrived at Grace," he says, "when I was on staff at **Memorial Drive UMC**." At that time **Memorial Drive** owned Larkin Community Center in the Heights as an outreach venture for underprivileged children. Since Larkin was providing services at a deficit, Gene Cragg headed up the strategy to form the Memorial Drive Caring Forever Foundation to allow designated gifts and funds for Larkin and scholarships.

When demographics changed, the need fell off dramatically and the church considered shutting the school down. "However, since there were still 100 children and 17 staff that would have been impacted by the school closing," notes Collin, "the senior pastor, Dr. Chuck Simmons and I began brainstorming other options. We wondered what it might look like to move Larkin School to **Grace UMC**, just a few miles away. This idea gained momentum and MDUMC felt so passionately about helping **Grace** and Larkin that they not only have given us the day school operation now that I have been appointed to **Grace**, but also nearly \$250,000 to help pay for renovations."

New Model, New Successes

According to Collin, this collaboration is not a "take over" by the larger church. Rather it is a collaboration between large suburban church and a smaller urban church, wherein each has investments described in a covenant list of responsibilities for each entity. "I think this can be a model for the future of the UMC, replicated to bring new life to dying churches or schools," he shares. When both churches have an investment it helps mitigate risk and communicate confidence. "This is not a big church telling us they will take it from here, they are helping us walk faithfully into a new way to do church and projects."

Since his arrival at **Grace UMC** 18 months ago, Collin has seen the average worship attendance grow by almost 40%. "It's fun to try new things and experience success with them," notes Collin. "Because the larger congregation is pulling alongside of us, we are able to relocate Larkin to our campus, We are renovating a building to meet modern day codes as we set out to serve the current community with a daycare and weekday school for newborns through five-year-olds – and ultimately even offering an after school program all the way to age 12."

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What excites Collin about this model is that each church retains its identity, and the new venture is considered a type of church plant in many ways. “**Memorial Drive UMC** invested in me for almost a decade while I was on staff, and they continue to invest in me and this urban community in creative and impactful ways,” he adds. “Chuck is the kind of visionary that sees 10 moves down the road, and this was his idea from way back.”

“The transfer of the Larkin Community School to **Grace UMC** was a win-win for all,” shares Dr. Chuck Simmons. “Relocating the ministry at **Grace UMC** enabled us to honor the Larkin legacy by continuing to serve the families of the Heights. The additional gift of school funds of about \$250,000 was required to make it possible and to empower our sister congregation to leap forward in its revitalization.”

Construction is underway at **Grace** with hopes of relocating the children and staff on campus this summer. “The demographics of the community surrounding our church has changed over the years,” Collin shares, “but they still need the Good News. Since we are located near downtown and the medical center, we are drawing kids from all over and consider this a fertile ministry ground, and a revenue source as we grow,” adds Collin.

Larkin’s Executive Director Leonor Hernandez was raised in the Heights and loves the idea of a new start in a building connected to a church “Pastor Collin has agreed to be our chapel teacher and also plays the guitar so I am excited about the chance to take the children into a real church every week – something many of them may do for the first time,” Leonor says. “Since our center serves over 20 different zip codes, it is such a blessing to know that these two churches have worked this out in order to avoid displacing these families. **Grace UMC** also has a food pantry which will be a blessing to some of our families. While it will be bittersweet to leave my school home of 28 years, I know that this is a really good fit with **Grace** and that it might even bring the church some new members.”

She is quick to acknowledge the blessings of working for a church all these years. “Larkin is so much more than a job! It is great to leave at the end of the day knowing we have done something good for our neighbors. **Memorial Drive UMC** and **Grace UMC** are a true godsend for our families and our community.”

Dynamic Duo: Husband and Wife Team Model Loyal Service

*Small membership churches like **First UMC Edom** depend on the willingness and flexibility of longtime volunteers like Keith and Karen Mills.*

When it comes to giving back, everyone wins. When giving back as a twosome, the blessings are doubled on both sides.

Studies even indicate that the interaction and satisfaction-- that comes from supporting a passion or personal belief—often has positive health benefits, in that it impacts happiness. As pastors throughout the conference will testify, valuable volunteers are the lifeblood of a church – and particularly critical for the vibrancy of small congregations.”

Dr. Jesse Brannen, Director of Congregational Excellence, who passionately studies the qualities of strong churches, affirms the volunteer spirit of Keith and Karen Mills who have attended **Edom UMC** since 1989. They have been active members, serving on virtually every committee over the years – all while modeling servant leadership on the job as well.

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Notes Jesse, “I was their pastor for four years, and would say the Mills excel at being consistent. Over the 20 years I have known them, they have maintained a helpful attitude of support of the church, in the face of ups and downs in their families and careers. When it came to keeping the rose garden, serving on the SPRC committee, helping with youth activities, or any fundraising activity or administrative meeting, they were all in.”

Looking back, Karen shares that she and Keith “have taught Sunday school at several levels, and been involved in Bible studies and various projects through the years.” Adds Keith, “Most importantly, we’ve been blessed by our relationships with church members, and clergy and their families.”

Keith, who is a horticulturist who supervised the infamous Tyler Rose Garden for over 20 years, has most recently worked at the Caldwell Zoo in Tyler. Karen recently celebrated her 20th anniversary working for a medical firm in Tyler that offers her opportunities to live out her faith on the job.

Shares Karen, “The Bible says that the meek shall inherit the earth, but in our society, it’s seldom the meek who get hired and promoted, but rather those who succeed at selling themselves. In the current cultural climate, public prayer and the display of the Ten Commandments is said to be so offensive to some that they feel compelled to take legal action, so how does a person of faith safely and effectively integrate that into the work place? I think the Methodist acolytes give us the answer at the end of every Sunday service, by carrying the flame out of the church, representing us taking the light of God out into the world.”

She opts to share Christ through her natural lifestyle. “It’s not uncommon for coworkers to ask how your weekend was, so it’s easy to mention church attendance with your answer, which quickly clues people to your life as a Christian, and can then open the door to greater possibilities as well as responsibilities. Keith and I don’t hesitate to tell a troubled coworker that we’ll pray for them, though Keith and I don’t publicly pray in the workplace, unless asked to by someone coming to us for comfort. And we don’t witness unless asked and we don’t force our faith or beliefs on others. The Mills believe that they are taking the light of God into the workplace by trying to demonstrate respect, integrity, and approachability. “If you can treat everyone with respect and take responsibility for your actions while supporting others in their achievements,” she says, “it can allow coworkers to see what God wants them to see in you. Finally, I think having an open-door policy might be the most important thing. We try to be sensitive to the needs of others, above ourselves.”

Their spirit of servant leadership is noticed by others. Adds Karen, “Some of the men who Keith supervises have told me that he is the only supervisor they’ve ever had who would get down in the dirt and work right alongside of them and how much they admired that. Keith is very approachable, and will never give a short answer when a longer one will do!”

Longtime loyal volunteers in the church need periods of inactivity on occasion. In 2010, Keith lost both his parents. Since he had been their power of attorney prior to their passing, and executor of the estates, he simply notified the nomination committee in time to fill their vacancies as needed.

Getting Started

Volunteering comes in many forms. When pondering a leadership position, consider pursuing:

- Something you are good at
- Something you want to learn (i.e. event planning skills)
- Something that will make your community better

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- Something that will allow you to meet people outside of your typical circle
- Something requiring obedience to God outside of your comfort level

Adds Karen, “I think our service over the years has followed our interests. When our daughter was young, I was involved in children and youth activities. As she got older, I was involved in young adult activities. During those years, Keith taught the young adult Sunday school class, and as we got older, the name of the class changed to the ‘young at heart’ class!”

The Mills admit that finding the time is not always easy and that the needs of their family have always come first. “We just became first time grandparents in 2015,” she shares, “so I cut back my committee involvement but I still volunteer to count the collection on Sundays and attend Bible study. As is true of any small church, if you're there, you are involved!”

Two-way Blessings

Reflects Karen, “I can't say that I've got a favorite ministry moment, because I've learned over time, the moments that I think are the most *insignificant*, might have a huge impact on someone else, and the moment I feel like I've said something deeply profound might be met with blank stares or eye rolls. My ministry efforts are probably best judged by others.”

Rev. Jason Huffman describes the Mills as quiet leaders who are always present and available. Notes Jason, “Keith is our finance chair and leads with a soft spirit. He is very committed to his duties and is always looking to work with others to make the church the best it can be. Karen has served in a number of capacities here at the church. She is always involved in the informal workings of the church helping any way she can. Karen also runs our Safe Sanctuary background checks to keep us in compliance with the conference.”

He also observes that, “In a church full of retirees and folks with a lot of discretionary time, Keith and Karen both work full time jobs -- but they are as committed as anybody in the church.”

As a “dynamic duo,” this twosome has a long track record of leading by example. Shares Jason, “In the short time I've known them, the Mills' did one thing that helped me define *servant leader*. Being a small church with a modest budget, we do a special offering called the ‘noisy bucket’ every month to go to a designated cause. We had elected to take the noisy bucket to buy chickens for the food pantry to give local families for Thanksgiving. A few days before we were to take up the donation, a tornado hit in Lindale, TX, right up the road from us. Since Keith was finance chair, I approached him about designating it for the storm victims. Keith and Karen looked at each other and said, ‘We'll take care of the chickens for the food pantry so we can use the Noisy Bucket for the storm victims.’”

UH Wesley Foundation Combines Diversity and Development

Students from near and far are find welcoming arms in this campus ministry at University of Houston, along with support on their spiritual journey -- regardless of their starting point.

When Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick, **Magnolia UMC**, was asked to serve on the board of The Bridge/University of Houston Wesley, her response was an enthusiastic “Yes!” given the exciting ministry happening at the UH Wesley Foundation. A firm believer in *Investing in the Young*, Stacy is one

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of several enthusiastic lay and clergy board members facilitating a supportive spiritual network for a group of students from as far away as Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia.

“Since we are on a very diverse campus, we see this as our mandate of *the world as our parish*,” campus pastor Rev. Jackie Collins shares. “We focus on growing students spiritually and *making disciples* no matter where they start on their journey. Students can range from never attended church before to those who grew up in the church such as a preachers kid.”

As a new volunteer on the board, Stacy joined the subcommittee planning the Fundraising Gala this fall. “The *excitement and opportunities* of a college campus outweigh the *challenges* of campus ministry when you have someone with the gifts of Rev. Collins,” adds Stacy. Board leaders are integrally involved in campus ministries. Notes Stacy, “I see God working through these students who study and serve together. They are engaged with a homeless ministry of action and service that goes hand in hand with what they learn and discuss during their Bible Study. Students then take those experiences into the other parts of their lives, inviting friends to come to The Bridge events and giving witness to how their lives have been impacted.”

“Over the past few months,” shares freshman Jershayla Johnson, biology/pre-med major, “The Wesley Foundation has become my second home. I have made wonderful lifelong friends and have grown in my faith. The opportunities to feed the homeless weekly and attend Christian camp helped me gain a better understanding of how to practice my faith in action! I am grateful for the Wesley Foundation and all the wonderful things they are doing.”

Stacy attended private colleges that did not have Wesley Foundations but she was active in student ministries nonetheless. “I believe college is an important time for young adults to explore different aspects of their faith and spiritual growth,” Stacy shares. “While a college campus is a transient place where your *congregation* has a lot of turn over, you are also in a place where your population values learning and is there to explore and develop for their future.”

Her fellow board member Dianne Akins Iglehart, a two-time University of Houston alumni, was “ecstatic to receive the invitation to join the board.” She says, “I have fond memories as an undergrad participating in some of the foundation’s activities. My parents encouraged me to continue worshipping and nurturing my faith during college, knowing that can be a time to expand academic skills and your understanding of what it means to *be a disciple*.” Adds Dianne, “I am proud to witness the current students take the time and opportunity to deepen their spiritual growth experiences in the Wesley Foundation.”

UH senior Alexandria Davis adds, “The Wesley Foundation at U of H has given me the opportunity to grow and learn to defend my faith through our interfaith dialogue free lunches once a week. It has also allowed me to build long-lasting friendships.”

Adds Stacy, “Clergy and lay leadership of the annual conference will soon be receiving communication from the U of H Wesley Foundation Board, and we ask that you prayerfully consider how your congregation can respond and be involved with this fruitful ministry as we *Invest in the Young* together as a conference.”

To contact Rev. Collins: www.uhwesley.org, uhwesley1@gmail.com
Facebook/Twitter: TheBridgeuofh

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March Mission Madness: Central South District is “One” in Missions

Iglesia Fuente De Vida received a welcome facelift thanks to dozens of South Central District volunteers who tackled seven projects on their Saturday workday.

The transformation that occurred between the morning hours and the afternoon hours was astounding. On March 5, almost 100 volunteers from 12 different United Methodist Churches helped to revitalize and repair the facilities for **Iglesia Fuente De Vida**. In one day’s time teams painted rooms, replaced flooring, built and installed a new sign, planted new landscaping, and power washed the whole facility. The work project followed the District theme for 2016: “We are One”.

“We are one in ministry together,” said Andy Noel, Superintendent of Central South. “The people who showed up to help represent the diversity of populations that makes our district so special. We come from different churches, cultures, and backgrounds, but we are one in our love for the Lord and our desire to serve.”

The biggest project was the demolition and replacement of the old playground. “When our church members saw the dangerous condition of the playground, we knew exactly what our next job was,” said Rev. Jeff Powers of **Westminster United Methodist Church**. “In very little time we were able to raise \$6,000 to provide new, beautiful playground equipment in spite of the instruction manual that was over 100 pages long.”

Westminster has been at the forefront of leading the renovation of **Iglesia**. The church shared a portion of its capital campaign to be able to make many repairs and replace the sanctuary roof.

On-the-Spot Fundraising

In addition to all of the work done at the District Workday, an additional \$10,000 was raised at lunchtime to replace the Fellowship Hall Roof. “We were about \$10,000 short of replacing the roof so the Central South District moved quickly, offering to match up to \$5,000 in gifts that would go towards the last roofing job. The money was raised in about 20 minutes,” Jeff adds.

Iglesia is a Hispanic Mission Church that serves on the north side of Loop 610 in Houston and ministers out of the former **Oakwood United Methodist Church** building. Currently almost 80 worship there every Sunday.

“It was amazing to see the difference from when we arrived on the property and when we drove off,” adds Central South Administrative Assistant Donna Alexander. “The sidewalks were dark and the wood looked black until we power washed it to reveal beautiful red wood. All in all it was just a great day for all of us.”

There are still opportunities to help **Iglesia** have a great facility. If your church would like to make a gift to the project, send it to the Central South District office at 1410 Lee Street, Houston, Texas 77009.

50/50 Missions Training is a Game Changer

“Collaborative” is the key concept behind the In Mission Together model that will be explored in upcoming trainings, as clergy and laity pursue more impactful outreach partnerships.

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In the always emerging language of outreach, local + global = “glocal” these days. It is a winning combination of mission work that is gaining popularity throughout the denomination. Clergy and laity seeking to learn more about this model are in luck!

The Texas Annual Conference is hosting a special training entitled, “Doing Good Better: Equipping Your Church for ‘Glocal’ Engagement.” In an effort to help churches move toward this new “50/50” missional partnership model of ministry, this training is being presented by the Center for Missional Excellence and the In Mission Together program of Global Ministries.

Rev. Scott Moore, assistant director of the Center, says, “The aim of this training is for anyone, be they lay or clergy, church staff or church member, to be introduced to a relationship-building model of mission. For decades, the predominant model of missions was the *mission trip*.” He adds, “Under this model, a group would go someWHERE to do someTHING **FOR** someONE else. With the 50/50 model we concentrate on building long-term relationships **WITH** other communities, sharing our gifts, graces, and resources with one another. The relationships can be with communities in our own backyard or on the other side of the world. Our hope is that participants will leave with a new understanding of living a missional lifestyle rather than simply engaging in mission trips and that they will have the tools they need to empower their local congregations to actively partner with new communities.”

The training will be held:

- April 16, 2016 at FUMC Conroe
- April 23, 2016 at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center

Participants only need to attend one of the dates. The gathering begins with coffee at 8:30 a.m. and worship at 9 a.m. The first session will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will conclude at 4:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

The day will consist of presenters from across the denomination guiding attendees through a series of discussions on topics such as:

- “Glocal Partnerships for Community Transformation,” a poverty immersion experience,
- “When Helping Hurts,”
- “A Case Study in Empowerment,”
- “Mobilization, Multiplication, Movement,”
- “The Wesleyan Way,” and
- “Implementation: 50/50 in Your Church and Community.”

Presenters include pastors and mission leaders from Global Ministries, ZOE ministries, The United Methodist Church in Mexico, and Church of the Resurrection. Rev. Diane McGehee, Missional Excellence Center Director adds, “We will also have the opportunity to worship via electronic conferencing with partner churches in the Rio Texas Conference and in Mexico. Those in attendance will be provided with a “tool kit” of resources to help organize their local church to begin engaging in missional partnerships.”

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The cost for the training will be \$69, including lunch. Need-based scholarships are available. Those interested in attending can contact Rev. Scott Moore at smoore@txcumc.org for more information. Registration will be available online at www.txcumc.org by mid-March.

Bishop Huie Video Available for Palm Sunday Prayer Vigils

The council of Bishops has invited each conference to host a 24-hour prayer effort on a given day before 2016 General Conference. The Texas Annual Conference will conduct our Day of Prayer on March 20, 2016 – Palm Sunday. During the week of March 14th, a link to a video prayer by Bishop Janice Huie will be sent to our Cross Connection readers to encourage prayer participation and to offer her own prayer for our United Methodist Church and for the people of the church who will be gathering in Portland, Oregon in mid-May. The video may be shown in Palm Sunday service or used privately to focus on this important time in the life of the United Methodist Church.

Conroe First UMC is promoting a vigil for the early evening hours on March 20th. What does your church have planned? Share your plans on the TAC Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Texas-Annual-Conference-of-the-United-Methodist-Church-136677901714/?ref=nf>

Retreat includes Communications Training for Small Membership Churches

April Canik, Associate Director of the Communications Office, will facilitate five hours of communications training targeted to clergy and laity of small membership churches at the annual retreat April 15-16 at Lakeview.

Rule 2 Grants Available

Rev. Dr. Jacqui King, director of Leadership for Congregational Vitality invites you to check out these new funding opportunities. To be eligible to apply for a Rule 2 Grant, the applicant must be (1) a United Methodist collegiate ministry, local church, district, conference or other United Methodist affiliated group/organization and (2) a program ministry that serves college or university students. Look at: <http://umcollegiate.org/initiatives/grants-scholarships/>

Laity Breakfast at Annual Conference

TAC Laity are invited to meet for breakfast during Annual Conference on Tuesday, May 31, at 7:30am, Hilton Americas, Ballroom A for a cost of \$25. Tickets will be available at each District Pre-Conference Meeting from District Lay Leaders.

Checks and/or Money Orders should be payable to:

Central South District

c/o Juanita Jackson

3014 Hutchins St.

Houston, TX 77004

For additional information: Jjackson3014@sbcglobal.net

(713) 523-6392