



Good deeds ... 5A



Staying connected ... 4A



Itasca hospitality ... 8A

**Annual Conference
Agenda Highlights**

Sunday, June 7

7 p.m. Music & Celebration of Christian Worship at White's Chapel UMC, Southlake

Monday, June 8

8 a.m. Clergy Executive Session at First Grapevine
8 a.m. Lay Session at White's Chapel

10 a.m. Joint Clergy/Lay Memorial Worship Service at White's Chapel

11 a.m. Business Session
11:15 a.m. Episcopal Address

4 - 5 p.m. Workshops

7:05 p.m. United Methodist Night at the Ballpark (Texas Rangers vs. Toronto Blue Jays)

Tuesday, June 9

8:30 a.m. Business Session
11 a.m. Awards and Scholarships

2 p.m. Retirement Service of Honor/Gratitude

7 p.m. Music and Service of Ordination at White's Chapel

Wednesday, June 10

8:30 a.m. Business Session
4:30 p.m. Sending Forth by Bishop Lowry

Many changes in store for 2009 Annual Conference June 7-10 at White's Chapel

The 2009 Central Texas Annual Conference convenes June 7-10 at White's Chapel United Methodist Church in Southlake to conduct the business of the conference and to join in worship and fellowship.

The new conference theme, "Energizing and Equipping Churches," defines the role of the conference in providing the resources and leadership that enable local churches to excel in their role of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The theme embraces the mission of The United Methodist Church and holds accountable the conference and local churches in their vital roles.

"We cannot stress enough the conference's commitment for energizing and equipping local churches," states Bishop Mike Lowry who will be presiding at his first Central Texas Annual Conference business session. "Local churches are at the intersection of the gospel, and the hurts and pains of this broken, battered and bruised world. They are where the action is!"

Many aspects of this annual gathering of about 1,200 lay and clergy members will reflect the changing nature of the church. For the first time in about four decades, the Annual Conference will recall its roots by returning to a local church setting for its meeting site. At the same time, the Annual Conference will celebrate the non-traditional

settings and diverse nature of "church" as it exists today and is evolving for the future.

Also for the first time, there will be open seating for the conference with lay and clergy members on the main level of the sanctuary and visitors in the balcony. All worship services, including the joint Clergy and Lay Memorial Worship Service on Monday morning (another change), will be in White's Chapel's expansive, multi-media equipped sanctuary.

Holy Communion will be offered every morning, rotating among three different cultural traditions, and Bishop Lowry will present the daily Bible studies.

As many business reports as possible have been moved to the consent calendar, thereby opening time for members to attend one of the 20 workshops offered late Monday afternoon preceding an evening of fellowship.

Everyone will be given an opportunity

to share in the fellowship at the Ballpark in Arlington where the Texas Rangers will be playing the Toronto Blue Jays and food vendors and restaurants serve up an array of dining selections. Plan to fully enjoy the evening of fellowship by dining on typical ballpark treats like hotdogs, pizza, sandwiches, nachos

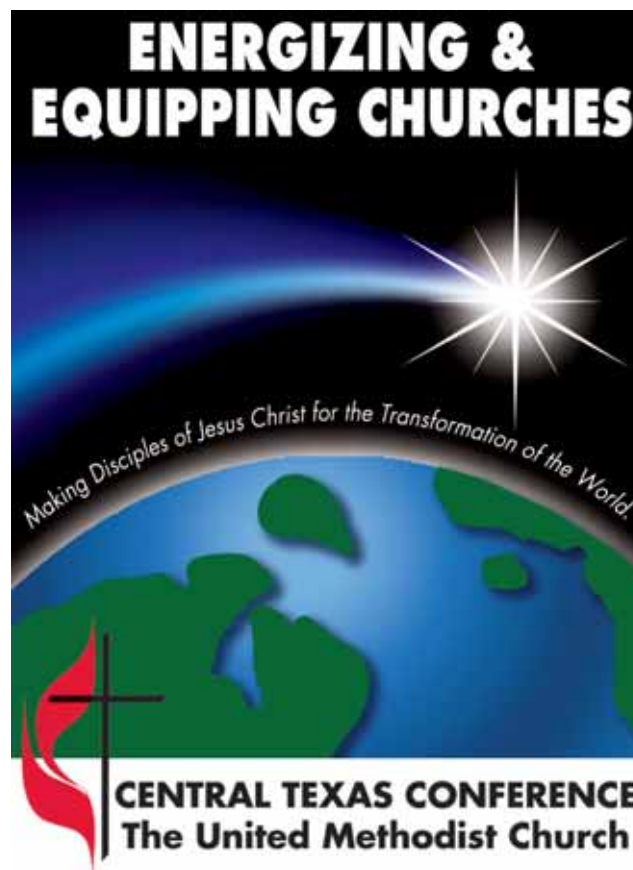
and more. There is also an upscale restaurant at the ballpark and a buffet sports grill for those who want a little finer dining.

The deeply discounted tickets for United Methodists will be available for purchase as three price ranges: \$31 for lower-level boxes, \$15 for lower-level reserved seating,

and \$7.50 for upper-level reserved seating. A link on the conference Web site (www.ctcumc.org) will take you directly to the Texas Rangers ticket office.

All United Methodists — youth groups, Sunday school classes, singles groups, etc. — are invited to come celebrate United Methodist Night at the Ballpark!

It will be back to business on Tuesday with the recognition of scholarship and award recipients and two reports that could have a significant impact on the Central Texas Conference and its local churches: the Realignment of Conference of the South Central



| **Continued** on page 8A



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The Wilderness Way

By BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

12.

In nine months JoLynn and I have grown to love Fort Worth. The vibrancy of the city and area, the hospitality of the people, the arts (well, maybe, I was treated to a Bill Envall performance at Bass Concert Hall for my birthday!) and of course, the great churches of the Fort Worth District.

First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth is a great church. Their outreach ministry to the city is tremendous. They offer a prominent and important public witness to the cause of Christ on behalf of the Methodist movement.

The same could be said for a number of other churches in the city. St. Andrews in Fort Worth has provided courageous and prophetic leadership. They are on the cusp of a new day as they embrace a different future in our post-Christendom world. I am deeply impressed by the future opening that is before First United Methodist Church in Burleson. They have had the courage to relocate and the vision to step towards a new tomorrow.

The same could be said of a host of other churches in the district — Crowley, Joshua, Saginaw, First in Azle and Christ among others come to mind. Lighthouse is living its name. It is a lighthouse of Christ's hope and glory in the northwest part of the district. The new ministry at LifePoint is thrilling! A work of God is underway.

In a different and exciting way, Arborlawn is pioneering how to move into a new future. Among many ministries, their adult discipleship training is impressive. Both St. John the Apostle and St. Andrew's in Arlington show similar vibrancy in developing paths for discipleship and reaching out to the mission field with new and exciting ministries.

In this district there are a host of churches situated in various city neighborhoods that are engaging their immediate mission field with creativity. Ridglea, Arlington Heights and Morningside. Campus Drive has an impressive missional out-reach to children as a part of its weekday life.

And yet ... and yet, as I gaze back over what I have written (begging mercy for those churches which should have been included in this writing but were not), I encountered the same split personality here as elsewhere. There are a number of churches that are struggling to connect with their mission field. The neighborhoods have changed. Nobody comes to church to keep the institution alive.

People come to meet God. They want to talk with the Lord. Jesus' core teaching applies in this metropolitan district with an exclamation point! "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." (Mark 8:34-35)

In some cases, the church has moved but the building has stayed behind. It is a losing proposition. In other cases, as noted in other Shepherd Visits, we desperately need to rediscover how to do evangelism. I am so impressed by El Buen Samaritano and Rev. David Martinez. They are a Wesleyan movement pioneering evangelism and mission in a neighborhood we must not abandon. They city cries out for Christ and we must answer in prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.



Annual Conference offering supports the many "faces" of justice ministries — PACT rebuilds relationships, reduces recidivism —

The Conference Mission Ministries Team selected a group of four ministries that comprise justice ministries for the 2009 Annual Conference offering.

This issue of *Central Link* focuses on PACT (Parents and Children Together) which began in 1984 by offering parenting classes for interested prisoners in the two federal prisons in the Fort Worth area. The Federal Correctional Institution houses about 1,775 low-security male offenders, while the Federal Medical Center Carswell provides specialized medical and mental health service to about 1,500 women.

Initially, the federal government funded the program to help preserve inmates' parent-child relationships to reduce prisoner recidivism and give children the emotional support needed to break what's often a familial cycle of crime.

With changes in the federal funding and hardening sentiments about crime, the PACT house found itself evolving into a temporary residential facility for families traveling from outside the area to visit with their incarcerated loved ones. They often slept in their cars or on the streets, but PACT reached out in Christian hospitality. That was extended to families relocating to the area in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

Today, PACT's main focus is the Mothering and Infant Nurturing Together (MINT) program. This

is a residential outreach promoting bonding and parenting skill development for low-risk female inmates. Women in the last trimester of pregnancy who have less than five years left on their sentences are eligible for the program.

Women in the program participate in pre- and post-natal drug prevention efforts and financial management workshops, and childbirth, parenting and coping skills classes. The mothers must make arrangements for a family or other guardians to take care of the child upon birth. PACT provides a place to stay for relatives coming to town to pick up the newborn.

PACT also provides temporary housing to newly released inmates with no other place to go.

While families travel across the country to visit relatives in Fort

Worth area prisons, some children who live in the area have parents incarcerated in those facilities too. Studies show children 2-6 years olds often have difficulty exercising autonomy or initiative because of the trauma associated with a parent/child separation or experience of seeing a parent arrested. Older children can have problems getting along with others or develop aggressive behavior.

PACT's support for Kids with Incarcerated Parents (SKIP) seeks to head off these problems by working in the local elementary and junior high schools to help children face how their parent's incarceration has affected them.

This year's Annual Conference offering helps PACT and other restorative justice ministries.

— Information for this article is from
Response magazine, October 2008

14-year-old devotes her summer to good deeds for the world and serving God's Green Earth

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third in a series of articles that recognize how individuals and groups are moving beyond the harsh realities of the economic downturn and turning to incredible acts of helpfulness and generosity to their neighbors, both near and afar. Fourteen-year-old Addison Elliott of Keller tells her own story of a summer spent on outreach and discovery.

BY ADDISON ELLIOTT

This may be the scariest thing I am ever going to do. It all started with Faith. Faith was the first cow given to Dan West when he started Heifer International. I first heard this story when my mom bought me the book *Faith the Cow*.

I was little and I loved animals, so the whole idea about giving animals to help other people soon made Heifer International my favorite organization. We visited St. Luke United Methodist Church and I learned more about Heifer and how you can buy an "ark" that has two of many different animals that Heifer International will give to people in need.

Last summer I decided I wanted to raise enough money to buy a cow for Heifer. I did not know what I was taking on. A cow was \$500 and it was a lot of work to get to \$500. I sold every kind of cookie imaginable, pound cakes, chocolate cakes and cheesecakes. I baked the whole summer and it ended up paying off. I raised \$810. Everything was great until I read an article on heifer.org titled "The Carbon Hoof Print."

The article quotes a recent report from the United Nations. One industry is responsible for nearly 20 percent of the greenhouse gases released in the atmosphere worldwide. What industry is it? It is not the trucking or air travel industries, which seem to be the obvious choice.

It is the livestock industry. Only 13 percent comes from trucks, cars and other transportation. Livestock industries are also contributing to deforestation of grazing land, the pollution of air and groundwater from animal waste.

By the time I learned this, I had decided to be a vegetarian and never eat meat again. However, it also hurts the environment when we eat vegetables that have been shipped long distances. What does the truck run on that takes your vegetables to the store? That's right, fossil fuels! This hurts the environment too! By



Fourteen-year-old Addison Elliott operates Sweet Solutions to sell her home-baked cookies and cakes. During one summer, she earned enough to buy a cow and other animals in the Heifer International outreach ministry.

this time, I had decided just not to eat. Just kidding! Buying local produce when available is a great alternative.

Yes, livestock and the world's rising demand for meat do contribute to global warming and the general deterioration of the environment. However, you can't just tell everyone to be vegetarians, because the production of livestock has enormous economic importance. It is big business at the industrial level and it is an important source of income and a means of survival for vast numbers of people. For nearly a billion of the world's poor, it is the only livelihood available.

... As I learned of the advantages and disadvantages of large livestock farms and small local farms, I'm thinking: I raised money and bought livestock that is going to hurt the environment!

Then I learned something else on the Heifer Web site that gave me a different perspective: Heifer International bases its mission on giving livestock to small farms because livestock is a real way out of poverty for many people. The small farmers' success depends on understanding what strategies they should use or avoid.

Organization like Heifer already know that livestock operations can improve more than just nutrition and income. They also

encourage small farmers to care for their land and water. They are more likely than large farms to follow sustainable practices because the well-being of their herds depends on the well being of their land.

Yes, Heifer does give livestock, but it gives them to small farms and teaches the farmers skills that won't hurt the environment. Heifer also plants trees to help with recovering from deforestation. We should not blame air and water pollution all on the livestock though; there is still that percentage of pollution that comes from us and the things we do.

To help the environment, trying doing all your errands at once instead of having to turn on the car a billion times. It will help the environment and help you save gas. How about using the cloth bags in the grocery store. Did you know that it takes YEARS for a plastic bag to break down in the land fill, but it pollutes the environment to make a paper bag and it kills a lot of trees?

In the words of the "Lorax," a book by Dr. Seuss, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

We all can do something to help make God's Earth greener. What are you going to do?



Conference Calendar

- May**
- 3: Golden Cross Sunday
 - 3: 40th Anniversary Concert at Austin Avenue UMC, Waco
 - 7: CTMF Advisors Seminar at Conference Center
 - 10: Wesleyan Home offering/Mother's Day
 - 12: Cabinet/Board of Ministry BAC Review at First UMC, Fort Worth
 - 12-13: Appointive Cabinet at First UMC, Fort Worth / Conference Center
 - 13: Bishop's dinner for ordinands
 - 14: Waxahachie District Conference 7 p.m. at First Corsicana UMC
 - 14: Fort Worth District Conference - 6:30 p.m. at Crowley UMC
 - 16: Venus UMC Homecoming at Venus Town Square
 - 16: Health & Welfare Task Force at First UMC Hillsboro
 - 17: Retirement celebration for Dr. Doyle Allen - 4-6 p.m. at St. Andrews UMC, Fort Worth
 - 18: Weatherford District Conference - 7 p.m. at First Weatherford
 - 18: Brownwood District Conference - 7 p.m. at First Comanche UMC
 - 18: Mid-Cities District Conference - 7 p.m. at Davis Memorial UMC
 - 19: Temple District Conference - 7 p.m. at First Belton UMC
 - 19: CTMF Board at Conference Center
 - 21: Waco District Conference - 6 p.m. at Cogdell UMC, Waco

2009 Annual Conference

Member registration online at www.ctcumc.org/2009AC/registration

More details on Constitutional Amendments at

www.interpretermagazine.org/interior.asp?ptid=43&mid=13368

United Methodist Night at the Ballpark tickets - check for link on www.ctcumc.org

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



Hispanic Ministries
Central Texas Conference

www.ctcumc.org/hispanic

Hispanic families welcomed to membership and leadership roles by Itasca congregation

By SUNNY FARLEY
OFFICE OF HISPANIC MINISTRIES

Lionel and Elizabeth Avila and their two daughters received a warm welcome at First United Methodist Church in Itasca. So did the Runyon family and the Baysdens.

“Everybody here gets up and hugs you. They’re so happy to see you,” Lionel Avila said. The three families are among several Hispanic families that have become part of the faith community at First Itasca in the past year.

At a recent meeting of the Waxahachie District Committee on Hispanic Ministry, they told their stories of finding their place in the historic church.

The Avilas said they moved to town a little over a year ago and were looking for ways to get their daughters acclimated. A member at Itasca invited them to church.

“We thought, why not? What do we have to lose?” Lionel said.

Rev. Tom Wood said growing the church has involved taking initiative in the surrounding neighborhoods.

“It requires knocking on doors,” Wood said. “You can’t just sit back and wait on it to happen.”

With the growing Hispanic population in the city, it was natural that the church members reach out to Hispanics among others. Wood also credited his congregation for their amazing hospitality, especially to people of other cultures.

The congregation is predominantly older and white. Carrie Runyon said she, her husband and their three



Marivel Baysden (above), member at First United Methodist Church in Itasca, shares stories of the church’s success in Hispanic Ministries with Waxahachie District Superintendent Don Scott and Sam Rodriguez, conference coordinator for Hispanic/Latino Ministries. At right, Elnorane Atkinson, a member for 86 years, stands before a stained glass window dedicated to her great-grandfather. She says the church is excited about the influx of young Hispanic families to their congregation.



children have felt nothing but love from her new-found church family.

“When we walked in for the first time, everybody greeted us,” she said. “Most of the people are older but every one of them got up out of their seats. They are really nice people, and we felt wanted.”

She joked that the church seems to have a “spiritual lasso” because “they won’t let you get away.”

Marivel Baysden said the church had a hold on her and her husband

from the first time they visited, too.

“Every Sunday after our first Sunday, this was home to us,” she said. “Both my husband and I have been tremendously blessed by this church.”

Elnorane Atkinson, who has been a member of the church all of her 86 years, said the congregation is excited about the influx of new members.

“We are blessed,” she said.

Atkinson has a long family

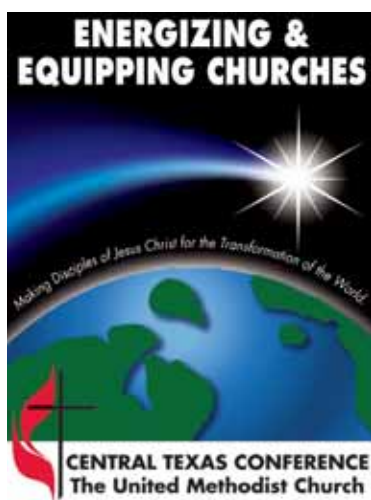
history at the church going back to her great-grandfather who fought as a teenager in the Civil War. A window in the sanctuary bears his name.

“We’ve seen a lot of changes at our church, but the purpose remains the same. We are all working for God’s will and God’s work and spreading the gospel.”

Atkinson bakes goodies for those who visit the church. She also cooks for fellowship meals, decorates the church for special events and makes

visits to the homes of members and guests of the church.

The Avilas, Runyons and Baysdens are also extremely involved in the church. They are involved in organizing special events, ministering to the children and youth, teaching Sunday school, leading Bible studies and music ministry.



Annual Conference | Continued from page 1A

Jurisdiction as reported by the Conference Committee on the Episcopacy and a report by the Conference Board of Pensions on the escalating clergy pension costs.

Members to Annual Conference will also be asked to vote on 32 constitutional amendments handed down by the 2008 General Conference that met last year in Fort Worth. The majority of amendments deal with the creation of similar structures for the church worldwide. Each Annual Conference would belong to a “regional conference” which would be able to organize

sub-units called “jurisdictional conference.” Others go more into the details of church operations and may generate considerable discussion.

Members are asked to be familiar with all the amendments and to be prepared to vote yes or no on each amendments. For three helpful articles, visit www.interpretermagazine.org/interior.asp?ptid=43&mid=13368 (by Richard Peck), 13382 (by Bishop Scott Jones) and 13383 (by Eddie Fox). It will also be helpful for members to attend their district

conference where the amendments will be addressed along with the complex information regarding the conference pension program. District conference will be held:

Brownwood District
7 p.m. May 18, Comanche UMC

Fort Worth District
6:30 p.m. May 14, Crowley UMC

Mid-Cities District
7 p.m. May 18, Davis Memorial UMC, Fort Worth

Temple District
7 p.m. May 19, Belton First UMC

Waco District
6 p.m. May 21, Cogdell Memorial UMC, Waco

Waxahachie District
7 p.m. May 14, First Corsicana UMC

Weatherford District
7 p.m. May 18, Weatherford First UMC

A special order of the day at 2 p.m. Tuesday, June 9, will be the retirement service of honor and gratitude. Retiring clergy and their years of service are: Dr. Doyle Allen (36), Rev. Marvin Moore (20), Dr. Allen Goss (40), Rev. David Chavez (41), Dr. Wm. “Bill” Longworth (43), Rev. Bill Hughes (22), Dr. Terry Michael “Mike” Young (40), Rev. Robert R. Beeman (11), Rev. Phyllis Modgling (13).