

Conference prepares to vote on new alignment proposal

The Exodus Project: A Transformational Roadmap for a Church in Transition is now available on the conference website (www.ctcumc.org) in three places: main feature, News and Alignment Blog.

Voting members of the Annual Conference are encouraged to study the proposal, visit with their congregations, attend any of the district alignment information meetings (list at right), watch the live streamed presentation on Sunday, Oct. 24, and be prepared to vote at the Annual Conference called session Nov. 13 at Mansfield First United Methodist Church.

District alignment information

meetings are being held throughout the conference to explain the alignment proposal and allow for questions. All are welcome to attend any of the meetings listed at right, although they are especially aimed at lay members of Annual Conference and clergy.

At 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 24, Bishop Mike Lowry and members of the Alignment Task Force will conduct a live-streamed event from the TV studio at Fort Worth First United Methodist Church that will be accessible on the conference website (www.ctcumc.org).

“If you have questions or comments you would like addressed during the live streaming here is your opportunity,” states

Alignment Task Force Chair Rev. Mike Ramsdell.

“We have created a special email address for the Q&A for the day of the streaming as well as leading up to it.” The task force will present the proposal and address any emailed questions and comments.

“You may make comments and ask questions ahead of the Oct. 24 presentation as well as during the actual live presentation,” states Ramsdell, adding that “You will be able to access the event by computer or at one of the viewings set by your district.”

Send questions and comments to ctcalignment@gmail.com.



District Alignment Information Meetings

(All are welcome to attend any of the meetings, although they are aimed at Annual Conference lay members and conference clergy)

Brownwood District

4 pm Sunday, Oct. 17 at Comanche First UMC

Fort Worth District

7 pm Wednesday, Oct. 20 at Fort Worth First UMC

Mid-Cities District

7 pm Wednesday, Oct. 13 at Euless First UMC

Temple District

7 pm Thursday, Oct. 28 at Salado UMC

Waco District

7 pm Monday, Oct. 18 at Central UMC, Waco

Waxahachie District

7 pm Monday, Oct. 11 at Waxahachie First UMC

Weatherford District

2 pm Sunday, Oct. 10 at Couts Memorial UMC

United Methodist students disappointed as Student Day giving continues to drop



Nearly 1,000 United Methodist students who qualified for a scholarship this year walked away empty-handed, and even more students are expected to be disappointed in 2011 unless giving to scholarship funds increases dramatically, according to a United Methodist News Service report.

Only two students in the Central Texas Conference benefitted from scholarships made possible by the denomination's annual Student Day Offering and they were small amounts. The annual Student Day Offering is coming up on Sunday, Nov. 28. Any other scholarship awarded to our students at the Annual Conference last June came from individuals or groups that fund special scholarships.

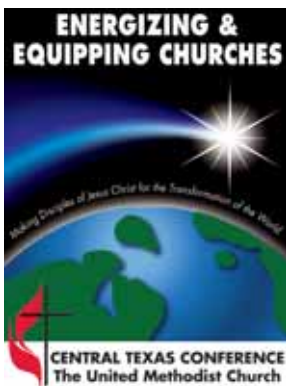
A number of factors have contributed to the reduced denomination funds problem, said James Harding, interim executive director of the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry Office of Loans & Scholarships.

“First, the applications skyrocketed after we began accepting applications online in 2009,” Harding said. “At the same time, investment earnings were down due to the poor economy, even as giving to World Communion Sunday, United Methodist Student Day, and Native American Ministries Sunday continues to decline.”

Money for UM scholarships and loans comes from a variety of fund sources – donations to Special Sundays with offerings, earnings on investments of gifts from wills and annuities, and repayments and interest on student loans.

Student Day offerings have declined from \$602,309 in 2007 to \$484,188 last year. “We turned down 954 qualified United Methodist students in 2010 simply because we didn't have enough money,” Harding said. In 2010, 2,411 students received scholarships totaling \$3.3 million.

“Support for United Methodist Student Day is crucial if we are to honor the church's commitment to educating a new generation of Christian leaders,” Harding said. Plan to participate in the Student Day Offering Sunday, Nov. 28, or whatever day your church chooses to observe it.



the
Central Link

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Editor

Carolyn E. Stephens,
Associate Director for Mission Ministries & Director of Communications
carolyn@ctcumc.org

Bishop

Bishop Michael Lowry
bishop@ctcumc.org

Mission Ministries

Dr. Georgia Adamson,
Assistant to Bishop/Executive Director
georgia@ctcumc.org

Circulation/Subscriptions

Susan Briles
susan@ctcumc.org

Production/Publishing

UMR Communications Inc.,
Dallas, Texas

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Central Texas Conference
464 Bailey Avenue
Fort Worth, TX 76107-2153
817.877.5222, 800.460.8622
Conference Website:
www.ctcumc.org

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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

45.

If you have been following along in *The Wilderness Way* you will know that (with occasional interruption) I have been writing on the general theme of congregational transformation since #38. I want to close this section of writings by offering some very concrete basic steps to congregational transformation.

With as much vigor as I can muster, I encourage both congregations and individuals to study and enact *The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* and *The Five Practices of Fruitful Living* as written by Bishop Robert Schnase. Those five core practices form the basis for both congregations and individuals to live faithfully and fruitfully before the Lord. They are: Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity. They are not something done and over with, but continual elements of ministry engagement.

To a deliberate re-emphasis of their basic, foundational enactment, I add the following seven recommendations for congregational transformation. Focus on these basics:

1. **Welcome first-time guests well** – they are more than visitors! Almost every church I have been in is convinced that they do a good job on this basic step, *but few do!* With the best of intentions we get side tracked greeting our friends and catching up on the past week. Consider becoming a Welcoming Congregation (a ministry of The United Methodist Church)

2. **Pay a return visit to first-time guests.** I recommend a doorstep visit offering something like a loaf of bread or a plant. It is a simple way of offering the fellowship of the early Christian community (Acts 2:42). The visit should be Sunday night or Monday. Its effectiveness goes down in an exponential curve. By Friday evening, it's just too late.

The visit is twice as effective if it's a lay person – twice as effective. (Clergy are paid to visit; with lay people the commitment is more evident.) It's better that a clergy person visit than no one. If nobody else can or will, clergy, you go. For years wonderful lay people I was privileged to serve with visited on Sunday evenings. I would usually follow up with a phone call on Monday night as a pastor. And then, we'd send out a pastor's letter. We'd mail it Monday or Tuesday so they got it Wednesday or Thursday. If possible, we had a lay person call and invite the person back to something on Thursday or Friday.

3. **Have a confirmation class.** Forty-plus percent of the United Methodist churches in the United States did not have anyone come to

the church by profession of faith. If you say to me, "Well, it's because it's so small a church," I simply point to the evidence of very small churches that have marvelous records of people coming to know Christ through their ministry. I can name a significant number of churches with less than 25 in average worship attendance that do have professions of faith, and they do because they evangelistically believe in offering Christ.

4. The simplest, most effective thing you can do evangelistically is *invite someone to worship with you.*

5. *Use occasions like the start of school, Christmas eve, and other occasions as times of evangelistic outreach.* The single most attended worship service by non-Christian people, or by those who are nominally Christian (i.e., when they tell you their church home, they are telling you what church they stay away from on a regular basis) is Christmas eve.

At least one of your Christmas eve services ought to be designed with a view in mind to present the gospel to people who really don't know Christ. Doing so will bless the already Christians who have been coming for 30 years as well.

6. *Raise the quality of your ministry across the board.* One of the revolutions in America today is the revolution in quality. It is part of a response to TV and a whole number of things, so what you have to do is raise the quality of what you do across the board in every aspect of ministry.

The children's nursery that got new toys in 1957 maybe needs another set of new toys. Raise the quality of your nursery. Your music – raise the quality of your music because, folks, today you're not competing with the neighborhood church. You're competing with what's on television. Preachers, raise the quality of your preaching!

7. *Engage in hands on ministry serving those in need in your community.* Get missional right where you are! Remember the great old hymn that says "they will know we are Christian by our love." The deeds of love, justice and mercy in our community both validate the rest of the church's ministry and are themselves basic expressions of Christian faithfulness and ministry. Great living happens for us individually and for a church when we decide to give our lives away for others.



Join the big Conference Centennial Celebration

Saturday, October 23

at Will Rogers Memorial Center, Fort Worth

(more details at www.ctcumc.org / click on the 100th year logo)

NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR ON OCT. 23

FOCUSED MINISTRY

Three conference members are paving the way for future CTC mission teams to Haiti

BY REV. LARAINÉ WAUGHTAL
CONFERENCE DISASTER RESPONSE
COORDINATOR & PASTOR AT BLUFF DALE
& MORGAN MILL CHURCHES

Three members of the Central Texas Conference left Oct. 6 on a mission trip to Haiti and, along with members of the Southwest Texas Conference, returning Oct. 14. During this time, the conference website (www.ctcumc.org) has been carrying a version of this article and updates from Haiti as Internet accessibility was available.

[A check of the website will provide a more up-to-date version of their activities in Haiti and future plans than allowed by an early press time for this article.]

Lay member George Murphy has held several positions at Salado United Methodist Church, including lay leader and delegate to Annual Conference. George is a registered pharmacist and sales representative for Abbott Laboratories. He is married and has two children.

Rev. Lara Whitley, pastor at First United Methodist Church in Joshua, has a keen interest in disaster response. Rev. Laraine Waughtal is pastor of the Bluff Dale and Morgan Mill United Methodist churches, and is the Disaster Response coordinator for the Central Texas Conference.



Only those who have mission experience in Haiti may lead future trips to the area. Three members of the Central Texas Conference are fulfilling their initial training experience and will be preparing teams for future service in Haiti.

All three are eager to serve. Upon their return from Haiti, they will be organizing mission trips to provide opportunities for others from the Central Texas Conference to help in Haiti.

The team of 12 from the two Texas conferences are staying in Port-au-Prince at the Methodist Guest House. The project for the week is to work at Carrefour Manse in Thor. This is a high priority project for the United Methodist Church in Haiti.

We are the fifth team to work on this house, which is a pastor's house and possible future site for Volunteer in Mission (VIM) teams to stay at when they come to work. Some of our group is also having a few days working at a medical clinic.

Our small team is carrying some supplies for the people of Haiti — the small amount we are able to carry in two checked suitcases each. With the help of contributors, I carried construction paper and other

items for children, antacid tablets for the Haitians whose circumstances often lead to digestive problems, and snack-size zip secured bags for dispensing medical supplies.

Lara carried over-the-counter medicines and hospital-grade medical station supplies, deflated soccer and basketballs, jump ropes and Vacation Bible School supplies and craft items.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has been making a great impact in response to the earthquake in Haiti — helping to provide fresh water, debris removal and building homes, schools and medical centers along with many other areas of assistance.

We look forward to sharing our story with you and have made reports from Haiti on the conference website (www.ctcumc.org) as access to the Internet was available.

Chuck Newman, a member of First United Methodist Church in Mansfield, recently returned from serving in Haiti. First Mansfield is currently exploring their 2011 calendar and hope to send a mission team sometime next year. Also, plans are underway for a mission team from the Wesley Foundation at the University of Texas at Arlington.

For more details on mission opportunities in Haiti, visit www.umvimhaiti.org.



Bishop Mike Lowry (left) presents his Imagine No Malaria contribution check to conference Treasurer Harvey Ozmer.

Keeping his promise

Little pipe cleaner mosquitoes had a huge impact on one little girl, and now many will benefit.

The Imagine No Malaria campaign to eliminate death and suffering from malaria in Africa, caught the attention of young Alyssa Washburn who was with her father, Ronnie Washburn of Bardwell United Methodist Church, at one of the Annual Conference business sessions last June in Fort Worth.

The fuzzy little mosquitoes were part of The United Methodist Church's fundraising effort to provide insecticide-treated mosquito nets, malaria prevention measures, and medical treatment in Africa.

Alyssa gathered up a number of the mosquitoes and "sold" them to lay and clergy members at Annual Conference, offering the funds she raised for the Imagine No Malaria campaign to Bishop Lowry with a challenge that they be

matched by the Cabinet.

"I'll do better than that," he told her, "I'll match your contribution myself." Together, they would contribute well over \$500 to the cause.

Given a bishop's heavy schedule, Bishop Lowry is a little tardy but still keeping his promise to match the contribution. He presented his check to conference Treasurer Harvey Ozmer earlier this month.

As of the end of September, Central Texas Methodists have contributed \$76,925 to the INM campaign and another \$3,288 to the Nothing But Nets campaign. Nothing But Nets, which preceded the expanded INM campaign, caught the attention of the world with their "\$10 buys a bed nets" initiative.

Every 45 seconds, an innocent child in Africa dies of malaria. The UMC's goal is to eliminate that death and suffering by 2015. Visit INMinfo@umcom.org.



Conference Calendar

October

- 16: Advanced Lay Speaking Class at Mansfield First UMC
- 16: UMW District Officer's event at Crowley First UMC
- 17: Alignment information meeting — 4 p.m. at Comanche First UMC
- 18: Alignment information meeting — 7 p.m. at Central UMC, Waco
- 19: Extended Cabinet Leadership Training
- 20: Alignment information meeting — 7 p.m. at Fort Worth First UMC
- 23: BIG Centennial Celebration at Will Rogers Memorial Complex, Fort Worth — 100th anniversary of the Central Texas Conference
- 24: Live Streamed event with Alignment Task Force — 3 p.m. at www.ctcumc.org
- 25: Waxahachie District DCOM meeting at Waxahachie First UMC
- 28: Alignment information meeting — 7 p.m. at Salado UMC

November

- 8-9: Self-Care for Clergy at Summer's Miss Retreat Center, Belton
- 13: Called Session of Annual Conference at Mansfield First UMC
- 13: Faithfully Fit Forever at Keller First UMC
- 14: Conference UMW Charter Committee at Grandview First UMC
- 16: Central Texas Methodist Foundation at Conference Center
- 16-17: Cabinet

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

News & Information

Conference clergy appointment changes

Bishop Mike Lowry and the Cabinet announce the following appointment changes for clergy in the Central Texas Conference:

Robert Barnett — from unappointed to 1/4-time supply pastor at Coolidge United Methodist Church, effective Oct. 1

Eric Scott Douglas — from unappointed to 3/4-time local pastor at Bartlett United Methodist Church, effective Oct. 1

Larry Duggins — from unappointed to 1/4-time associate pastor/Center for Missional Wisdom at White's Chapel United Methodist Church, Southlake, effective Oct. 1

Victor Pena (full-time local pastor) — from Resurrection to assistant pastor Church Growth & Development under Par. 316.1, effective Oct. 1

Jana Wear (elder in full connection) — from unchartered Light of the World to assistant pastor Church Growth & Development, effective Oct. 1

Marilyn Zemba — from full-time local pastor at White's Chapel United Methodist Church to unappointed, effective Oct. 1

Faithfully Fit Forever Leader Training

The Central Texas Conference Health & Welfare Task Force is sponsoring Faithfully Fit Forever Leader Training Saturday, Nov. 13, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Keller First United Methodist Church (1025 Johnson Road, Keller 76248).

Faithfully Fit Forever (FFF) is a non-profit, cooperative community health program created by MeritCare Hospital Parish Nursing and Cardiac Rehab staff. It attempts to eliminate the barriers that keep people from participating in exercise and health enhancing behaviors.

To date, over 150 places of worship in eight states have implemented FFF programs. The \$75 training cost includes 16 weeks of programming to get participants started, a training manual, educational materials/references, devotional resources and exercise leadership video. More details are on the conference website at www.ctcumc.org under Ministries/Health and Wellness.

New downloadable Domestic Violence resource

Breaking the Silence: A Resource to Equip United Methodists to Speak Up and Speak out About Domestic Violence

October is Domestic Violence Month. A new, downloadable resource, "Breaking the Silence," employs the Wesleyan quadrilateral to equip local churches in addressing systems that perpetuate domestic violence and encourages United Methodists to speak up and speak out about domestic violence.

The 23-page study is for use in local congregations. It provides an opportunity for church members, either as individuals or in small groups, to study domestic violence through the lens of the Wesley quadrilateral of scripture, tradition, reason and experience. It uses Psalm 139 as its biblical text. The new resource is available through the General Board of Church & Society (GBCS) website at <http://www.umc-gbcs.org/atf/cf/%7B689fea4c-8849-4c05-a89e-c9bc7fff64c%D/BREAKINGSILENCE.PDF>.

Methodist Fellowship Day & Stadium Tours

Methodist Fellowship Day will be observed at Cowboy Stadium in Arlington from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 6. Methodists are invited to a behind-the-scenes tour of Cowboys Stadium and have access to the players' and cheerleaders' locker rooms, a run through the Cowboys tunnel and field access to throw a few footballs. \$12/adults and \$10/children and seniors. Contact: Amber Winger at 817-892-4668 or amwinger@dallascowboys.net.

Depression Connection: help and hope

The World Health Organization reports that four of the 10 leading causes of disability in the U.S. and other developed countries are mental disorders. By 2020, major depressive illness will be the leading cause of disability in the world for women and children. Most people diagnosed with a serious mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment plan.

With no cost to your church, the Central Texas Conference Committee on Mental Health Concerns and Depression Connection Team will provide a seminar for your church. To inquire, contact Tony Campbell at 817-810-9599 or tony@depressionconnection.org.

1. Assemble a Disaster Relief Supply Kit for United Methodist Committee on Relief (www.umcor.org)
2. Send Campbell's Soup labels or Box Tops for Education (www.labelsforeducation.com) to the McCurdy School (www.mccurdy.org) or Red Bird Mission (www.redbirdmission.org)
3. Pack backpacks of food for school children from low-income homes to eat on the weekends (Pacminburleson.blogspot.com)
4. Participate in a short-term mission team (www.missionvolunteers.org)
5. Start a food pantry or volunteer at your community food bank
6. Support a United Methodist missionary (www.gb-gm-umc.org)
7. Support a refugee through Refugee Services of Texas (www.refugee-servicesoftexas.org)
8. Encourage your congregation to pay 100% of its Fair Share Askings
9. Practice "Alternative Giving" for holidays and birthdays (<http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/advance/give/alternatives/>)
10. Advocate for legislation that helps move people out of the cycle of poverty (www.umc-gbcs.org)
11. Mentor, tutor, or read to a child through pre-school or after-school programs
12. Give blood or organize a blood drive
13. Visit someone in prison or volunteer with Epiphany or Kairos (www.epiphanyministry.com or www.kairosprisonministry.org)
14. Make a baby cap or blanket for your local hospital
15. Start a prayer shawl ministry as a comfort to others in times of need
16. Give to an Advance Special of your choosing (www.advancinghope.org)
17. Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity to work on a house or bring meals for those working (www.habitat.org)
18. Visit people at your local nursing home or shut-ins from your church — tell them stories about what is happening at your church
19. Donate a meal to your local youth group for one of their meetings
20. Say "thank you" to your children, youth and adult Sunday School teachers
21. Start a prayer partner ministry using all generations in your church
22. Start a book distribution team (<http://www.serve.gov/toolkits.asp>)
23. Start a walking school bus for children in your community (<http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/>)
24. Start a public land or trail maintenance team (<http://www.serve.gov/toolkits.asp>)
25. Adopt a college student from your church or from

- a local college to provide encouragement and care packages during times of high stress like finals
26. Volunteer at a local animal shelter
27. Gather friends and trash bags and pick up the trash at your local park
28. Keep non-perishable food in your car to give out to people asking for help
29. Volunteer at a local hospital
30. Adopt a shut-in: visit and do errands for them, help around the house or do yard work
31. Volunteer your time with your church's Stephen Ministry (<http://www.stephenministries.org/>)
32. Volunteer at a local elementary, middle, high school
33. Volunteer your time helping others at Justice For Our Neighbors (www.ctcumc.org / click on Refugee & Immigration Ministries)



50 Ways YOU can be in mission

34. Volunteer to work at a local polling location
35. Open a Cinderella's Closet (or prom dress re-use closet) for teen girls in your community
36. Provide a meal or before-game prayers for local sports teams
37. Hand out water bottles in public places as a way of showing God's love and invite the recipients to church
38. Put together emergency waiting room snack bags for a local hospital / it can be comforting during times of stress
39. Plan to mow or rake the yard of a church member's house / then do the rest of the yards on the block and let the member tell their neighbors why
40. Donate clothing to Goodwill, Salvation Army or your local church clothes closet
41. Provide free babysitting for families that can't afford a babysitter
42. Offer your tutoring services for free to a local elementary school or after-school program
43. Help prepare bulk mailings to benefit a social service agency
44. Setup, tear down or clean up at a soup kitchen
45. Open your church gym or rent a place where kids can come and learn how to play sports
46. Invite kids of the community to come and paint pictures and then display them in your church like an art gallery / teach short classes on different art techniques
47. Organize a fundraiser for CTCYM Beyond Our Borders to help bring clean drinking water to Liberia
48. Build or replace a wheelchair ramp for someone in a wheelchair / it's not as hard as you might think (<http://www.wheelchairramp.org/> or www.texasramps.org)
49. Plan a canned food drive in your neighborhood for your local food pantry
50. Grow fruits and vegetables in your backyard and donate them to the local food pantry or share them with your neighbors