



Connectional giving ... 3A



Choir returns to CTC ... 8A



**Stefanie
Schutz**

World leadership at 15 ... 5A

Recipient is sought for 2009 Annual Conference offering

Each year the Central Texas Conference receives a special offering at the Annual Conference in June. The 2009 Annual Conference will gather June 7-10 at White's Chapel United Methodist Church, Southlake.

The amount collected at past Annual Conferences has varied greatly, generally determined by the interest in the particular ministry or cause and the effectiveness of the recipient organization in promoting itself and the offering.

The Conference office of Mission Ministries is accepting requests for the 2009 offering with the recipient to be selected by the Mission Leadership Team in March.

Requests should be submitted in writing by Feb. 18 to Dr. Doyle Allen, Director of Mission Ministries, 464 Bailey, Fort Worth 76107-2153 and include:

- Name, address, e-mail, telephone and contact person of the submitting organization.
- Name and position of the person submitting the requests along with contact information (address, e-mail and telephone).
- Brief description of the mission/ministry of the organization.
- How the offering funds would be used, if selected.



Quality of life for the believer is connecting the body, mind and spirit in healthful pursuits, something Dr. Mark DeHaven has stressed in the GoodNEWS Project that has been underway in many of the Central Texas Conference congregations over the last four years.

Dr. DeHaven takes *"Improving Health and the Quality of Life"* to a higher level at the Spring Leadership Summit March 21 in Waco when he explains *"Why the Church Must Lead."* Sponsored by the Conference Mission Ministries, the Spring Summit covers a broad range of healthy life choices information — from childhood through end of life — for lay and clergy, although one track is specifically for clergy.

Scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Central United Methodist Church (5740 Bagby, Waco 76712), the Summit leads off with worship and then Dr. DeHaven in plenary session. He will illustrate the traditional connection between faith and health, and address the compelling need for people of faith to take an active leadership role today in reducing the growing worldwide epidemic of chronic disease.

Although health improvement efforts must begin among individuals and in local churches, they must also be extended beyond the church to the surrounding community and globally through mission activities — all part of The United Methodist Church's commitment for global health and stamping out diseases of poverty.

Participants in the Summit will be asked to choose among the following workshops for the remainder of the day:

☞ *Keeping the Flame Alive: How to Light a Candle Without Burning Yourself Out!* Dr. Bill Crawford, a psychologist, organizational consultant and life coach, will lead this workshop for clergy only spans across all four workshop sessions.

Taking Care ... *of the Body of Christ*

Effective clergy must have a burning passion for helping and an ability to bring enduring energy to their multiple roles. Unfortunately, given the pace of change, complexity of parish needs and increasing demands on clergy time, this has become quite difficult. Dr. Crawford goes beyond stress management to offer a step-by-step system for accessing clarity, confidence and creativity to bring the best to life and ministry.

☞ *Growing Healthy Children* — Rev. Robin Stevens, First United Methodist Church of Keller

In our fast-food, fast-paced, high achievement culture, we need to know how do we help children make healthy lifestyle choices without becoming obsessive over having a "Hollywood body," embrace their own spiritual being and inner beauty, and connect fully with God. Participants will explore ways to nurture children into leading lives that are whole, spiritual and healthy.

☞ *Living the Last Third Fully and Ending the Race Well* — Dr. Dan Bonner, Wesleyan Homes in Georgetown

Active adults over 55 years can live robust lives by harnessing wisely the physical, emotional and spiritual energy with themselves. The goal of the workshop is to examine the potential available only to Baby Boomers and beyond. Practical and challenging approaches to vital living for you and your peers in your local church are expected outcomes.

☞ *Spiritual Practices for an Integrated Life* — Rev. Bob Holloway & Rev. Judy Holloway, First United Methodist Church of Graham

What does it mean to have a spiritual life? What impact does a

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The Wilderness Way

By BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

6. Most of us enter a new year with a decided mixture of hope and fear. There is a sense of hope in the nation with the inauguration of a new president. Indeed, the title of President Obama's book, *The Audacity of Hope*, shares a word of faith. Christians, regardless of party preference, are a people who live in an audacity of hope. As a people of the resurrection, we live in hope in a way the world knows not of. Scripture say, "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you." (Peter 3:15)

At the very same time, there is reason to fear this new year. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan continue. The land we call holy is once again aflame with violence. World economy is in chaos. Closer to home, our economy makes the most audacious pause in guarded caution. Hope is fragile and precious.

This great mixture of hope and fear is a part of the wilderness way. Faithful rational Christians experience both. The continued movement of society is away from the old known Christendom culture into an unknown future.

Part of our struggle today as a church comes from the vain attempt to remain in control. Despite our best efforts, we are not in control! Thank God! One of the major tasks of the wilderness way is to be open to God's leading. The Exodus story is dramatically, redundantly clear that God is leading the people. The gospel story is clear that Jesus' ministry began with the Spirit leading him into the wilderness. The wilderness belongs to God!

The reality that we are marching toward the Red Sea (or more properly Sea of Reeds) should not be ignored. More trials lay ahead! Greater testing was before the Israelites and is before us. To those who are naive or seeking short cuts, beware! True faithfulness calls for yet greater trust!

In the midst of this movement, we need to pause to celebrate. Evidences of extravagant generosity are all around us. The Central Texas Conference finished the year financially ahead of last year. Not only did the Central Texas Conference pay out its ministry missions work to the General Church (apportionments) 100 percent, but also we contributed almost \$800,000 to second mile giving through advanced specials. (This doesn't even count the significant additional amount of Advance Specials that were paid directly by churches!) I am particularly grateful for the tremendous response we have made to our sisters and brothers suffering from Hurricane Ike in the amount of over \$53,000.

The wilderness way thrives on generosity. Generosity of spirit reflects a willingness to trust God's leading in the wilderness. To the churches of the Central Texas Conference, well done thou good and faithful servants!



283 churches meet their full connectional giving commitment

Central Texas United Methodists have once again proven to be among the finest of all in the country, Rev. Harvey Ozmer, Conference director of Finance & Administration, stated in an announcement about year end payouts.

He further announced: Even in the midst of the economic uncertainties of our time, 283 of our local churches met their Connectional Giving commitment in full (100 percent). That means 95.89 percent of the Conference budget was received — an increase of 9.09 percent over last year.

Your gifts are at work changing lives, making disciples for Christ. Here in Central Texas you make it possible for new churches to be organized, for youth to claim Christ at Glen Lake Camp, for the sick to receive needed medicine at Open Arms Ministry, just as lives are being touched in your own church.

In the world you have made it possible to sustain our missionaries stationed in almost every nation, and



Among the 100% congregations was Joshua United Methodist Church. Pastor Billy Strayhorn, left, hand checkout items to Rev. Harvey Ozmer (ar right).

you are saving thousands of lives by providing funds to "Nothing But Nets" to stamp out malaria.

Your giving funds so many other ministries. Your concern

and generosity is overwhelmingly demonstrated by the more than \$1,000,000 that you gave to advance specials and second-mile causes.

Your are making a difference for good. Thank you so much for your commitment to the Connectional Giving Program. Together, we are making a positive impact for Christ in our community and our world.

* * * * *

Thrall UMC is first again!

Thrall United Methodist Church (Temple District) is the first Conference church to remit its 2009 Connectional Giving obligation in full. This is the third consecutive years for Thrall to claim this accomplishment.

The Thrall church closed out 2008 with a membership of 19, with an average attendance in worship at 14. This small church is alive and well, and the congregation's commitment to ministry in its community and world through its connectional giving is a beacon to us all.

Conference youth Stefanie Schutz continues journal on her unique Connectional Table experience

EDITOR'S NOTE: Stefanie Schutz, a 15-year-old Central Texas Conference youth, is representing youth from all over the world as a member of the denomination's Connection Table. She will be sharing that experience with periodic updates in the Central Link. This is her second article.

Hello, everyone. This is the first time I have been able to sit down and write about my first experience with the Connectional Table. I was elected to this position back in September 2008, and had my first meeting in November in Georgia.

When I arrived in Georgia, I knew no one except Bethany Amey, the other representative from the Division on Ministry with Young People. All I knew about this weekend was that I would be in a room with 60 other people and we would start the visioning for The United Methodist Church for the next quadrennium.

We were on St. Simons Island at a United Methodist retreat center called Epworth By the Sea, right on the water. It was beautiful. The atmosphere was wonderful on the island as well as in all of our meetings. I met so many people from all over the world. We were split into covenant groups of six to seven people.

The Connection Table has four focus areas of churchwide ministry:

1. Developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.
2. Creating new places for new people by starting new congregations and renewing existing ones.
3. Engaging in ministry with the poor.
4. Stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally.

I served on a panel that made presentations on how we thought the UMC was handling these topics and what could be done and what precautions we need to take when dealing with them. I made a speech on the second day of our retreat.

I had a different view on some things, which is understandable coming from a 15 year old. I focused on having more youth leaders in the local church, and the idea of the wonderful program

called Pray With Africa. Pray With Africa is what it sounds like, pray With Africa, not for it. I invite you to visit the Pray With Africa Web site to get a better understanding of the purpose. www.praywithafrica.com.

A large amount of the weekend was getting to know each other and ourselves. We did a self assessment that categorized our strengths and allowed us to understand what kind of a person others see us as. It came down to a few words to describe each person. For example, one of mine was counselor. Taking part in this allowed us to see the strengths and diversity within the group. The Connectional Table is full of interesting people who all have something a little different to bring to the table.

Before we could start visioning, we had to establish what is already present in the UMC. We listed a countless number of good things

in the UMC. Things from the abundance of mission opportunities to the pot luck meals — everything was thrown out there.

More importantly, we discussed the things that need improvement. Some of the things thrown out in the open were more youth involvement, more new church starts and having agencies work together to accomplish more. These and many others were the topics we started to scratch the surface of. As the Connectional Table, we will work to find better ways to approach issues of The United Methodist Church using the general agencies and ourselves.

I am honored to be a part of the wonderful group that has such a big part in what goes on in our local and general church. My eyes have been opened to many views of what goes on in our church and in the world in general. I have been blessed by meeting all these amazing people that are transforming my life.



January

- 22: Extended Cabinet
- 23: Appointive Cabinet
- 24: Nurture, Outreach & Witness councils (MLT) conference call meeting
- 24: Student Leadership Team meeting at Hillsboro UCF
- 24: Weatherford District Training Event at Coutts UMC
- 25-27: United Methodist Women Legislative Event
- 25: Joint Mid-Cities/Fort Worth Districts Training Event at First UMC Arlington
- 26: Equipable Compensation Meeting
- 29: Board of Pensions Meeting
- 29-31: National Plan for Hispanic Ministries Module I Training at Acton UMC
- 29-Feb. 1: UMC Quadrennial Training Event at Jacksonville, Fla.
- 31: United Methodist Women Sing A Rainbow at Acton UMC

February

- Feb. 2: Deadline to receive resolutions and rules recommendations to come before Annual Conference
- 3: Personnel Committee
- 5: Evangelism Task Force
- 6-7: United Methodist Men's Retreat at Glen Lake
- 7-8: Youth Mid-Winters Retreat #1 at Glen Lake
- 7: GLC Board of Directors Meeting
- 9: 2010 Budget Requests Due
- 9-13: UMWIM Mission Trip to Lake Charles, La.

For the latest updates on the conference and youth calendars, visit regularly www.ctcumc.org

Virgin HealthMiles Begins 2009

The 2009 Conference HealthFlex incentive program is calling for participants to "get active and get rewards."

HealthFlex and the Center for Health is asking folks to get out, get moving, and the General Board of Pension & Health Benefits will reward them up to \$300 a year!

Getting active will help participants feel better, and that's a reward to participants too.

For more details on the program, participants are asked to visit the Conference Web site at www.ctcumc.org or to contact Shawn-Marie Riley at 817-877-5222, 800-480-8622 or shawn-marie@ctcumc.org.

2009 Hunger Ministry Grant applications are now available to fund local church hunger initiatives

Through the generous contributions from Central Texas Conference churches to last year's Thanksgiving Offering, the Conference Task Force on Hunger will be able to fund ministries initiated by local church congregations that address hunger in our communities.

If your congregation would like to initiate or build capacity for a ministry that fights hunger locally, please download the grant application at www.ctcumc.org/hunger and return it to the Conference office by March 31.

Applications will be reviewed and awards will be made in April. The Task Force on Hunger looks forward to learning about your developing programs and the blessings they will provide to your communities.

Noteworthy Items

Sam Rodriguez renews and expands CTC commitment

Samuel Rodriguez has worked for the past six years as a domestic missionary of the General Board of Global Ministries as part of the Central Texas Conference Office of Hispanic Ministries. For the next three years his role in the Conference will be expanded to conference coordinator of Hispanic Ministries.



Sam Rodriguez

Over the next three years, Rodriguez will continue to develop ministries for the ever-growing Hispanic-Latino/a population. In addition, he will supervise new Hispanic church starts under the direction of Dr. Allen Goss, Conference director of Church Growth & Development. Goss said Rodriguez's new assignment will build on the solid foundation the conference has established in Hispanic ministries first under the leadership of missionary Rev. Jeannie Trevino-Teddle and now under Rodriguez who is her successor. He said Rodriguez is available to any local church that wants to explore the opportunities for Hispanic ministries including guidance on English as a Second Language and citizenship classes.

The UMC's goals for the 2008-2012 quadrennium focus on congregational development, immigration ministry and other critical social issues and the development of lay and clergy leadership. The goals include the charter of 75 new Hispanic-Latino/a churches and the formation of 500 new faith communities and the transformation of existing churches in the area of Hispanic-Latino/a ministries. There are three church starts underway in the conference: Aldersgate UMC in Arlington, Resurrection UMC in Cleburne and Rancho Brazos in Acton. Pastors Carlos Careaga and Victor Pena serve these churches.

Vacation Bible School programs/discounts

Joyce Brown, Cokesbury, curriculum consultant, will be offering hands-on previews (one already past) of Cokesbury's 2009 Vacation Bible School — CAMP E.D.G.E. (Experiencing & Discovering God Everywhere). A 20 percent discount will be given on all VBS resources ordered at these events. For more details, contact Brown at 817-249-2526 or joyce@danbrownart.com.

- Saturday, Jan. 24, at Couets UMC, Weatherford (802 N. Elm) Previews at 11:10 a.m. and 2:10 p.m. during Weatherford Dist. training
- Sunday, Jan. 25, at First UMC, Early (1073 Early Blvd.) Preview at 3:45 p.m. during Brownwood Dist. training
- Saturday, Jan. 31, at Fort Worth Cokesbury Store (6333 Camp Bowie) 10 a.m.-3 p.m. with Brown in the store to answer questions, gather resources
- Sunday, Feb. 8, at First UMC Belton (205 E. 3rd Ave.) 2-5 p.m. workshop on "Curriculum Choices for Children; VBS, Sunday School and more as part of Temple Dist. training
- Sunday, Feb. 22, at Lorena UMC (205 S. Bordon) 3-5 p.m. workshop with discount on VBS resources

24 Central Texans to attend quadrennial training

More than 120 United Methodist leaders — about 24 from Central Texas — are expected to attend the church's quadrennial training event in Jacksonville, Fla., Jan. 29-Feb. 1.

Living the United Methodist Way: Turning Worlds Upside-Down (www.umcquadtraining.org) is the theme for the pivotal gathering that will help the denomination's 8 million U.S. members live out the four areas of focus adopted by the 2008 General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body.

"Through this gathering, conference leaders will begin to see how their particular ministry roles relate to the big picture," according to Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, top executive for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship. "As we move from vision to reality, we want and need a seamless integration of our shared values of what it means to live the United Methodist way to cascade throughout United Methodism," she added. "It is in living the United Methodist way that we can once again turn worlds upside down."

Coming out of the 2008 General Conference a movement was set in motion to reinvigorate The United Methodist Church with emphasis on leadership development, congregational development, elimination of poverty in communities with the poor and global health.

Taking Care | Continued from page 1A

spiritual life have for our daily routines? This worship will focus on spiritual practices and strategies for the 21st century that shape personal and congregational life.

☞ *Community Gardening: The Act of Inspiring and Transforming Communities Through Gardening* — Dr. Don Lambert, a longtime gardener and Peace Corps worker in agricultural/rural health projects, and Rebecca Smith, one of the founders of Our Saviour Community Garden with a vision to "plot against hunger."

The two presenters show how gardeners in community development, church members, neighbors and area volunteers can accomplish small miracles by establishing a working group in a community gardening project.

☞ *Feed the Body, Free the Mind* — Sheri Zorrilla, practicing dietitian who provides nutrition care to those suffering from disordered eating and eating disorders. Discover how to free you mind from constant food worries and anxiety by learning to nourish your body with love and delicious foods.

☞ *You Gotta Have Heart* — Jim Reeves, popular sports writer from *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, will disclose his own personal challenge with heart disease and surgery. He will share, along with medical professionals, insights and wisdom on how best to care for one's heart.

☞ *Special People, Special Needs* — A panel of representatives from Aldersgate Enrichment Center in Brownwood, Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio and Advocates for Special People (with centers at Epworth and St. Stephen's United Methodist churches in Arlington)

It is not uncommon for local churches to have members with mental retardation or severe developmental needs. This workshop deals with how best to support teens and young adults who have these challenges. There will be resources for congregations and families.

☞ *When Winter Comes: Hospice and Palliative Care: Death Is a Part of Life* — Theresa Luby, chaplain with Community Hospice for the last 20 years. "Hospice care neither hastens death nor prolongs life, but strives to make death a natural part of life," according to Community Hospice. With offices in Waco, Fort

Worth, Cleburne, Mexia and Burleson, Community Hospice is the oldest non-profit hospice in Texas. This workshop will deal with how best to assist the dying and their families.

☞ *The Recovering Church* — Representatives of United Methodist congregations will share their experiences, strengths and hopes in recovery. White's Chapel UMC in Southlake has Celebrate Recovery and Alcoholics Anonymous; Smithfield UMC in North Richland Hills has both Alcoholics and Emotions Anonymous groups.

John Wesley saw the church as a place of healing for body, mind and emotion as well as spirit. Although recovery groups appeared years after Wesley, most reflect elements of early Methodist classes and instruction.

Brochures with registration forms are available on the Conference Web site at www.ctcumc.org. Early bird registration (by March 6) is \$20/person or \$15/person with 10 or more from one church; \$25/person by March 13 and \$30/person after March 13. No child care will be available. Please direct questions to Susan Briles at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or susan@ctcumc.org.

Hope for Africa Children's Choir returns to CTC for 2009 Spring tour

Last year the Hope for Africa Children's Choir toured the U.S. for the first time, performing across the country and at General Conference. Some Central Texas congregations may have been fortunate to see one of their performances.

These incredible children will be back in the U.S. for a 2009 tour to promote the Humble United Methodist School in Uganda and to raise awareness about orphans and vulnerable children throughout Africa. More about the children and the school can be seen at www.hopeforafricachildrenchoir.org.

The choir will begin its second U.S. tour in Texas during March and April. Churches in our conferences have the opportunity to host this group. Rebecca Harrison, a member of Silver Creek United Methodist Church in Azle, will be coordinating the Texas portion of the choir's tour.

Host churches will need to provide housing (preferably with



host families), meals, everyday needs for the children, and transportation while the choir is with them, including transportation to the city in which the church is located.

The choir brought about 25 children and 10 adults in 2008, so a bus will most likely be required at some point. The choir also brings its own teachers, so a space for daily education and playtime would be needed.

Based on their tour last year, the choir would like to have several performances throughout the week during which they can raise funds to send children to the Humble United Methodist School in Uganda. They

will need volunteers to help with sound and stage set up, as well as the sale of African crafts they will bring as additional fundraisers for friends and family back home.

Ideally, Rebecca would like to find churches that can host the choir for a full week, although she is flexible. Please prayerfully consider this opportunity for your church.

For more details, contact Rebecca Harrison at Rebecca@silvercreekumc.org or 951-231-7278. Rebecca and her husband Eric traveled to Uganda in late 2008 to visit the choir and school, and have a very special relationship with this group.