



Therapeutic Music ... 4A



Men's Gathering ... 5A



INM Partytime ... 8A

Bishop Lowry announces superintendents for new Central Texas Conference alignment

After prayer and deep thought, I am pleased to announce the following superintendent appointments, effective at the Central Texas Annual Conference in June:

North District
Dr. Virginia Bassford

South District
Rev. Rankin Koch

Central District
Rev. Don Scott

East District
Dr. Bob Holloway

West District
Rev. Carol Woods

In addition, I have asked Dr. Luther Henry to serve as a special consultant to myself and to the Cabinet on matters of inclusivity and diversity. He has graciously consented to do so, and will be a part of all Appointive Cabinet meetings.

As we look to a new future implementing The Exodus Project alignment, there remains much work and deep changes before us.

Throughout this process, I believe we must hold fast to the promise of the Lord: "For I know the plans I have for you, ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11).



**North District
Dr. Virginia Bassford**



**South District
Rev. Rankin Koch**



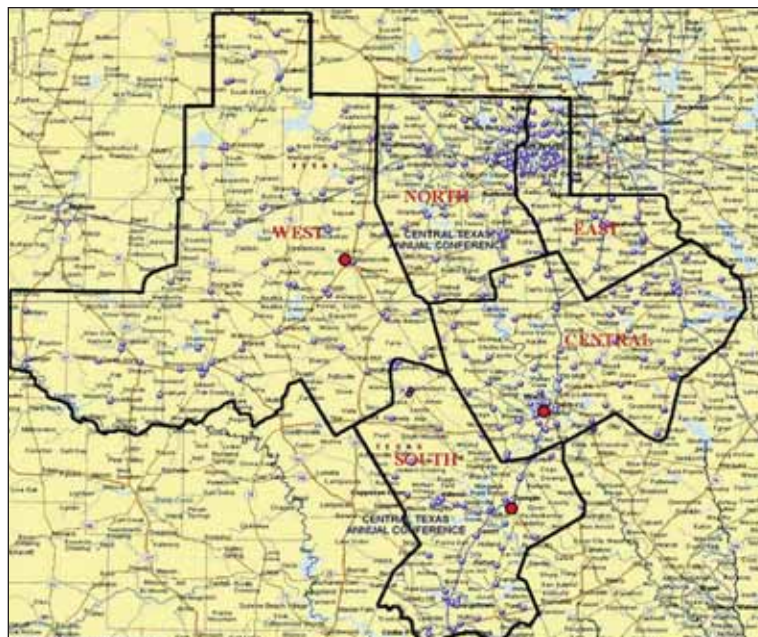
**Central District
Rev. Don Scott**



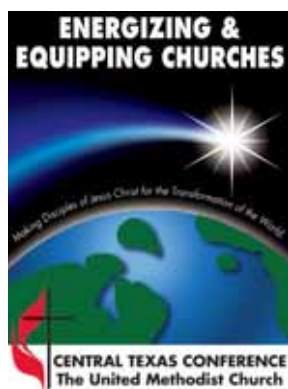
**East District
Dr. Robert Holloway**



**West District
Rev. Carol Woods**



Small blue dots represent (not necessarily accurately) churches within the Central Texas Conference. Larger red dots are the approximate location of district offices. The North and East district office locations will be finalized after a decision is made about the conference office location.



the **Central Link**

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Learning from the Megachurch

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

NOTE: Bishop Lowry departs from *The Wilderness Way* with this issue to share a message from his latest "This Focused Center Blog." You can follow his blog writings at www.ctcumc.org.

I just finished reading Scott Thumma and Dave Travis' book *Beyond the MegaChurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches*. It makes for fascinating reading. Perhaps the most significant insight is this: "We argue that the greatest contribution of megachurches is not about growth or being large so much as it is about learning how to address the contemporary needs of people in the community.

In many cases megachurches have figured out how to do this in ways that resonate with their neighbors – an insight that has great value to congregations of all sizes." (p.191)

1. MYTH: "All megachurches are alike!"
 REALITY: They are not all alike, but in fact are very diverse. They do share some common organizational characteristics.
2. MYTH: "That church is just too big!"
 REALITY: "The reason that megachurches are so large is ultimately because many people are getting their needs met in them." (p. 46) Younger generations are comfortable with and in larger institutions and often find in them small intimate groups for nurture and discipleship formation.
3. MYTH: "Megachurches are cults of personality."
 REALITY: Leadership is a critical factor in any size of church. Megachurch pastors lead teams of people with a clear sense of vision and mission.
4. MYTH: "These churches are only concerned about themselves and the needs of their attendees."
 REALITY: Great initial growth tends to focus a church on building facilities and internal structure, but as churches mature, they diversify and strengthen their outreach in ministry often far beyond other churches. Many (if not most) megachurches have great missional outreach to those in need.
5. MYTH: "Megachurches water down the faith."
 REALITY: The evidence is just the opposite. Clarity of mission means that these churches "actually call many believers to higher levels of commitment." (p. 92)



6. MYTH: "These churches are bad for other churches."
 REALITY: They have resulted in the loss of power and influence from smaller churches, but the "benefits these congregations bring to other churches can outweigh the challenging situations they create." (p. 119)
7. MYTH: "These churches are full of people of the same race, class and political preferences."
 REALITY: While this can appear true at a distance, closer examination often reveals greater diversity than in traditional congregations! Every study done on megachurches shows a considerable mix of economic groups, education and occupation.
8. MYTH: "Megachurches grow because of the show."
 REALITY: Preaching and excellence in worship are a hallmark of megachurches. As a group, these churches are widely diverse in worship styles and much better at connecting with the "heart language" of new generations. They speak both to and with the culture. Quality is a crucial explanation for growth, but not the only factor!
9. MYTH: "The megachurch movement is dying – young people hate these churches."
 REALITY: Just the opposite is true! "There are large numbers of young adults in these churches – perhaps in greater percentages than in any other congregational size or form." (p 169)

There is much to learn here for all kinds and sizes of churches. Thumma and Travis' core insight bears repeating. "We argue that the greatest contribution of megachurches is not about growth or being large so much as it is about learning how to address the contemporary needs of people in the Community. In many cases, megachurches have figured out how to do this in ways that resonate with their neighbors – an insight that has great value to congregations of all sizes."

"Make Your Music Matter More!"



"Make Your Music Matter More!" provides a unique opportunity for people who love to play music for others, care about the needs of children, and want to give something back in their lives.

This therapeutic music entertainment workshop to prepare musicians to reach out to children in pediatric healthcare settings will be Saturday, Feb. 26, from 10 a.m. to noon. The sponsor and setting

for the workshop is The Hugworks Center at 752 Mary Drive, Hurst 76053.

The objectives of the workshop are:

- Provide you with an understanding of The Hugworks organization and what they do,
- Introduce you to Hugworks' unique approach to live music entertainment for hospitalized children, and

- Help you determine how you can become an active participant in Hugworks' ministry.

The workshop presenters are Jim Newton and Paul G. Hill of Hugworks and Larry Dykstra, a therapeutic music entertainer/trainer.

If interested, respond to hugworks@hugworks or 817-268-0020.

Radical Hospitality

Celebrating and learning from our 'Certified Welcoming Congregations'

Renewing their official Certified Welcoming Congregation status with The United Methodist Church are First United Methodist Church of Burleson and First United Methodist Church of Coleman.

Both have already met all the requirements to become Certified Welcoming Congregations, but have continued to grow and meet higher standards each year in showing radical hospitality in their communities.

Because The United Methodist Church places a high value on radical hospitality as a vital ministry, these two congregations — and 24 others in the Central Texas Conference that have achieved this status — will continue to embrace newcomers and provide opportunities for discipleship through their welcoming style.

For churches that are interested in improving their welcoming ministry, visit the denomination website at www.umc.org and do a search for

"Welcoming Congregations" and "Rethink Church."

The Welcoming Congregations site provides the steps and qualifications for certification. Besides the recognition, the process is an excellent way to strengthen your church's welcoming ministry. Your church begins the process by registering one person for the WCC100 online forum, which is open at all times with step-by-step online "Becoming a Welcoming Certified Congregation" course.

There is also a downloadable Training Manual and a Planning Handbook. Reading it ahead of time, gives readers a new perspective on the importance of being a welcoming congregation. It also reminds all of us that "the pitfall for many churches is that we think we are friendly because we are friendly with each other." But how often does that friendliness reach out to others outside our immediate circle of friends?

Certified Welcoming Congregations in the Central Texas Conference

Brownwood District

Brownwood First UMC
Coleman First UMC
Gorman First UMC
Oakdale UMC

Fort Worth District

Burleson First UMC
Campus Drive UMC, Fort Worth
Crowley First UMC
Edge Park UMC, Fort Worth
Everman First UMC

Mid-Cities District

Grapevine First UMC
Wm. C. Martin UMC, Bedford
McMillan UMC, Fort Worth
St. Barnabas UMC, Arlington
Trinity UMC, Arlington

Temple District

Bartlett First UMC
Grace UMC, Copperas Cove
Florence UMC
St. Andrew UMC, Killeen
St. Philip's UMC, Round Rock

Waco District

Woodway UMC, Waco

Waxahachie District

Alvarado First UMC
Wesley UMC, Corsicana
Cleburne First
New Day UMC, Mansfield

Weatherford District

Glen Rose First UMC
Poolville UMC

Corrections on Cornerstone Garden story

A story in the last Central Link incorrectly credited Temple District Superintendent Rankin Koch with verifying a cornerstone that once marked the start of the Rockwood Methodist Church in the Brownwood District.

In fact, it was Rev. Bob Weathers and his wife, Mary, who made a special trip to check on the Rockwood church. Weathers was superintendent of the Temple District at the time, and they found the hole in that church's

facade that perfectly matched the size of the cornerstone.

It rested just outside the back door at the conference office for several years. Today it more appropriately rests in the Methodist Cornerstone Garden on the campus of Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth.

The second correction is about the St. John's cornerstone, which was from the St. John's church in Fort Worth rather than Waco.

Metro Board: "On the Road to Change"

"On the Road the Change" will be at the heart of the Metropolitan Board of Missions' annual dinner from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 24, at Round-Up Inn, Will Rogers Memorial Center, Fort Worth.

The Metro Board is motivated by Christ's love to resource and fund ministries that respond to human need. For 2011, the Metro Board will 42 partner ministries in the greater Tarrant County area.

The dinner is open to all who wish to support the mission of the Metro Board and its partnership ministries. Make your reservation with churches in the Fort Worth and Mid-Cities districts or by contacting Metro Board at 817-569-1454 or metroboard-umc@sbcglobal.net. More details about the Metro Board's ministry and the annual dinner event can be found at www.metroboard-umc.org.



Transforming Men for Christ

A hearty group of men in the Center Texas Conference gathered Jan. 21-22 for the "Transforming Men for Christ Conference" at New World United Methodist Church in Arlington.

Bishop Mike Lowry, pictured at left, started the conference by delivering a message of transformation and personal dialogue. Continuing with messages of transformation and encouragement were Rev. David N. Mosser, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of Arlington, and Dr. Todd Renner, teaching pastor and provost at White's Chapel United Methodist Church in Southlake.



February:

- 5: United Methodist Women Charter for Racial Justice Event/ Sing A Rainbow at Burleson First UMC
- 7-8: Residency CE Event (for first and second-year resident attendance required) at Sillwater Lodge
- 8: Equitable Compensation meeting at Conference Center
- 9: Extended Cabinet Leadership Training
- 12: CSCM Planning Team meeting, location TBA
- 15: Central Texas Methodist Foundation Board at Conference Center
- 15-17: Cabinet Inventory
- 17: Board of Ordained Ministry meeting at Hurst First UMC
- 19-20: Mid-Winters #1 at Glen Lake Camp, Glen Rose
- 19: Tasting Diversity (morning) & Human Trafficking (afternoon) Retreat at Stephenville First UMC
- 19: United Methodist Women Finance Committee meeting at Hillsboro First UMC
- 22-23: Appointive Cabinet
- 22-24: Children's Forum 2011 in San Antonio
- 23: United Methodist Women Realignment meeting, Conference Center
- 25-27: 8th Annual Lay Speakers Weekend at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
- 26: Mid-Winters #2 at Glen Lake Camp, Glen Rose

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

Get ready to “Change the World” at your congregation

May 14-15 set for “change the world” action

Churches have an opportunity to participate in “Change the World,” which focuses on building community and fighting malaria globally. In 2010 more than 1,000 sites with over 100,000 volunteers in 16 different countries addressed needs and hunger to human trafficking, malaria, and more.

This effort shows the power of the connection when we join together to carry out the mission of the church.

In 2011, Change the World is scheduled for May 14-15, and the conference would like to acknowledge how your congregation will be participating this year.

United Methodist Communications, through Rethink Church, will provide free promotional materials and educational resources to support local churches in their projects. Here’s how it works:

(1) Each faith community should define a project relevant to its local community’s needs and/or find a way to assist our brothers and sisters around the world.

(2) Each faith community should register its participation at www.umcom.org/changetheworld and be prepared to share stories of their ministry so that the world and other churches in our conference can see the power of the connection. Share your stories with the conference with Carolyn Stephens, director of communications, at carolyn@ctcumc.org.

Two video clips on YouTube give examples of what other churches are doing. View them at www.youtube.com/user/UMCChangeTheWorld#p/a/u/1/pv80fk760ew and www.youtube.com/user/UMCChangeTheWorld.



Our Social Principles: Do you know them, how will they change in 2012?

In 2011, annual/regional conference of The United Methodist Church worldwide will elect delegates to represent them at the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Fla.

This is the official body of the United Methodist Church that will prayerfully deliberate over making changes to the denomination’s Book of Discipline and the Social Principles.

Congregations can get a head start in understanding the becoming familiar with the Social Principles as they are now, and may even want to submit resolutions to make changes.

The General Board of Church & Society provides on its website (www.umc-gbcs.org) capsulated documents on the Social Principles that over the decades have held great interest among the delegates who will be called on to make changes as well as lay and clergy in our congregations.

By hosting the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, our faithful membership in the Central Texas Conference gained greater insight into the denomination’s legislative process and the intense scrutiny and deliberation that goes into every aspect of our Social Principles.

The GBCS documents are created in the form of bulletin inserts, but can also be used to study

in Sunday school and other small groups. The United Methodist Church has in its Social Principles definitive viewpoints on many of the issues that perplex society today.

Do you know what The United Methodist Church says about such areas as:

- aging,
- racism,
- war and peace,
- immigrants,
- health care,
- children’s rights,

- alcohol and other drugs,
- religious minorities,
- women’s rights,
- medical experiments,
- HIV and AIDS,
- genetic technology, and
- persons with disabilities?

Each bulletin insert gives a brief statement of “our belief,” what we affirm and urge, and then statements that invite reading reflectively, reflecting prayerfully, praying responsively, and responding justly.

