



MARTIN
Centennial logo ... 5A



Today's quilters ... 5A



More on Haiti response ... 8A

Central Texans send 23,099+ health kits for Haiti!

23,099! Behind this big number are a lot of wonderful little stories. Together, they provide a glimpse into the generous hearts of the people of the Central Texas Conference and their neighbors.

“When the Holy Spirit knocks on my door, there’s no telling what will happen,” says Lorena United Methodist Church pastor Rev. Christie Robbins. She challenged her congregation, which averages about 150 in worship, to create 500 health kits to be sent to the people of Haiti. They assembled 1,500 kits!

The word got out in the community that kits would be assembled at the church on Wednesday evening, usually the time devoted to Bible study. But that night, the Bible study group grew from 12 to 40 mission-oriented folks who acted on the gospel rather than just reading it.

“I believe the church leaders who say the church can and will be resurrected through mission evangelism. I saw evidence of that on Wednesday night,” said Robbins who then challenged every United Methodist church in the Waco District to assemble 500 health kits for Haiti.



Above, UTA students assemble health kits at the Wesley Foundation. At right, Rev. David Ray coordinates the drop offs for the main collection site at First United Methodist Church in Hillsboro.

She urged them not to unduly burden their own congregations, but to involve their communities.

Members talked with their neighbors, with aunts and uncles, with community groups and before they knew it, kits were coming in from the Lorena Independent School District, from two schools in Robinson, another in the Bruceville/Eddy area, and a nearby Presbyterian church.

Altogether, the Waco District brought in 4,822 health kits for Haiti. As of the Feb. 7 drop off dates for all the churches and ministry groups in the Central Texas Conference the health kits totaled:

- Brownwood District - 884
- Fort Worth District - 1,876
- Mid-Cities District - 4,433



- Temple District - 2,063
- Waco District - 4,822
- Waxahachie District - 5,741
- Weatherford District - 2,280
- Miscellaneous - about 1,000

Driving the more than 5,700 totals in the Waxahachie District is the resourcefulness of members of First United Methodist Church of Mansfield. They brought in 3,000 by the conference collection date, and plan to continue until they reach 5,000. This was the challenge presented to members by their senior pastor, Rev. Mike Ramsdell.

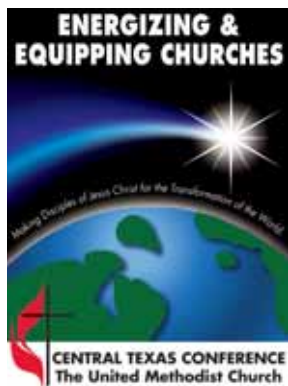
“We e-mailed members and posted the details on our website,” said Rev. Sharon Reid, associate pastor. “Our members got so excited about the possibility of helping the people of Haiti that many got their children’s schools involved, Sunday school classes and our children’s ministry pitched in,” she said. “This was primarily our church family,” states Reid, but it went beyond that, deep into the community.

In the Weatherford District, Graham High School joined 19 congregations in the district to participate in providing well over 2,000 health kits. In the Hillsboro area, Rev. Reed Justus reports that sharing the health kits plan at a local Rotary Club was met with offers to help, including



Brownwood District disaster response coordinator Bob Bell unloads about 900 health kits for the earthquake survivors in Haiti. So many community people stepped in to add their contributions to our United Methodist congregations.

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the
Central Link

An edition of
The United Methodist Reporter
February 19, 2010
Volume 156 | Number 42

Central Link, an edition of *The United Methodist Reporter*, is the official publication of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Opinions are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect official United Methodist positions. The Central Texas Conference does not endorse any product or service advertised.

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

The mission of Central Link edition of *The United Methodist Reporter* is to inform, enlighten, inspire and equip leaders for mission and ministry in our connectional church.

For circulation and/or advertising policy, contact Susan Briles 817.877.5222, 800.460.8622 or susan@ctcumc.org. Subscriptions: \$20/year.

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

The Central Link edition is published every other week and is the official publication of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107-2153.



The Wilderness Way

By BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

31. Our daughter and son-in-law met and four years later married in Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone and the adjacent Grand Teton National Park are one of my most favorite places on earth. After their wedding, Jolynn and I stayed for a few days in the park to hike with our son. He knew a special hike to some off the beaten path geysers out in the back county of Yellowstone. It sounded great and we headed out with enthusiasm. But then the plague struck!

We were attacked by mosquitoes so big they discussed whether to eat us on the spot or take us back to their lair. (Ok, I'm exaggerating, but only slightly!) It was terrible. We were pouring some heavy duty backwoods bug repellent on ourselves. Our pace speeded up subconsciously thinking we might out run the mosquitoes. I couldn't help it. It just popped out of my mouth. I, who love hikes, sarcastically asked, "Are we having fun yet?" I was asking the "why" question as in "why are we out here?!" Both my wife and son reminded me in no uncertain terms that hiking off into the wilderness was my idea.

As we travel on the wilderness way, answering the why question becomes an imperative. Moses faced the "why" question. A nascent rebellion took place in wilderness. "Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.'"¹

Every church and church organization has people who want to go back to Egypt. Electing a chair of the Back to Egypt Committee is a common pastime of dissenters. Heading back to Egypt feels comfortable. Egypt may have been bad but at least it represented the known way. Furthermore, Egypt represents a false security. It is commonly remembered as better than it really was. The temptation is high to think if we just get the right pastor or leadership mix, next year will be 1951 instead of 2011. We can go back to the day when Christianity reigned supreme in American.

The truth is that there is no going back to Egypt. A charismatic new pastor (preferably a young male married with a wife who doesn't work outside the home and plays the piano, having 2.4 kids (one preschool and the other early grade school) *won't* make all the difference. We can go back to the mythical security and sanctity of Egypt. Egypt had its own massive problems. Even more significantly, it is God who has sent us into the wilderness of the twenty-first century. Secular culture is the vehicle God is using to build a new church.

One of the critical imperatives before us is to answer the "why" question for ourselves and our congregations as they seek to elect a new Captain to head the Back to Egypt Committee. Answering the "Why?" question involves theologically rethinking not only our mission but theology and core convictions that provide the foundation for our mission. Here we must begin in confession for the common theological orientation springing out of enlightenment thought² has run its course. The standard alternative of holding tenaciously to the Bible and rejecting modern theological thinking has likewise sprung massive leaks on the shoals of reality (scientific and otherwise).³ In the wilderness, we must engage again in the hard work of rethinking our theology. This will challenge our most cherished bias across the theological spectrum. It will be different and it most assuredly will be met with deep resistance and renewed nominations for the Back to Egypt Committee.

² Such thought is usually referred to as liberal or progressive. I reject such labels because they are incomplete and inevitably confused with secular politics in ways that are both inaccurate and unhelpful.

³ Such thought is typically referred to as fundamentalist, conservative or evangelical. Again I reject such labels. The three terms each represent a different point on the theological spectrum and cannot fairly be equated with each other. Furthermore, they are too are incomplete and inevitably confused with secular politics in ways that are both inaccurate and unhelpful.



Brownwood DS takes incapacity leave

Health concerns have necessitated Rev. Jim Olney's decision to request incapacity leave from his role as superintendent of the Brownwood District of the Central Texas Conference.

Bishop Mike Lowry accepted his request with deep regret. "I cannot convey adequately my deep grief," Bishop Lowry replied upon receiving Rev. Olney's notification letter. "You've made both valued and valuable contributions to my ministry coming into this conference and to the work of the conference as a whole," he said, adding, "You will be sorely missed."

As Rev. Olney proceeds with treatment for cancer, Bishop Lowry said, "I will look forward to

the day in which I may place you back on active appointment."

Caring for the clergy and laity of the Brownwood District is a primary concern at this time, especially as the conference moves into the annual inventory and clergy appointment process. Three members of the Cabinet — Superintendents Rankin Koch (Temple District), Rod Miles (Waco District) and Ginger Bassford (Weatherford District) — have stepped up to cover the Brownwood District with their prayers and leadership.

Congregations have been assigned to the three superintendents based mostly on geographic location with consideration given to driving

routes and the most effective clusters of local churches. The superintendents who will be representing in Rev. Olney's absence have already or will be contacting their assigned local churches.

Rev. Olney's request for Feb. 1, 2010, as his effective leave date sets in motion a review and approval process as defined by The United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline. A clergy request for incapacity leave requires approval of the Cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry's Joint Committee on Incapacity. This joint committee, comprised of representatives of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Board of Pensions, has responsibility to

review the medical verification of incapacity status and determine the disability benefits. Rev. Olney will be well cared for, and there will be periodic updates on his incapacity status.

Our prayers offer the best support the conference can give Rev. Olney during this time of intense treatment. Bishop Lowry reminds him, "Know my full sense of prayer and great admiration for your courage and work for the Lord."

Pull out your crayons! Turn on your favorite computer draw program! Now, can you capture 100 years in a logo?



1910 is an important date in the history of the Central Texas Conference — and so is 2010. This year is the 100th anniversary of the conference and that's a reason for celebration.

A special centennial celebration is planned for Oct. 23 in Fort Worth, so please save that date and plan to attend the big festivities. There will be big name entertainment, local churches displaying their histories, food and fellowship, and a few surprises.

Another way to participate

in this historic event is to pump up your creative mind and submit your idea of a Centennial Celebration logo design to be used in promotional materials and at the event.

The 100th Anniversary Committee will judge the entries, and the selected artist will be recognized at the anniversary event. Logo guidelines include:

- Logo may be color or black/white
- Incorporated in the logo should be some representation of the following: Central Texas Conference,

The United Methodist Church, 100th Anniversary or Centennial Celebration or 1910-2010

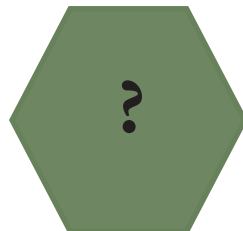
- Artwork should be suitable for promotional materials, program cover, medallion and/or lapel pins

The Central Texas Conference began as part of the Texas Conference (1840-1866) and then the Northwest Texas Conference (1866-1910).

“Recognizing the growth of Methodism in the region, the General Conference of 1910 agreed to divide the Northwest Texas Conference into two annual

conferences,” states Conference Archivist Carol Roszell.

Logo designs should be submitted in digital format (TIFF, EPS, JPEG) on or before April 1 to Carolyn Stephens at carolyn@ctcunc.org or on flash drive or disk to: Central Texas Conference Logo Design, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107. Mailed art should include a print out of the design along with the digital format and contact information for the artist and church affiliation.



Celebrating the ministry of quilts

“Share your quilting group” was the request made in the December 11 issue of *Central Link*. So far two churches have responded.

The question was: “Would a picture of your quilting group today look anything like the one pictured here in this mid-1800s print?”



A Central Texas Conference staffer was the winning bidder on this print at the Metropolitan Board of Mission's annual auction, but would like to share it with others as they visit the conference center in Fort Worth.

The Quilting Party was painted by an unidentified American artist some time between 1854 and 1875. It captures a time, lifestyle and art form that continues today in many of our communities. Handmade quilts often bring the highest contributions to our church fundraisers.

The first quilting group to share their story was from First United Methodist Church in Springtown where a quilting club has been around since 1940. “The highest

bid we have gotten for one of our quilts was \$1,500 in 2008 for a Ring of Love quilt that measured 105x104 inches,” say Debbi Bosch and Voncille Ball. “We make an average of eight big quilts and eight smaller ones for our Lord's Acre auction ... and have the best time,” said Debbi.

The Troy United Methodist Church Quilters have just completed a quilt that was made of material scraps from the old Cheeves Brothers Dept. Store's millinery in Temple. Maurine Thomas, who was the milliner, designed and made hats for the ladies in the Temple area. She saved the scraps and pieces of material and gave them to Levy Hamilton who pieced the quilt together for a true work of art.

The quilters of Troy UMC organized in 1963, meeting in each others homes, and about 20 years ago moved their meetings to the church.

The women quilt for the public and all money is placed in a fund which is used for church activities, the community food kitchen and other charities. Each year at least one quilt is auctioned at the church's annual Fall Festival.

Some of their custom quilts have been made for people as far away as Mississippi, California, New York, Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska and many parts of Texas. The quilters do not advertise, but depend on the successful word of mouth.



Quilters at First UMC Springtown are, l-r, Debbi Bosch, Jo White, Maria Gregory, Voncille Ball, Lois Gamble, Judith Anna, and Kay Williams.



Quilters at Troy UMC are, l-r, Willie Mae Gross, Janice Porter, Jackie Lewis, Janet Klement and Edna Rankin. During their first 20 years, the club created 318 quilts. When they moved their meetings to the church, their quilts grew larger with more complex designs so fewer are made each year.

February

- 16-19: Cabinet Inventory Retreat
- 20-21: Mid-Winter Youth Retreat #2: Near & Far at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
- 20: Weatherford District clergy mission work day
- 20: Conference United Methodist Women finance meeting at Tarleton Wesley Foundation, Stephenville
- 21: Gathering in honor of Jim & Terri Olney, 4-5:30 p.m. at First Brownwood UMC
- 21: Glen Lake Camp board meeting
- 23: Temple District Laity Banquet at Mayborn Civic & Convention Center, Temple
- 25: Conference Council on Finance & Administration at Conference Center
- 25: Metropolitan Board of Mission Annual Dinner at Round-Up Inn, Will Rogers Complex, Fort Worth
- 26-28: 7th Annual Lay Speakers Weekend at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
- 26: Waxahachie District Laity Banquet at First UMC, Alvarado
- 27: Temple District Mission Leadership Team meeting at First UMC, Killeen
- 27: Health & Wellness Task Force meeting at First UMC, Bosqueville

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

News Briefs

2010 Annual Conference

In an effort to be more environmentally friendly and to reduce printing costs, the 2010 Annual Conference information will be made available on the Central Texas Conference website rather than by mailing.

All details concerning hotels, luncheons, childcare, schedules and the 2010 Preliminary Reports will be posted as they become available. Providing the Preliminary Reports online will be a significant cost savings and an act of good stewardship of conference funds. You may view and download the information by clicking on the 2010 Annual Conference icon at www.ctcumc.org.

The conference appreciates the support of members as this year's Annual Conference "goes green."

Clergy appointment changes

Bishop Mike Lowry and the Cabinet announced the following changes in clergy appointments:

Kenneth Bergeron — elder in full connection, from Bethesda United Methodist Church (Weatherford District) to incapacity leave, effective Dec. 7, 2009.

Rodney Corder — full-time local pastor, from associate pastor at Acton United Methodist Church (Weatherford District) to incapacity leave, effective Nov. 29, 2009.

Barry Holmes — retired member, from retired unappointed to pastor at Central United Methodist Church, Mineral Wells/Graford (Weatherford District), effective Jan. 1, 2010.

Alison Humann — part-time local pastor, from 1/2-time pastor at Emhouse/Richland charge to 3/4-time and including UCF Navarro College (Waxahachie District), effective Feb. 1, 2010.

Helen Jones — part-time local pastor, from 1/2-time pastor at Tolar/Temple Hall charge to 1/2-time as pastor at Tolar (Weatherford District), effective Feb. 1, 2010.

Gary Kindley — elder in full connection, from retired status to surrender of credentials, effective Jan. 7, 2010.

C. Wayne Lewis — full-time local pastor, from pastor at the Bangs/Mullin charge to the Bangs/Santa Anna charge, effective Jan. 16, 2010.

Kevin Morton — supply pastor, from not appointed to 1/4-time pastor at the Trickham/Valera charge (Brownwood District), effective Jan. 1, 2010.

James R. Olney — elder in full connection, from superintendent of the Brownwood District to incapacity leave, effective Feb. 1, 2010.

Victor Pena — full-time local pastor at Acton: Rancho Brazos/Resurrection charge to Resurrection United Methodist Church, Cleburne (Weatherford District), effective Jan. 1, 2010.

John Seth — part-time local pastor, from 1/2-time at Blanket United Methodist Church to 1/2-time at the Blanket/Mullin charge (Brownwood District), effective Jan. 16, 2010.

Eric E. Smith — elder in full connection, from pastor at the Kopperl/Rio Vista charge to associate pastor at Acton United Methodist church (Weatherford District), effective Feb. 15, 2010.

UMVIM Team Leader Training

A United Methodist Volunteers in Mission team leader training will be held from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 24, at Alliance United Methodist Church.

UMVIM can be a vital tool in helping your church be more effective as partners in God's mission to a hurting and broken world, whether you take a team down the street, to your own community, to Haiti or elsewhere across the globe.

UMVIM team leader training is for beginners and seasoned leaders alike. Learn tips for all aspects of project planning, group theological reflection, team building, insuring your team, and fostering a transformational mission experience. For more details, contact Jennifer Bellamy at 817-877-5222 or jennifer@ctcumc.org.

Big number ... many small stories | Continued from page 1A

First United Methodist Church's neighboring Hillsboro Baptist Church.

Rev. Joseph Nadar, director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Texas at Arlington, reports that campus ministry nursing student Elliott Schmidt was the spirit and energy behind raising over \$900 on the UTA campus.

He distributed fliers outlining the need for health kits and set up collection booths at a number of campus locations. Four completed health kits were donated, but mostly the students gave money for supplies. Wesley Foundation students were able to purchase supplies for about 60 health kits and extended an open invitation to student to help in "building" the kits Tuesday evening, Feb. 9.

The Shorthorn, UTA's campus newspaper, quotes Schmidt in saying that people should not stop donating now because incoming donations are only addressing immediate needs. Haiti will need help for a long time. The Wesley Foundation is now considering a trip to Haiti and possibly an annual donation drive to help the earthquake victims, Schmidt said.

Youth groups at a number of churches, including First Burselon, Bedford and Minerals Wells, worked at assembling health kits. Junior and senior high school students attending the Central Texas Conference Mid-Winters at Glen Lake Camp had their own focus on global ministries. Students gathered under the evening stars on the steps of Turner Hall to read aloud the collection of prayers for Haiti that were assembled by the General Board of Discipleship. Out of the darkness a flashlight would light the reading of a prayer, followed by a moment of silent meditation. Then another light and prayer, and another, and another.



Rev. Jerry Galloway of First UMC Waxahachie (center) brings a load of health kits to the collection site at First UMC Hillsboro where Rev. Reed Justus and Rev. David Ray, senior and associate pastors at First Hillsboro, help in transferring the boxes to one of the two U-Haul trucks.

White's Chapel United Methodist Church in Southlake hosted a Rock Haiti Benefit Concert on Friday, Feb. 12, with five high school rock bands performing. Proceeds from the concert will benefit Haitian earthquake relief.

The Youth Ministry at First United Methodist Church of Fort Worth observed Shrove Tuesday, Feb. 16, with a pancake supper along with "Shrove-to-God" pancake mixes. All proceeds from the supper and the pancake mixes are being donated to the Haiti Relief Fund.

The conference is grateful to Bill and Linda Eslick of Acton United Methodist Church and Win and Jinny Hatt of First United Methodist Church of Mansfield for volunteering to drive the two 26-foot U-Haul trucks to the Sager Brown UMCOR Depot in Baldwin, La. This is the distribution point from which health kits and other supplies will be transported to Haiti.

"God is amazing and so are the people of the Central Texas Conference!" exclaims Rev. Laraine Waughtal, chair of the Conference Disaster Response Task Force and the coordinator for the conference-wide call for health kits to help the people

of Haiti.

"I just want to praise God and the people of the Central Texas Conference, and to say thank you to Bishop Mike Lowry for his support of Haiti, all the District Disaster Response coordinators, churches, district collection sites, the people who drove the trucks to Hillsboro, to First Hillsboro for being the main collection site, the conference office, UMCOR for all they do, and so many others who made this all possible," Waughtal said.

She also praised U-Haul executives who, after learning how the two 26-foot trucks would be used, gave a great discount so that the delivery to Sager Brown was possible. "What an amazing response," Waughtal said.

"As I have talked with various people at Sager Brown about the delivery of the kits and making arrangements for their arrival, every singled response has been 'Wow!' when they heard what you have done," she said. "They have not had a response like this from any other conference, and they are grateful for your faithfulness in responding to God's call. God bless you all."



Bill and Linda Eslick, closest to the vehicle, volunteered their services to drive one of the two U-Haul truckloads of health kits to the Sager Brown UMCOR Depot in Baldwin, La. The Eslicks are members of Acton United Methodist Church, and are joined by friends at Acton UMC who drove the van back to the church.