

**THR relationship study ... 4A**



**Marriage guidelines ... 5A**



**Event list ... www.ctcumc.org**

## Conference Alignment Task Force underway

In his episcopal address at the 2009 Annual Conference June 8, Bishop Mike Lowry called for a restructuring of the Central Texas Conference “with an eye to less institutionalism and more mission-driven ministry around the [denomination’s] four focus areas” of developing leaders, creating places for new people, eliminating poverty and improving health globally.

The task force was named and charged with the conference vision for growing faithful and fruitful local churches that are transforming the world, noting the primary function of the Central Texas Conference as energizing and equipping the local church to carrying out the vision.

The task force met for the first time Sept. 24 in Mansfield under the leadership of Rev. Mike Ramsdell, chairman, and special consultant Rev. Gil Rendle, former consultant with The Alban Institute and author of *Leading Change in the Congregation* and *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*.

“There was tremendous excitement among the task force about the opportunity to lead the Central Texas Conference, already a great conference, into being even more effective in aligning our resources with our vision of the church of Jesus Christ,” Ramsdell reported.

Alignment Task Force members are:  
Rev. Louis Carr, Jr., Waco

Rev. Beverly Gilliam, Fort Worth  
Rev. Ken Diehm, Grapevine  
Tom Harkrider, Fort Worth  
Dawne McAlpin, Granbury  
Priscilla Monson, Brownwood  
Rev. Bryan Patrick, Eastland  
Rev. Mike Ramsdell, Mansfield  
Rev. Todd Renner, Southlake  
Jim Scoggin, Grapevine  
David Scott, Arlington  
Kim Simpson, Arlington  
Daniel So, Waco  
Pat Stroman, Woodway  
Estee Valendy, Arlington

**Alignment Task Force members pictured, l-r, are Kim Simpson, Jim Scoggins, Bishop Mike Lowry, Priscilla Monson and Daniel So.**



Photo by Todd Renner

## Working for a Win-Win

*EDITOR’S NOTE: Rev. Dean Reed, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church, Stephenville, has been instrumental in establishing the Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN), a faith-based network of Texans who reach out in love to immigrants.*

*At the invitation of the Center for American Progress, he was a presenter last week in CAP’s effort to highlight communities of faith that are acting on behalf of migrants in the push for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Watch the next issue of Central Link for “WIN goes to Washington, D.C. — a special report as WIN tells its story to the nation.”*

BY REV. DEAN REED  
PASTOR, FIRST UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH, STEPHENVILLE

Aleksandar is a Bulgarian musician living in Chicago where he earned his Ph.D. and has worked for 10 years raising a family. He wants to simply change jobs and come to Texas.

To make that transition, however, it will take as much as a year for the Immigration Service to grant approval for the move. What employer would — or even could — wait that long?

If you said almost no one, you would be right. It’s a problem

for employers, and even more of a problem for the immigrants themselves.

“Most people would give up and go home, and perhaps this family will,” says the layperson whose church tried to hire Aleksandar. “One can’t help but wonder if that’s the intent.”

One can’t be sure of intent, but the results are clear. There are millions of immigrants who face immense challenges in trying to make a life for themselves in this country. The U.S. immigration policies and practices often produce unreasonable, harsh or even inhumane results.

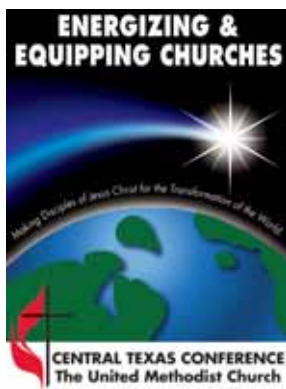
But the good news is that

there is an emerging grassroots-led activism in faith communities across the country advocating for change in the immigration system. And one of the most notable examples in the nation is in our own backyard.

It’s called WIN — the Welcoming Immigrants Network. I was moved by the message in Matthew 25 where Jesus indicates that we are ultimately measured by how we treat those who are down and out. One of those measures is how welcoming we are toward strangers.

Embracing this lesson from scripture, I began to realize that the

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the  
**Central Link**

An edition of  
**The United Methodist Reporter**  
October 2, 2009  
Volume 156 | Number 22

*Central Link*, an edition of *The United Methodist Reporter*, is the official publication of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Opinions are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect official United Methodist positions. The Central Texas Conference does not endorse any product or service advertised.

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Dallas, Texas

The mission of *Central Link* edition of *The United Methodist Reporter* is to inform, enlighten, inspire and equip leaders for mission and ministry in our connectional church.

For circulation and/or advertising policy, contact Susan Briles 817. 877. 5222, 800.460.8622 or susan@ctcumc.org. Subscriptions: \$20/year.

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The *Central Link* edition is published every other week and is the official publication of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107-2153.



## The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

# 22.

“We used to have a call night at Glen Lake.”  
“We used to have about \$600,000 a year in shares for church development.”  
“We are rediscovering core practices common to all faithful and fruitful congregations.”  
“We are stepping up our conference communications.”

By your grace and patience, Wilderness Way #22 is an intentional break from my current theme of writing on the key elements of faith-walking in the wilderness of our time. Wilderness Way #23 will pick back up with the theme of courage.

I take this brief interlude to highlight four key areas of challenge for us in the next three months. The first is Exploration 2009. As we wrestle with where the next generation of leadership is coming from for The United Methodist Church, all across the church people have noted the absence of young clergy. They are being called “spotted owls.” (A reference to an endangered species of owls.) Recently someone commented to me, “We used to have a call night at Glen Lake.”

Here in the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church we are returning to the active practice of sharing a call for ordained ministry. Christ is moving in our midst with the call of the wild! A great new adventure awaits us.

A key event called *Exploration 2009* will be held in Dallas Friday, Nov. 13, through Sunday, Nov. 15. It is designed especially for youth and young adults to explore a call to ministry. You can get more information at [www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)! *I am challenging the Central Texas Conference to take at least 100 young people to this event.*

A critical ministry of sharing the gospel is to start new churches and strengthen existing churches. Currently we are facing a fiscal crisis in Church Growth & Development. We used to bring in as much as \$600,000 a year through the Shares ministry. Today that commitment

is shrinking. One of the most important ministries of the conference is seriously undercapitalized. *I am challenging the Central Texas Conference to commit to 2000 new shares!* You can get information on how to make a new commitment at [www.ctcumc.org/page.asp?PKValue=884!](http://www.ctcumc.org/page.asp?PKValue=884)

“We are rediscovering core practices common to all faithful and fruitful congregations.” Bishop Robert Schnase’s seminal insight on The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations has swept across the church. He offers a detailed way of recovering core practices that make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Every congregation, regardless of its size or situation, will benefit from engagement in core fruitful ministry. Every now and then, I run across someone (or some church) that says “We’ve already done that. We don’t need to go.” When I hear such a report, I know that person (or church) doesn’t get it. This is about ongoing core practices of faithfulness and fruitfulness. *I am challenging the Central Texas Conference to have teams from 200 churches present at the Fall Leadership Summit Nov. 14!* You can get the brochure by going to the conference Web site at [www.ctcumc.org/event\\_detail.asp?PKValue=1404!](http://www.ctcumc.org/event_detail.asp?PKValue=1404)

Additionally, we here at the Conference Center are working on stepping up our communication to local churches. We exist to energize and equip local churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. *I am challenging the Central Texas Conference to improve conference communications!* Watch our Web site. Hold us accountable. Together we are going to step up for Christ and His Kingdom.



## Central Texas Conference studies evolving relationship with Texas Health Resources

Meeting for the first time Sept. 24 at the Conference Center in Fort Worth is a task force to study the relationship between the Central Texas Conference and Texas Health Resources.

The study comes as the result of a motion at Annual Conference last June following a number of changes by the parent company, Texas Health Resources, that included renaming the hospitals formerly known as Harris Methodist and the loss of the familiar United Methodist cross and flame imaging.

“It was a good meeting,” states Dr. Eric McKinney of Georgetown, who chairs the task force. “The historical relationship the conference has had with the former Harris Methodist Health Care System is valued very much. We appreciate being involved and invested in the cause of benevolent health care in



Photo by Carolyn Stephens

the greater Metroplex.”

The task force has been organized in subgroups, according to McKinney, to do the work that he expects will be reported at the 2010 Annual Conference next June.

Bishop Mike Lowry named the

following people to the task force:

Rev. Frank Briggs, Fort Worth  
Rev. Carol Gibson, Fort Worth  
Rev. Kay Hawkins, Waco  
Rev. David Martinez, Fort Worth  
Rev. Mike McKee, Hurst  
Rev. John Schaub, Fort Worth

Jerry Secrest, Temple  
Earl Wood, Fort Worth  
Rev. Penny Yaites, Fort Worth  
Ex Officio members: Dr. Georgia Adamson and Rev. Connally Dugger.

At the 2009 Annual Conference, THR president and CEO Douglas Hawthorne reported that “The faith-based heritage and values of Texas Health Harris Methodist hospitals remains at the center of everything we do. A new brand identity for the hospitals was rolled out across the system at the end of 2008 and early 2009. This change is the result of a need to establish a single identity across the THR system. The hospitals continue to have ‘Methodist’ as a prominent part of their names. The new logo includes a subtle faith symbol embedded in the design. Each hospital displays the cross and flame symbol of the UMC inside.”

## EQUIPPING

# New rules guide marriage preparation and counseling

Clergy: Do you do premarital education? Would you like to find good curriculum? Have you tapped into the help available from the State of Texas?

An education event to introduce curriculum, resources and the State of Texas Twogether in Texas program is available to pastors from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 8, at Central United Methodist Church in Waco.

The training features three plenary speakers, three workshop sessions and an extended period for certification.

The entire training is free to CTC clergy, but no lunch will be provided. A free lunch will be available and time provided until 2:30 p.m. for additional training leading to certification in the Growing Love in Christian Marriage (GLCM) curriculum. Those choosing the extended period may preregister or register on Oct. 8 for the afternoon session.

To register for the morning and/or the extended training, please contact Susan Briles in the Conference Center at [susan@ctcumc.org](mailto:susan@ctcumc.org).

### Plenary Topics:

- △ ***The Biblical & Theological Rational for Doing Pre-Marriage Education***  
Presenter: Dr. Richard Hunt, a retired Methodist clergy, who is author of GLCM and senior professor of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary;
- △ ***The Twogether in Texas Program***  
Presenter: Gordon Leeks, representative from Twogether in Texas, PMP project manager, and Texas Health & Human Services Commission's Healthy Marriage Programs Unit;
- △ ***How to Integrate Pre-marriage Education into the Local Congregation***  
Presenter: Dr. Cynthia Harr, LCSW, who is assistant professor at Baylor University's School of Social Work.



### Workshops:

- △ ***Growing Love in Christian Marriage*** (GLCM is the official United Methodist curriculum)  
Presenter: Dr. Richard Hunt
- △ ***Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study (FOCCUS)***  
Presenter: Dr. West Eades, LPC / LMFT and member of College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy
- △ ***Prepare-Enrich***  
Presenter: Dr. Preston Dyer, professor emeritus at Baylor University School of Social Work
- △ ***Pre-marriage Awareness Inventory*** (LOGOS productions)  
Presenter: Rev. Carl Freeto, senior pastor at Center United Methodist Church, Waco
- △ ***Saving Your Marriage (or Your Second Marriage) Before It Starts*** (material written by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott)  
Presenter: Rev. G. Allen Grant, senior pastor at China Spring United Methodist Church & Rev. Darlene Grant, LBSW, chaplain at Texas Home Health Hospice

## Loans, scholarships, Africa University challenged

The combination of the recession and an online application process dramatically increased the demand for United Methodist loans and scholarships this year, according to the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry, making contributions to the Student Day, World Communion Sunday and Native American Ministries Sunday offering even more important.

More than 9,000 students applied for United Methodist scholarships this year, although only 2,877 completed all the required recommendations and documentation by the May 15 deadline. GBHEM awarded 3,365 students about \$4.6 million in scholarships in 2008. Awards totals are not complete for 2009 as yet. So far this year, the Board has provided another \$1.6 million in loans to 333 students.

### United Methodist Sunday Day

Last year, \$554,252 was given to the United Methodist Student Day offering, which helps fund the loans (10 percent of funds) and scholarships (90 percent of funds). The 2009 offering is on or around Nov. 29. Only students whose home churches have contributed to the Student Day offering are eligible for

the annual Merit Scholarships. Each year the Central Texas Conference Higher Education Task Force must deny scholarship applicants whose churches did not participate.

### World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday is observed on or around Oct. 4. In 2008, \$1,028,865 was given in this offering which funds scholarships for international and U.S. racial and ethnic minority graduate students.

### Native American Ministries

Native American Ministries Sunday, which will fall on April 18, 2010, nurtures mission with Native Americans and provides scholarships for United Methodist Native American seminarians. Church can celebrate this Special Sunday and take an offering on any day they choose.

Support for the United Methodist loans and scholarships can be done through local churches or online at [www.umcgiving.org](http://www.umcgiving.org). Free promotional resources, video presentations and worship resources for Special Sundays with offerings are available at the same Web site.

To learn more about United Methodist loans and scholarships, visit [www.gbhem.org/loansandscholarships](http://www.gbhem.org/loansandscholarships).

As students all over the world went back to school last month, about 300 young adults in Africa will remember 2009 as the year they did not get to go to school.

This information comes from Bishop Ernest Lyght, chair of the Africa University Board of Development Committee and the Advisory Development Committee. These student could not come up with the necessary money to expand their academic horizons at Africa University.

Many of them could not go to college because United Methodists did not give 100 percent to the Africa University Fund. [This was not the case with the Central Texas Conference where education is a priority and 100 percent of our apportioned commitment was met for 2008].

The 2008 General Conference apportioned \$10.1 million to local churches for the university's current and day-to-day operations and management. However, last year congregations paid only 90.77 percent of the apportionment, leaving a million-dollar shortfall.

Africa University continues to attract, educate and graduate strong leaders who take hope throughout

Africa and world, but the cost per student is \$5,400 annually. This covers tuition, room, board, medical care and student union fees.

For a brochure on how you and your church can help, visit [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org) and enter Africa University Fund.



### AU Student at Work

Africa University graduate Manenji Mangundu is a project coordinator for humanitarian aid working with OXFAM Great Britain to bring clean water to Kerfi, a small town in Chad located along the Sudan border, where he has seen the ravages of Darfur, which resulted in disputes over clean water.

"My biggest achievement to date," Mangundu said, "has been helping over 200,000 people in Western Darfur gain access to potable water, latrines and medicine in the face of water shortages."

### October

- 3: United Methodist Women Annual Autumn Gathering at Austin Avenue UMC, Waco
- 3: Board of Pensions at Arlington Heights UMC, Fort Worth
- 4: World Wide Communion Offering (provides scholarships for U.S. racial- and ethnic-minority and international students)
- 8: Pre-Marriage Counseling Training at Central UMC, Waco / an educational event for pastors, associate pastors, social workers, counselors
- 8: Board of Ministry at First UMC, Burleson
- 9-11: Poverty Simulation Weekend at Mission Waco (open to grades 9-12 and sponsors)
- 11: Conference UVMIM Team Leader training at First UMC, Mansfield
- 13: Extended Cabinet
- 13: Agenda Committee at Conference Center
- 14: Appointive Cabinet
- 15: Equitable Compensation Committee at Conference Center
- 17: Conference Student Leadership Team at UCF, Hill College, Hillsboro
- 17: Marcia McFee Worship Workshop at First UMC, Burleson
- 17: Conference Committee on the Episcopacy at First UMC, Fort Worth
- 24: Board of Laity at Glen Lake Camp, Glen Rose
- 29: Executive Ministry at Conference Center



## Conference Calendar

For the latest updates on the conference and youth calendars, visit regularly [www.ctcumc.org](http://www.ctcumc.org)

# Equipping for Ministry

## Training for Children/Youth Workers

A training day for children and youth workers on “Safe Sanctuaries & Sexual Misconduct prevention will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, at First United Methodist Church in Hillsboro. The training is free, but participants are asked to bring their own sack lunch.

This conference-sponsored event will focus on how the safe sanctuary topics affect those who work with children and youth and is especially geared to teachers, sponsors, interns, van drivers, mission trip workers and anyone who ever asked, “Why do we have “Safe Sanctuaries?” Contact: MaDora Ratliff by Oct. 16 at the Conference Center (817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or madora@ctcumc.org).

## Conference-sponsored Academy of Christian Education — Nov. 9-13

The 2009 Academy of Christian Education, designed for those who lead education and spiritual formation ministries in their local churches, will be held Nov. 9-13 at Still Water Lodge, Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center in Glen Rose. Last year 23 educators attended this event and were inspired, energized and equipped to do great things in Christian education.

For a brochure and registration information, visit [www.ctcumc.org](http://www.ctcumc.org) or contact Karen Granderson at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or [karen@ctcumc.org](mailto:karen@ctcumc.org).

## Small Church Leadership Institute equips laity and clergy for the future

This South Central Jurisdiction event is aimed at equipping lay and clergy with the knowledge and skills for leading their small attendance churches into the future. It will be held Nov. 15-19 at the SCJ's Mount Sequoyah retreat center in Fayetteville, Ark. For more details and to register, please visit [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org).

## Fall Leadership Summit focuses on the 5 practices that all churches need!

Imagine your church as a fruitful, vital, disciple-making congregation! Bishop Robert Schnase, the creator of the dynamic *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* book and media guidelines, will present his five practices at the Central Texas Conference-sponsored Fall Leadership Summit Saturday, Nov. 14, at First United Methodist Church of Mansfield.

Plan on bring a team from your congregation to learn more about: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service and extravagant generosity. Visit [www.ctcumc.org](http://www.ctcumc.org) for the details and registration information or contact Susan Briles at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or [susan@ctcumc.org](mailto:susan@ctcumc.org).

## Upper Room 2-year Academy for Spiritual Formation starts July 2010

Upper Room Ministries has been offering The Academy for Spiritual Formation since 1983 as an in-depth experience in Christian spiritual formation for clergy and laity. The next two-year Academy begins in July 2010 in the South Central Jurisdiction.

The Academy is an intense two-year program bringing participants together for 40 days (five days each quarter) for worship, silence, covenant groups and study. Sixteen courses form the backbone of the Academy; worship and small groups shape its heart and soul.

Once called “the best kept secret in the United Methodist Church,” an independent research study funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment confirms its effectiveness. Participants emerge with a deeper relationship with God, a better sense of self- and soul-care and more creativity and freedom for the practice of ministry.

A matching grant program, called Encouraging Spiritual Leaders, is available. All sessions will be held at the Oblate Renewal Center in San Antonio. For more information on the Academy and the grant program, please visit [www.upperroom.org/academy](http://www.upperroom.org/academy).

## Working for a WIN / WIN | Continued from page 1A

United States had become a less welcoming place to strangers.

The Statue of Liberty says, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses.” That’s the promise we make, but we aren’t living up to that promise.

That shortcoming led me to ask the Justice For Our Neighbors office for some names of people they thought might be interested in beginning a network to support immigrants, and was soon in contact with Lori Stafford, a lay person in the North Texas Conference.

We decided we would advocate for the Comprehensive Immigration Reform and started sending out messages asking people if they were interested, and met with lots of success.

In six months, the fledgling network of two has grown to well over 200 members between those on an e-mail list and the “fans” who have joined up on the WIN Facebook page. A WIN Web site is in the works.

I don’t know how, but people keep finding us, asking to be a part of this movement.

WIN’s goal is to generate

support for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. They do that through education and action.

We send out two e-mails or Facebook posts each week. One is a collection of the best articles we’ve seen on immigration during the week in order to help people become more knowledgeable.

The other is a set of the most current opportunities for taking action for the reform effort. That might be making a phone call or writing a letter or signing a petition. This is just a way to pitch in and make a difference.

WIN also organized the “Evening of Compassion” Sept. 27 at Fort Worth’s Polytechnic United Methodist Church, Fort Worth. Bishop Mike Lowry was unable to attend, but a letter of support was shared with the group. (Look for a report on this event in the next issue of *Central Link*.)

For the Central Texas Conference, WIN will serve a dual purpose. Bishop Minerva Carcano of the Desert Southwest Conference is leading the Interagency Task Force on Immigration, and is calling on each conference in the U.S. to establish a network of supporters



for Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

In the CTC, WIN will be that network. It will be used as a communication tool, especially if there are times when a “rapid response” is needed in a situation. If calls to your congressional representatives are needed quickly. Then WIN will get notification out through the network.

We have a strong head start because WIN already existed. But we need more people to step forward and ask to be added to the group. We need representation from all across the conference.

If you want to be a member of WIN, simply contact Rev. Dean Reed at [rdr17@me.com](mailto:rdr17@me.com) or 254-965-6046.

Immigration reform is a win-win prospect (pun intended). The immigrants benefit from being here, and we benefit from their presence as well. We benefit economically, culturally and, in particular, spiritually. They are Christ to us, and we need to welcome Christ in the stranger.

## Status report on conference apportionments

A review of the monthly apportionment receipts at the mid-September meeting of the Council on Finance & Administration indicate a 5 percent decline over the same period last year, according to a report by Rev. Harvey Ozmer, conference director of stewardship, finance and administration.

“Although this is a concern, we anticipate that our conference churches will meet their apportionment obligations, as historically they have,” he said.

“We recognize that these are trying times. We deeply appreciate all the churches that have already submitted their apportionments in full and those that have paid a significant percent. The ministry and administration obligations of the conference depend on consistent and regular receipts.”

He also reported that, “Our conference mailed to every church an apportionment statement along with a letter of encouragement from Bishop Lowry. We trust that you will respond positively to the ministries that change people’s lives.”

## Spotlight on History

*DID YOU KNOW?* — While the present structure of the Central Texas Conference is comprised of seven districts, since 1866 there have been 32 different districts.

They have been: Abilene, Belle Plains, Belton, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Cisco, Clarendon, Colorado, Comanche, Corsicana, Dublin, Eastland, Fort Worth, Fort Worth East, Fort Worth West, Gatesville, Georgetown, Granbury, Hillsboro, Lampasas, Mid-Cities, Northwest Colored, Palo Pinto, Pan Handle, Plainview, Springfield, Stamford, Temple, Waco, Waxahachie, Weatherford and Vernon.

The Central Texas Conference’s 100th anniversary will be observed next year with the creation of a conference history book and special anniversary events. For those who wish to make a contribution to help defray the costs, a check marked “100th Celebration” may be sent to Central Texas Conference, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107. One suggestion is for individuals to contribute \$1 per year for the number of years they have been in the bounds of the conference.

Contacts for questions or to volunteer in the anniversary observance are Rev. Henry Radde ([hradde@tmf-fdn.org](mailto:hradde@tmf-fdn.org)), Rev. Michael Patison ([mpatison@charter.net](mailto:mpatison@charter.net)) or conference archivist Carol Roszell ([carol@ctcumc.org](mailto:carol@ctcumc.org)).