



HACC back in Texas ... 5A



Suicide prevention ... 5A



Fall fund raisers ... next issue

In hard times, theological schools increase scholarship funds

The 13 United Methodist theological schools have increased scholarship support for their students by nearly 10 percent to keep students on campus despite the recession — even as the seminaries have faced dwindling endowments and decreasing funds from the church.

For the 2009-2010 academic year, the theological schools awarded nearly \$27.9 million in scholarships, a 9.8 percent increase from the \$25.4 million awarded in 2008-2009, according to figures compiled by the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools.

Dean Maxine Clarke Beach of The Theological school at Drew University said that means the 13 UM institutions are giving more in scholarships than they receive from the Ministerial Education Fund.

The MEF is the churchwide apportionment fund that provides educational support for United Methodist ordained elders and deacons and assists theological schools and clergy recruitment. Twenty-five percent of the apportionment is retained in the annual conference for professional development, continuing education of clergy and clergy retirement. — *Excerpt from story by Vicki Brown*

Two events hold promise for young people as they discern and pursue their future paths

Exploration 2009
Nov. 13-15 • Dallas Sheraton

Online registration, GBHEM scholarships and YouTube videos at www.gbhem.org/exploration

Often times, it's the people in the local church who are mindful of the young people in their midst who show a gift for spiritual leadership. These fellow members can use this opportunity to encourage them to pursue ministry as a career path.

Now is the time for church leaders to help in identifying those future leaders, whether it be clergy or lay ministry, and to ask the important questions:

"Who in my congregation/class/group has shown spiritual gifts and graces and love of Christ?"

"How is God calling you to use your gifts?"

As of the end of August, 11 young people who are a part of the Central Texas Conference Student Leadership Team have already registered for Exploration 2009, a three-day event for high school seniors and young adults up to age 24 to hear, discern and respond to God's call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in the UMC.

Others who wish to explore

this possibility for their future will want to check out the scholarships offered through the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry. Their deadline is Sept. 9. The CTC Student Leadership Team is offering up to five scholarships. Plus, as part of the denomination's focus on developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world, the Texas Methodist Foundation has offered to provide 10 scholarships to young people who wish to attend the event Nov. 13-15 at the Dallas Sheraton Hotel. Transportation to the event in Dallas will be provided from two locations in the Central Texas Conference — Waco and Weatherford.

For more details on scholarships and how to connect with the free transportation, please contact Joy Roberson, CTC youth director, at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or joy@ctcumc.org.

Visit www.gbhem.org/exploration for YouTube videos and registration. Who will your congregation be sending to Exploration 2009?

College/University Preview Event
10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sept. 12 at MCH, Waco

As high school juniors and seniors contemplate where they will be applying for their continued studies, the Central Texas Conference Task Force on Higher Education is making it convenient for them to consider the value of choosing a United Methodist-related school.

To this end, the task force is sponsoring the 2009 College/University/Seminary Preview Event Sept. 12 on the campus of Methodist Children's Home in Waco.

Twenty six exhibitors will be on hand to visit with students and their parents and answer questions about their specific schools, campus life and campus ministry programs.

Lon Morris College in Jacksonville, Tex., is the one two-year college represented. It has served well as a college entry point for many students from the Central Texas Conference who go on to four-year programs, some even on to seminary. Lon Morris also offers a substantial Bishop's Scholarship each year to a deserving student in the CTC.

Besides the four-year colleges and universities represented from Texas, Louisiana, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Mississippi there will be three seminaries prepared to address the questions of those who may be contemplating a career in

ministry. They are Perkins School of Theology, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Brite Divinity School.

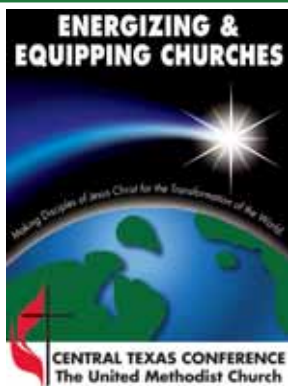
Campus ministries and chaplains represented will be those that are a part of the Central Texas Conference plus Southern Methodist University, Denton Wesley Foundation and Oklahoma State University Wesley Foundation.

Besides the Exhibit Hall there will be focused sessions for students and their parents.

The Student Session will feature a panel of current college students (Stefani Reed from Texas A&M University, Courtney Thompson from Texas Christian University and Payton Carter from Lon Morris) with Jeff Jones, CTCYM director, as moderator. They will be prepared to address adjusting to college life, what surprises they encountered, how to thrive not merely survive, and to answer the preview students' specific questions.

The Parent Session will focus on scholarship and loan opportunities, financial aid, how to fill out government financial assistance forms, and meaningful ways to stay connected with their student.

Light snacks and bottled water will be available.



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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

20. The wilderness way must be constantly nourished and fed by the leadership of the living Lord. Attentiveness to God's design and desires is always central, but even more so in the face of an uncertain future. Such attentiveness is nourished by heightened worship and spiritual connectedness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Once again, the biblical story of Exodus is instructive. Pursued by the Egyptians, God miraculously delivers the people from Pharaoh's army in the crossing of the sea. The Bible records that "Moses and the Israelites sang this song to tell the Lord."¹ The 15th chapter of Exodus records the song of Moses and the Israelites as well as the song of Miriam. Both are songs of worship and praise in the triumph of God. "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation." With tambourine and dance, Miriam and the women echo the exultant praise of God. This is the ethos — the mood, the spirit — with which they enter the wilderness.

They would teach us that we too must travel in the wilderness with exultant worship. Consider where they are. They have escaped Pharaoh's army but are not in the holy land. While the victory is miraculous and joyous, they are now in the desolation of the wilderness.

The first order of business is about worshipping God and acknowledging the structure. The first order of business is about worshipping God and acknowledging the leadership of the Lord. It is so tempting in our own wilderness to restructure, hoard resources or argue about leadership. The biblical story reminds us that the first order of business is exultant, joyous worship that acknowledges God alone as Lord and ruler of our lives.

What follows in the tale of the exodus adds critical and yet similar insight to our situation in the early part of the 21st century. Three days into the journey they found themselves crying out for water. "And the people cried out against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' He cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet."²

Three days into the journey they are complaining! It is reminiscent of a child on a trip asking before you have even left the city limits if they are at journey's end! Provisioning comes from the Lord. Over and over again this lesson has to be learned. God truly does provide and provision. Like our

Israelite ancestors of old, we learn and relearn and learn again to truly trust God.

The church will get smaller before it get larger. We will lose those who have only signed on for the easy walk. The wilderness way challenges us with the tough unknown. But, the even greater challenge is that we are called to rely upon God in ways we have not often had to do. It is worth wondering: have we seen so few miracles because we have had so little need? The provisioning from God does not come at our beck. The Lord's provisioning is even present in our time of genuine reliance upon God.

After the miracle of the sweet water, a strange thing happens. The second part of the story continues: "There the Lord made for them a statute and ordinance."³ Pause and reflect on the importance of that statement. It does not say that they made rules and laws. At the start of the wilderness journey God claimed their allegiance. The application applies to us as well, no longer is casual allegiance to God sufficient.

This test and benefit is now visited upon us. The day of casually being Christian is over (or rapidly fading in those regions that still cling to waning vestiges of Christendom). It is a test because now we are challenged by our very culture on the most basic issue of belief. Do we place our ultimate and primary allegiance in God?

The wilderness journey is marked in Exodus by exuberant joy-filled worship. Regular worship is the first and most basic response of a Christian. The test is basic; it is concrete. Do we regularly, devoutly and exuberantly, expectantly and reverently worship God? Worship is no longer a casual part of the Sunday schedule. It is a primary test of commitment and allegiance. In worship we are not only spiritually fed. In worship we also make (and renew) a primary pledge of allegiance. The commandment to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy"⁴ has not been repealed.

- 1 Exodus 15:1
- 2 Exodus 15:24-25
- 3 Exodus 15:25



Rev. Ben Disney, pastor at Arborlawn UMC, tells why he stopped asking the "why" questions a long time ago

Why I stopped asking "Why?" a long time ago. Most of the conversations I have with people begin with the question "Why?"

Why did this happen to such a good person? Why does God allow such terrible things to occur? Why doesn't God answer my prayers? Why doesn't God protect us from the terrible things that happen? Why am I a person of faith if my faith doesn't seem to make any difference in what happens to me or the people I love?

I used to try to answer the questions, but it gradually dawned

on me that at best the answers were trite and superficial and at worst inherently disingenuous.

I don't know why some things happen. I can't explain why some people suffer through unimaginable illnesses and tragedies and others seem to skate through life relatively unscathed.

If you're looking for the answer to the ancient question of "Why?" there's a good chance you're going to be severely disappointed and greatly disillusioned. A lot of people turned and walked away from Jesus when they weren't satisfied with the

answers he gave. A lot of people through the centuries have given up on the church because they expected to find the answer and were disappointed when they didn't.

I finally stopped asking the question "Why?" and started asking the more important question "What?" Given what has happened, what does God want me to do? What is my response as a follower of Jesus to this terrible thing that has happened? What will I do now as a person of faith in light of what I cannot change?

At this juncture in my life, I

spend a lot of time on my knees praying and even more time walking toward where I believe God is urging me to go.

When I dwell too long on the question of "Why?" I sound more and more like a helpless victim. When I turn and begin asked "What?" I become closer to what I believe Jesus wants me to do and be. When we finally begin asking the question "What?" it's the moment we start becoming the church.

Hope for Africa Children's Choir returns to Central Texas

By JENNIFER BELLAMY
DIRECTOR OF HUMANITARIAN SERVICES

Several Central Texas Conference congregations, led by Silver Creek United Methodist Church, recently provided Texas-size hospitality to the Hope for Africa Children's Choir (HACC), part of the Humble United Methodist School in Uganda.

The children, ages five through 11, were given a brief respite from a rigorous performance schedule during a six-month U.S. tour. They enjoyed the circus, a Fort Worth Cats baseball game, lots of swimming and spending time with host families during their 10-day stay in Central Texas.

The group did, however, bless the conference with their music ministry during worship services and a concert at St. Barnabas United Methodist Church in Arlington on Aug. 12. The children sang, danced and shared poems about youth and their relationships with God.

More importantly, they educated the audience about the challenges of extreme poverty in Africa as well as how churches can provide relief by supporting the



Humble School and its HACC Music Academy.

During a time of answering questions about their lives in Africa and their experiences in the U.S., Rev. Randy Wild asked the children about their homelands of Uganda, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

One choir member, whose mother died giving birth to her, said that God had chosen her to be in the choir and so had given her the gift of song, a place to sleep, food and the ability to go to school.

You can help these and many other children attending the

Humble School through vital financial contributions to the following special advance projects:

- Advance #3020785 - Hope for Africa Children's Choir Music Academy
- Advance #14191A - Humble United Methodist School & Vocational High School Sponsorship Program
- Advance #3020781 - Humble United Methodist Vocational High School

Your church treasurer may send donations to these advances to the CTC treasurer.

The Humble School is also currently seeking support for three

immediate projects: a wall around the perimeter of the campus; plumbing for several water tanks on the property; and an agricultural program to grow food for the students as well as teach them skills for a possible vocation in agriculture.

For more information about HACC or the immediate projects listed earlier, visit www.hopeforafricachildrenchoir.org or contact Rebecca Harrison at Rebecca@silvercreekumc.org.

The Humble school provides both primary and secondary education to orphans and vulnerable children from the five countries that comprise the East Africa Annual Conference — Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan and Kenya. The choir, through its American tours, plays a key role in raising awareness and funds for these children.

The lyrics of one song the choir performed at St. Barnabas are: "So blessed, I can't contain it/So blessed, I've got to give it away .../ Lord, you're more than enough for me!" As the children counted their blessings, it was the recipients of their ministry of song that evening who were truly blessed.

Chaplains are on the front lines in suicide prevention

By VICKI BROWN*
GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER
EDUCATION & MINISTRY

Anything a soldier tells a chaplain is confidential and that fact is the single biggest reason clergy are on the front lines of the U.S. Army's suicide prevention efforts, United Methodist chaplains say.

"Chaplains have specialized training and are gatekeepers for the prevention programs," said Chaplain Lt. Col. Scott Weichl, behavior health program manager at the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

"Many folks come and talk to us. We are not judgmental, and many who have had serious difficulties just need someone to talk to. We try to discern, to triage who needs to see someone with special training and skills," said Weichl, who is a United Methodist chaplain.

The Army stepped up suicide prevention efforts in January, mandating a suicide prevention stand-down that involved 1.1 million soldiers, establishing a suicide prevention task force,

improving Army policies, procedures and resources; and recruiting additional psychological and behavioral health counselors. The Army also plans to observe Suicide Prevention Month in September.

Through the end of June — the latest figures reported — there have been 88 reported active-duty suicides in the Army during calendar year 2009. Of these, 54 have been confirmed as suicides, and 34 are pending final determination of the manner of death. For the same period in 2008, there were 67 suicides among active-duty soldiers.

Rev. Ron Lowery, district superintendent in Clarksville, Tenn., and a lieutenant colonel and endorsed chaplain serving with the 11th Air Wing Tennessee Air National Guard, said when a soldier comes to a chaplain and says he or she is having suicidal thoughts, the chaplain can do something to help. "It's the ones we never hear from that we can't help," Lowry said.

Rev. Tom Carter, director of endorsement and pastoral care, United Methodist Endorsing Agency of the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry, agreed that chaplains are providing



Photo by Troy Langenburg, courtesy of Fort Campbell

Brigadier Gen. Stephen Townsend, deputy commanding general, 101st Airborne Division, talks to soldiers of the 1st and 2nd Brigade combat teams about suicide during May 27 stand-down.

key leadership as the military ramps up its suicide prevention programs.

"But since service members represent a cross-section of American society, it is equally important for local clergy and church leaders to take a lead role in working with folks who see suicide as an escape from the increasing pressures of life," Carter said.

Carter, Lowery, Weichl and Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Carleton Birch,

Office of the Chair of Chaplains, all say the stigma attached to seeking help is a big problem.

"The environment we are in is sort of macho — somewhat difficult for a soldier to talk about. We are trying to make it more acceptable," Weichl said. "The Army has prominent, high-ranking officials speaking about this."

| Continued on page 8A



Conference Calendar

September

- 6: Christian Education Sunday
- 7: Labor Day (Conference Center closed)
- 9: Board of Ordained Ministry dCOM training at Central, Waco
- 9: Candidacy Mentor Training at Central UMC, Waco
- 10: Board of Ordained Ministry dCOM training at Arborlawn UMC, Fort Worth
- 10: Candidacy Mentor Training at Arborlawn UMC, Fort Worth
- 10: Evangelism Task Force at First Hillsboro
- 10: Council on Finance & Administration at Conference Center
- 12: UM College & University Preview Day for high school juniors/seniors at Methodist Children's Home, Waco
- 12: Disability Concerns Committee at Glen Lake Camp Reception Room
- 13-18: Disaster Response Mission Trip to UMCOR Sager Brown Depot, Baldwin, La.
- 14-16: Cabinet meeting
- 15: Deadline to request Board of Ordained Ministry spring interviews
- 19: Conference Mission Leadership Team/ N.O.W. Councils at Glen Lake Camp
- 26: Training for Stephen Ministers, sponsored by Outreach Council's Mental Health Concerns

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

Chaplains address Army suicide prevention | Continued from page 5A

The stigma of getting help is not just an Army issue; it is a national issue, with civilians reluctant to seek mental health help, too, Birch adds.

“Soldiers have always come to chaplains, what’s changed is that we’re now giving our chaplains more training, and they have a bigger group of helpers to call on,” Birch said. He says chaplains can refer soldiers to special drug and alcohol counselors, marriage and family counselors, mental health counselors, or social workers.

“The counselors have come to realize that chaplains are an entry point,” Birch said. And while a chaplain cannot force a soldier to get further help, Birch said his own experience is that those who come to chaplains will follow their advice.

Rev. Dr. LeNoir Culbertson, senior pastor at Madison Street United Methodist Church in

Clarksville, near Fort Campbell, the U.S. Army post that is home to the 101st Airborne, has seen that concern about stigma. Eleven deaths at Fort Campbell in 2009 have been confirmed as suicide, three are still under investigation.

“A lot of people don’t want to use services on the post, and they don’t want to use their insurance for the same reason,” Culbertson said.

Her church has about 600 active members, and she estimates one-third to one-fourth are active duty or retired military. She said the church supports the Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee, which base their fees on ability to pay.

Culbertson said she does not really do frontline counseling about suicide, that her role and that of the church is to be there as a resource for families.

“The pattern I see is difficulty reintegrating after deployment. The spouse is away for 15 months, you

learn to get along, then they are back. You are glad to see them, but boy, it takes an adjustment,” Culbertson said.

Lowery agrees. He said typically, the deployed person expects to return to their original family and then tries to adjust to changes. “The third phase can be giving up, and that’s when there’s a risk of suicidal thoughts,” he said.

Weichl is working on suicide prevention presentations aimed at raising awareness of the problem. A program called ACE (Ask, Care and Escort) does role playing with soldiers to encourage them to ask a buddy if they are thinking about

suicide and encourage or escort them to seek help if they are.

“The difficulty is in the asking. If they are able to ask their buddy, then the care and the escort goes much easier,” he said. “It seems so simple, but it’s difficult to look another human being in the eye and ask that profoundly personal question.”

The new ACE program is being tested now, he said. Suicide prevention training is mandatory for all soldiers and is often done by the chaplains.

Researchers are looking into what factors contribute to suicide among military personnel, but so far, Weichl said, it appears that suicides

in the military parallel the general population, with more suicides in the 17- to 26-year-old population, although there are some problems among older men.

For information on how to support military families, visit GBHEM’s United Methodist Endorsing Agency’s Web at www.gbhem.org/chaplains. The Army’s more current suicide prevention information is located at www.armygl.army.mil.

**Vicki Brown is an associate editor and writer, office of Interpretation, General Board of Higher Education & Ministry*

Here are some ideas on how churches can help our military families and chaplains

When Rev. Dr. LeNoir Culbertson was appointed pastor of Madison Street United Methodist Church in Clarksville, Tenn., just a few miles from Fort Campbell, the U.S. Army post that is home to the 101st Airborne, she thought that churches probably needed to have special programs for military families.

“I was told repeatedly, ‘We don’t want to be treated like military,’” said Culbertson, adding that one-third to one-fourth of her congregation of 600 active members are military, military families or retired military. The following are a few of their thoughts.

- Many needs of a military family with a deployed member are similar to the needs of single parents, Culbertson said. She said the church tries to be conscious of providing child care for any programs such as a Bible study or prayer groups.

- Kerry Mays, whose husband, Bryce, is deployed to Iraq with a medic unit, said that unlike single parents, though, military families don’t have time to arrange for child care or other help. “My husband deployed in May, and we found out in April that he was leaving,” she said. So most single parents would

have things lined up, while military spouses suddenly find themselves 24/7 on the job with young children, Mays said.

- While the Army offers respite child care, Mays said it’s not Christian-based, and many parents feel there are too many children to be supervised well. She said for parents with young children, child-care help is one of the biggest things churches could offer. “With you church family, you don’t have to worry that someone will use profanity, or say something you don’t want your children to hear,” she adds.

- Culbertson also added that many military families don’t want to be on prayer lists because they don’t want to advertise that a woman and children are living alone.

- We keep current a referral list of reliable and honest electricians, plumbers, carpenters and mechanics, since people come into town and don’t know anyone,” Culbertson said.

- A worship component is important, too. “We try to offer programs and liturgy that are supportive of the military, but flag waving, no saying that everything you do is the will of God.” For instance, Madison Street will offer a special litany and welcome the Sunday before Veteran’s Day.

- Chaplain Lt. Col. Scott Weichl, behavioral health program manager at the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., said he worries about the Reserve and National Guard soldiers who return to their communities after deployment and do not necessarily have support services available to active duty military.

“I think the churches could make a tremendous impact on Army Guard and Reserve soldiers,” Weichl said. “There is a wonderful opportunity for churches to partner with other organizations or the military to be able to do good.”

- Rev. Ron Lowery, the new superintendent for the Clarksville District, said churches need to ask what the needs are. He hopes to set up zones based on the episcopal structure of the church so that there is a church to serve as a resource center every 20 miles or so.

Spotlight on History

Many churches have surprising antecedents. In “Seventy Years the Lorena Methodist Church” we are told that “Previous to 1881 the Methodists of this vicinity worshipped in a number of places. A building known as Sambo’s Chapel, originally the residence of a slave named Sambo, was an early place of worship.”

* * *

Southwestern University traces its roots as far back as Rutgersville College, which was founded in 1854. This makes Southwestern the oldest institution of higher education in the State of Texas. In fact, it originally was named Texas University. At the request of the state, it relinquished that title so a public school in Austin could have the official name. Some measure of recompense was achieved when Southwestern University competed in football on a par with The University of Texas — and won! — By Rev. Michael Patison

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.

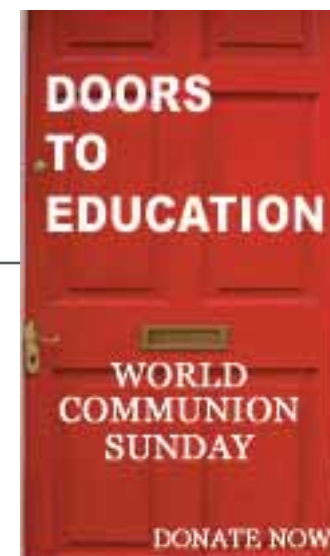
Contacts for questions or to volunteer in the anniversary observance are Rev. Henry Radde (hradde@tmf-fdn.org), Rev. Michael Patison (mpatison@charter.net) or conference archivist Carol Roszell (carol@ctcmmc.org).

World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday will be celebrated by United Methodist congregations on or around Oct. 4 as one of the six churchwide Special Sundays. This World Communion Sunday offering provides scholarships for U.S. racial- and ethnic-minority and internationally students at both the undergraduate and graduate school levels.

Specifically, financial support from the World Communion Sunday offering is divided among several program:

- 50% — Crusade Scholarship program (with at least 1/2 going beyond the U.S.)
 - 35% — Ethnic Minority Scholarship program
 - 15% — Ethnic Minority In-Service Training program
- Recent denominationwide giving to this area of ministry has been:
- 2008 — \$1,028,865
 - 2007 — \$1,205,022
 - 2006 — \$1,100,191



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