



*A life of giving, not receiving.
Caring, not crisis.
Spirituality, not materiality.
Grace, not greed.*

Message of hope ... 4A



New leadership ... 5A



Spring Summit ... 8A

Just where do we draw the line?

Just where do we draw the line?

Leaders of The United Methodist Church have been asking themselves this question ever since Episcopal area boundaries came into question at the 2004 General Conference. When delegates met in Fort Worth last spring for the 2008 General Conference, they approved the reduction of one Episcopal area in each of the five jurisdictions.

Subsequently, the Western, North Central, Northeastern, South Central and Northeastern jurisdictions (see map at right) took this mandate under advisement when the jurisdictional conferences met last summer. Since the number of bishops serving a jurisdiction is based on the number of church members, United Methodists in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, where membership has been declining, were ready last summer to make recommendations to redraw their denominational boundaries as a way of providing more effective mission and ministry.

Although the Northeastern Jurisdiction could lose another 50,000 church members over the next few years, Bishop Jane Middleton of the Harrisburg (Pa.) Area said in her Episcopal address that the realignment “is positioning us to do ministry in new ways” and “this is a model for us to be willing to



move into God’s future.”

Under the mandate to reduce episcopal areas, the South Central Jurisdiction will redraw boundaries to create 10 areas from the current 11 areas (see map on page 8A):

- Central Texas
- North Texas
- Southwest Texas/Rio Grande
- Northwest Texas/New Mexico
- Arkansas
- Oklahoma

- Missouri
- Kansas East/West
- Nebraska
- Louisiana
- Texas

The College of Bishops within each jurisdiction will undertake the difficult task of redrawing the episcopal boundaries, but they would like to hear comments and ideas

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Your Invitation to the Discussion

You are invited to share your comments — or just listen to the discussion — when Bishop Janice Huie of the Houston Episcopal Area (Texas Annual Conference) leads a discussion and examination of options for redrawing boundaries in the South Central Jurisdiction.

10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturday, March 28
First United Methodist Church, Fort Worth

This is a working lunch with a light meal served — your pre-payment of \$6/person serves as your lunch reservation. Send check by March 15 to: Office of the Bishop, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth 76107. Please make your check payable to “Office of the Bishop.”

Average for Episcopal Areas by Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Sq. Miles	Membership ('06)	Area Population	# of Churches	# of Charges
Western	151,972	64,310	10,680,198	397	340
South Central	70,723	159,273	4,173,073	706	545
North Central	49,376	143,447	5,550,060	485	363
Southeastern	32,871	219,184	4,810,671	1,136	888
Northeastern	20,473	128,127	5,775,204	595	459



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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

9. When my main image for what the church is facing is taken from the Exodus story and entitled *The Wilderness Way*, there are a number of other images applicable to our situation. One is of a seagoing voyage. In fact, some have characterized the church as the *Titanic* — “a ship about to sink but unaware of its fate.” (David Kinnaman and Bage Lyons, *UnChristian*, p. 121).

The Bible is quite aware of such images. Look at the image from the 27th chapter of the Book of Acts of the Apostle Paul’s perilous nautical voyage to give his witness in the capital city of Rome. It is there he will offer his greatest triumph in the name of Christ and give his life as a martyr’s witness. Instead of the church as the *Titanic* going down for the last time, the metaphor of Acts 27 is the church sailing through a storm.

Jettison the image of the *Titanic*. Embrace the voyage of the Apostle Paul to a new future prepared by God. The church is set sail on a new ocean of possibility and promise. It is perilous. We are sailing through a storm. Wind and waves batter us at every turn. The ship is leaking and creaking. There is, we must confess, dissension among the crew.

Passengers and other space holders on deck are mutinous. Some think that if we can just get a new executive officer (Pastor) everything will be okay. (Please note that the Captain is Christ!) Others, typically executive officers, think that if we can just get a new crew (translate leadership) we’ll make it.

Still others are convinced that we need to jettison the passengers (think pew place holders) and the ship will sail more smoothly. Some go so far as to say that if we chuck the cargo overboard (translate the unconverted and society in general) then we will have no more worries.

There are even some who advocate abandoning ship. (This means forsaking the church and by implication the gospel of Christ). If there is no more ship to care about then our problems are solved, they assert.

We can just float like rubber ducks on the surface of the cultural storms. While appealing, this *Kon Tiki* solution is hardly storm surviving. Even the most culturally embracing among us recognizes the utter shipwreck of such a solution.

The back to Egypt committee (or if you prefer the *Mayflower* image, the back to England commission) has many adherents. We do not know what the future holds. We really don’t! However unseen to us this day, the promised land of a new world lies in the future.

Let the image of Acts 27 guide our voyage. It is the story for sailing through a storm. I submit this is a better metaphor for what we are both facing and going through. We are not the *Titanic* plowing into an iceberg, but the fellowship (fellows, people, in the same ship) sailing through a storm. There are learnings to be gained for our time that guide, comfort and challenge us.

- They did not hide in the false safety of harbor.
- They acknowledged the reality of their voyage.
- They risked storms.
- They learned again to radically trust God.
- They fed each other.
- They resisted the temptation to execute the messenger. (Reject scape-goating)
- God will bring us safely to shore.



A message from the Conference treasurer

BY REV. HARVEY OZMER

TREASURER/DIRECTOR, CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE COUNCIL ON STEWARDSHIP, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Before I was born, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

As we are experiencing the uncertainty of the stock market, loss of jobs and home foreclosures, it is easy to allow fear to take center stage. And as it does, it can well begin to creep into our view of church finance.

But, let me remind you of the words of John Wesley who from his deathbed said, “The best of all is, God is with us!”

It is faith, not fear, that will see us through these times. I believe it. I believe that with my whole heart.

I am reminded of the Exodus. In Exodus 16:2-4 the Israelites complained bitterly to Moses that he had brought them into the

wilderness to die. Their complaints were fueled by the fact that they were starving. Then God provided bread from heaven ... and each day the people would go out and gather enough for that day.

The real truth for the church is this: God still is providing enough for each day ... for as we share our gifts we live in abundance, not scarcity. As Christians, ours is a life

of giving, not receiving.

Caring, not crisis.

Spirituality, not materiality.

Grace, not greed.

As Conference treasurer, I want to thank all of you for your commitment to God and the Church. Thank you for the many ways that you are in ministry in your community and your support of connectional giving that enables Christ’s work of changing lives to continue around the world.

Georgia Adamson, Gary Lindley, Bob Holloway, Ginger Bassford are named to new conference leadership roles

Changes in several top leadership positions within the Central Texas Conference have been precipitated by the retirement of two council executive directors and one district superintendent rotating off the Cabinet.

Bishop Mike Lowry announced Feb. 23 the appointment of Dr. Georgia Adamson to the dual positions of assistant to the bishop and executive director of Mission Ministries and Rev. Gary Lindley to executive director of Church Growth & Development.

Adamson, currently superintendent of the Weatherford District, succeeds Dr. Doyle R. Allen who served as assistant to the bishop and executive director of Mission Ministries for eight years. Lindley, currently superintendent of the Fort Worth District, succeeds Dr. J. Allen Goss who, besides leading Church Growth & Development since 2003, also chaired the 2008 General Conference Host Committee.

Appointed to the Fort Worth and Weatherford district positions they are vacating are Dr. Robert "Bob" Holloway, who has been serving as senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of Graham since March 2006, and Dr. Virginia "Ginger" Bassford who has been senior pastor at Alliance United Methodist Church since 2005.

Dr. Clifton Howard will be rotating off the Cabinet after serving the maximum eight years in superintendency, first in the Brownwood District and now in the Waco District. His successor will be named at a later date.

The changes are effective with the 2009 Annual Conference June 7-10.

Dr. Georgia Adamson

In her new dual role, Adamson will be addressing the greatest challenges facing The United Methodist Church today. "The first challenge," she states, "is leadership, leadership, leadership."

"We need leaders in our churches and at the conference level who can recapture the spiritual roots of their calling and ensure that those who assume new roles of leadership are persons of active faith committed to their own and other's discipleship. We need courageous risk takers who are women and men of vision, who think missionally, and who can articulate and put in place strategies for effective and systemic change."

Becoming missionally driven is second on her list of priorities. "We must recognize as Paul Borden states in his book, *Hit the Bullseye*, 'The primary function of a church is not to be family.' In reality the primary



Dr. Georgia Adamson



Rev. Gary Lindley



Dr. Bob Holloway



Dr. Ginger Bassford

function is to be a community on a mission," she stresses. "The local church is God's primary unit of mission in the world. We need to see ourselves as missionaries placed in a fertile mission field ... to fulfill the Great Commission."

Additionally, she believes "the conference exists to be an agent for congregational reproduction, transformation and helping local congregations network and direct mission dollars. "We have to get this right," she said. "We must put God's agenda above our own!"

In considering her own preparation for the new role, Adamson said, "I believe everything about who we are is part of God's preparation. As a person who lived outside the church and without an understanding of God as relevant to my life until I was well into my adult years, I think I have some insight into how non-Christian or unchurched persons think."

That perspective has been broadened with her servant leadership in the local church and more recently as a superintendent.

"The work I have done for the last three years with Gil Rendle and the Texas Methodist Foundation has strengthened my resolve about needed

changes and encouraged me to use my gifts more boldly," she states.

Rev. Gary Lindley

"This is an exciting time in The United Methodist Church," states Lindley. "Several weeks ago, I attended the New Church Leadership Institute where, looking over the crowd of young men and women, I could see the excitement as they listened to new start pastors share their stories."

"I am committed," he pledged, "to Path 1 and I want to see our Annual Conference fully supporting the efforts to start new churches as well as working with established congregations in the hard work of transformation."

Lindley is a good fit for Church Growth since he began his ministry in Central Texas as a new start pastor. He was the first full-time pastor at Acton UMC, helped to restart Covenant UMC, and was the founding pastor at St. Philips UMC in Round Rock.

"These experiences have definitely prepared me for this new task," Lindley said, adding that "also serving as a district superintendent has broadened

my understanding of the Annual Conference and has enabled me to see the need for new churches and the transformation of many of our established churches."

Dr. Robert "Bob" Holloway

As he assumes the Fort Worth District superintendency, Holloway says he is drawn to the need of the church and its members to be formed into the likeness of Christ for the sake of others. "Bishop Lowry comes to us as that sort of visionary spiritual leader and I am glad to have the chance to be a part of that mission," he states. "The challenge we face today is the church's need to witness, to develop principled leaders and to relieve suffering in the world," he states.

Holloway's ministry began in 1971 with appointment to the Chatfield/Barry charge, and continued with pastorates at seven churches and a stint as Waco District superintendent from 1996 to 1998. "God has prepared me for this new role through the churches of various sizes I have served, but also through my work with the systems-based 'Healthy Congregations' which focuses on churches in transition." He also cites his work with the Upper Room Academies of Spiritual Formation — Methodism's best kept secret in terms of life changing and enhancing growth, he says.

Dr. Virginia "Ginger" Bassford

In accepting her new position as superintendent of the Weatherford District, Bassford cites three areas of challenge for the church today.

"I think The United Methodist Church has many opportunities today to reclaim the passion and fire that first caused us to be named Methodists! We also have the opportunities to claim responsibility for our lives and our behavior as Christians, and to overcome the notion that the perfect pastor and the perfect church exist in reality."

In recalling her own preparation for servant leadership, Bassford says she has served churches as small as 10 members — where they installed indoor plumbing so they could start having Sunday school again — to her current congregation of nearly 1,000 members.

"Every church I have served has had a wonderful and valuable lessons to teach me," she states. "I have been in all kinds of churches, and have been blessed by each of them in one way or another."



Conference Calendar

- March**
- 7: Mission Ministries Leadership Team Annual Meeting at Arborlawn UMC, Fort Worth
 - 10: Extended Cabinet
 - 10: Appointment Beyond the Local Church/ Extension Ministries Annual Meeting & Luncheon, location to be determined
 - 11-13: Appointive Cabinet
 - 12: Deadline for reports to be included in the Annual Conference Preliminary Report
 - 20-22: United Methodist Women Spiritual Growth Retreat at Lakeview Assembly Retreat Center
 - 21: "Taking Care ... of the Body of Christ" Spring Leadership Summit at Central UMC, Waco
 - 22: One Great Hour of Sharing Offering at all churches
 - 23: Weatherford District clergy meeting at First Weatherford UMC
 - 25: Conference Personnel Structure/ Compensation Benefits Task Force at Conference Center
 - 26: Council on Finance & Administration
 - 26-28: Young Adult Mission Team to Aldersgate Enrichment Center
 - 28: 2nd Chance Prom at Venus UMC
- April**
- 1-2: Appointive Cabinet
 - 4: Conference Board of Laity at Glen Lake
 - 4: A Great Day of Service / one day mission event for UM youth in the Metroplex

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

Noteworthy Items

Draw the line | Continued from page 1A

A Great Day of Service

Join United Methodist youth from around the Central Texas Conference for a one-day mission event on April 4. The event opens at 8 a.m. with breakfast and worship at Polytechnic United Methodist Church in east Fort Worth, and then breaks off into small groups to serve the many ministries of the Metropolitan Board of Missions.

The Metro Board, the Student Leadership Team and CTC Youth in Mission are jointly sponsoring this event. For group registration forms and more details, please visit www.ctcumc.org/greatday.

Spring Leadership Summit March 21 will focus on Health & Wellness theme

The Conference Spring Leadership Summit focuses this year on health and wellness — “Taking Care ... of the Body of Christ” — Saturday, March 21, at Central United Methodist Church, Waco.

While this program, sponsored by the Conference’s Mission Ministries, will benefit both clergy and laity, the track on “Keeping the Flame Alive: How to Light a Candle Without Burning Yourself Out,” is geared specifically to clergy and extends over the period of three workshops. It will be led by Dr. Bill Crawford, a noted psychologist and author from Houston.

Dr. Mark DeHaven, well known for leading the GoodNEWS Project for church of the Central Texas Conference over the past four years, will present the opening plenary. In “Improving Health and the Quality of Life: Why the Church Must Lead,” he will outline 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.

Participants will spend the remainder of the day with four workshop choices listed below, while clergy will attend Crawford’s three sessions with one remaining choice for the fourth workshop of the day. For more details and a registration form, please visit www.ctcumc.org. The workshops choices are:

- Keeping the Flame Alive: How to Light a Candle Without Burning Yourself Out (CLERGY)
- Growing Healthy Children
- Living the Last Third Fully and Ending the Race Well
- Spiritual Practices for an Integrated Life
- Community Gardening: The Act of Inspiring/Transforming Communities Through Gardening
- Feed the Body, Free the Mind
- You Gotta Have Heart
- Special People, Special Needs
- When Winter Comes: Hospice and Palliative Care: Death Is a Part of Life
- The Recovering Church

“The Shack” author to visit Breckenridge UMC

William Paul Young, author of the popular and controversial book *The Shack*, will be a special guest in the Breckenridge community March 23. A number of churches have been using this book for Sunday school class and small-group studies.

Young will speak and answer questions about the book and the theology it embraces at 7 p.m. March 23 in the Breckenridge High School’s Bailey Auditorium, 500 W. Lindsey, Breckenridge 76424.

Tickets for the event are available online at <http://firstumcbreckenridge.tix.com>. There is a package deal that includes one hardback book per couple, special seating and admittance to a private reception.

Glen Rose UMC, one more time!

In the last issue of *Central Link*, an article about the new sanctuary at First United Methodist Church of Glen Rose failed to mention that the pastor is Rev. David Leach. A familiar name to many in the conference is Mike Ford, former director of Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, who served as chairman of the Glen Rose church’s building committee.



from as many church members as possible as an important part of the process.

For that reason, Bishop Mike Lowry has invited Bishop Janice Huie of the Texas Annual Conference (Houston Episcopal Area) to lead a discussion and examination of the options Saturday, March 28, at First United Methodist Church, Fort Worth. Bishop Lowry will act as scribe, noting the input of concerned United Methodists in the Fort Worth Episcopal Area (Central Texas Annual Conference). Likewise, Bishop Lowry will conduct the discussion and examination of options for the Houston Episcopal Area meeting at another time while Bishop Huie acts as scribe.

All those who are interested in the redrawing of episcopal area boundaries are invited to attend. There will be a \$6 per person charge for the working lunch, with a prepaid lunch reservation deadline of March 15. Please make check payable to Office of the Bishop and mail to: Office of the Bishop, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth 76107.

“I believe as we examine the options before us, none are without price, none are easy,” states Bishop Lowry. “There is a great deal of complexity in any choice we might opt for as a jurisdiction.”

In order to be prepared for the discussion, Bishop Lowry recommends participants view the study prepared by Dr. Lovett Weems of the Lewis Leadership Center, Wesley Theological

South Central Jurisdiction



Seminary. He has been working with the South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops to guide their process of listening and discernment as they enact the General Conference mandate for episcopal area reductions.

Survey data completed at the SCJ meeting last July and online is shown, in part, with this article and in detail at www.churchleadership.com and choosing “Research.” The report is entitled “South Central Jurisdiction Episcopal Area Study.”

In a report to the SCJ Conference last July in Dallas, the College of Bishops said they are being guided by the following principles:

- Mission. Everything we do is shaped by our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- A More Vital, Faithful and Fruitful United Methodist Witness.

We envision an outcome of our work being a stronger United Methodist presence and witness.

- Listening to God. Prayer and discernment must undergird and shape all of our deliberations.

- Listening to Everyone Affected. One way we will listen to God is by listening to one another across the jurisdiction to hear the wisdom God has given each of us on this matter.

The bishops will be looking for feedback on additional considerations that surfaced through surveys at the SCJ Conference and online. A familiarity with these four tiers of feedback will be helpful for those who wish to participate in the discussion.

Survey reports and statistical data available at www.churchleadership.com.

Episcopal Areas of the South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Area	Sq. Miles	Membership ('06)	Area Population	# of Churches	# of Charges
NW Texas/NM	216,829	104,087	4,107,720	366	315
Kansas	83,040	158,672	2,757,854	702	492
San Antonio	82,883	119,759	5,554,701	440	382
Nebraska	72,673	82,000	1,754,865	399	242
Oklahoma	68,667	244,986	3,547,884	625	509
Missouri	68,384	171,431	5,782,112	892	644
Arkansas	52,068	138,814	2,779,154	700	477
Houston	45,759	285,652	7,369,532	706	545
Louisiana	43,562	125,637	4,523,628	524	353
Fort Worth	26,794	161,471	3,318,491	317	254
Dallas	17,294	159,490	4,407,857	325	275