

## Leadership Training

District events ... 4A



Thanksgiving ... 5A



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## Glen Lake Camp is grateful for many year-end gifts

Glen Lake Camp and Still Water Lodge faithfully fulfill our purpose for them "to promote the threefold spiritual, mental and physical development of young persons and adults as Christians.

If you appreciate all they are doing for our conference, perhaps you would help in other ways. November and December are slow revenue months for GLC. This creates a financial squeeze when it comes to fixed expenses like debt service and utilities plus cancellations totaled over \$85,000 in lost income, mostly because of the economy. But you can help:

- Pray for this vital ministry of the Central Texas Conference.
- Promote year-round utilization of both campuses among the decision makers in your church and other organizations to which you belong.

- Make a generous contribution.

As of Dec. 22, \$17,000 has been donated by individuals and church groups. Every contribution, large or small, helps. Send your contribution to Glen Lake Camp, P.O. Box 928, Glen Rose, TX 76043.

# Alignment Task Force sets timeline for change

By REV. MIKE RAMSDELL  
CHAIR, CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE  
ALIGNMENT TASK FORCE

The immediate and most important result of the third meeting of the Alignment Task Force Dec. 10 is working from a timeline that would have us present a preliminary alignment plan or rough draft at Annual Conference in June 2010.

Then our goal would be to present the final proposal at a called session of the Annual Conference in the fall. This would allow us to focus carefully on one of the most important shifts in our conference history, aligning our structure which includes staff, districts, the processes and systems of the entire conference. We would implement the plan after



*"There is great hope and enthusiasm out there today. It is a season of learning and willingness to change."*

— Rev. Mike Ramsdell

the 2011 Annual Conference.

### Thoughts About Our Process

We are looking carefully at what other conferences around the nation have done, are doing, or are getting ready to do. There is a tsunami of change happening in our denomination, as a result of crisis but also an expanding vision of our

mission. There is great hope and enthusiasm out there today. It is a season of learning and willingness to change.

We continue to be guided by our consultant Dr. Gil Rendle as well as input from many conferences — their leadership, conference staffs and local churches.

We are researching the present

reality of our own conference, both in our structure as well as current and historical data. That reality has some positive points, but in the light of world change and population increases in our conference area over the last 20 years, we don't feel like we have come close to our potential.

This must change, and to change reality the system that produced it must change. Our faith, passion, and mission is unquestioned as a church. The concern is our system. Let's change it.

We are also examining some of the alignment possibilities, restructuring and refocusing. These possibilities help us work with concrete ideas as we examine our existing structure.

| Continued on page 4A

## United Methodist Women's Racial Justice Event features former Women's Division president

"Come to the Feast!" is the theme of the United Methodist Women's Sing A Rainbow, the annual Charter for Racial Justice Event, Saturday, Jan. 30, at First United Methodist Church of Arlington.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. with the program from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Dr. Carol E. Johnson, chief

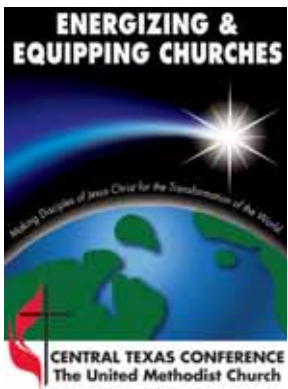
diversity officer for Purdue University, will lead the gathering in a celebration of diversity. Her vast professional experience includes teaching at all levels of the public schools, executive director of a neighborhood-based social service agency, a consultant to numerous school districts, corporations, civic organizations, and textbook companies.

She has served on all levels of United Methodist Women, and is a past national president of the Women's Division. She is currently participating with the Division in a major project on women in higher education with colleges and universities historically founded by the Division.

Sing A Rainbow is free to all, but participants are asked to register

on the UMW conference website (www.ctcumc.org) or by contacting Registrar Theresa Robinson at 817-536-5537. Childcare is provided. For lunch, everyone is asked to bring a favorite dish to share that comes from a culture other than their own.

Come to the feast!



the **Central Link**

An edition of  
**The United Methodist Reporter**  
 January 8, 2010  
 Volume 156 | Number 36

*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.

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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.

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 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

**28.** “Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death so that everyone could also be included in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.” (II Corinthians 5:14-15, *The Message*)

Those words from *The Message* paraphrase of the Bible have stuck with me since I first read them (at least first read *The Message* version) in my devotional time last fall. I want them said over my life and ministry as a bishop. I want to live out of a focused center based on Christ. I am also convinced that the sense of a focused center based on Christ is critical to the future of the Christian movement in this wilderness way.

Last summer I read a story from Jim Collins new book *How the Mighty Fall*. He wrote: “... leaders atop companies in the late stages of decline need to get back to a calm, clear-headed, and focused approach. If you want to reverse decline, be rigorous about what *not* to do. In the early 1990s, I invited a former Marine turned entrepreneur to guest-lecture in my course on creativity at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He’s done multiple tours of jungle combat in the Vietnam War. When asked what lessons, if any, carried over to his civilian life as an entrepreneur, he thought about it for a moment and then responded, ‘When you have just a few people, and there is enemy all around you, the best thing is to say, ‘You take this section from here to here, and you take this section from here to here, and *do not* fire on automatic. Take one shot at a time.’”

“Breathe. Calm yourself. Think. Focus. Aim. Take *one shot at a time.*” (*How the Mighty Fall* by Jim Collins, pg. 97)



This is great advice for us as a wilderness people. We need to be calm and breathe (see *The Wilderness Way* #27).

This is a central component of trusting God. We need to think. Old habits and strategies will not do in this new age and on this wilderness way. We must focus on the heart of the faith — Christ our Lord.

Do you remember the story from the 11th chapter of Acts? “The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. ...they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. ... So it was that for an entire year they associated with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians.’” (Acts 11:21-26)

It is my intention (hope?) to start a blog this coming January entitled *This Focused Center* based on this passage from II Corinthians. I hope to share what I am reading and wrestling with. Together I hope and pray that we can live out of the focused center of life with Christ. Truly he came for all and he came to include us “in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.” (II Corinthians 5:15)

May His birth be your joy and my the New Year find you living from this focused center!

## Alignment Task Force | Continued from page 1A

What is working here, in other places, what is not working, what needs to end, what needs to begin. What might we look like if we were shaped by our mission, and what structures must we have as set in place by General Conference and our Judicial Council. As you can see, this is quite a task.

We hope to define an outcome, one already somewhat in place by the clarified mission statement for our denomination as well as by the Central Texas Conference’s claimed mission. As we focus on a clear mission, we then must define the system that is able to produce that outcome.

What do you think the outcome of the local church ought to be, the conference, the United Methodist Church? We must begin with the end in mind. There are two typical ways institutions and churches operate: they either watch the old dies as they desperately seek to maintain it, or they are actively building the new. What are we going

to build? This is a high risk, high reward season.

What we do must be within the boundaries of The Book of Discipline and the financial constraints of the conference.

We’re grate for Bishop Mike Lowry, Dr. Georgia Adamson, Dr. Bob Holloway, and a creative task force of folks from a variety of places in the journey of serving God in the UMC. They have already done a great deal of work and will continue to do more.

We will be involving many other leaders in the conference as this process moves rapidly forward. You can begin your involvement by praying, signing up for posts from the periodic blog, and commenting as you feel led.

This is our conference and we are in an exciting season as we prepare for a renewed future. We have ownership of our conference and ownership means we each — clergy and laity — are responsible for its success or failure.

## District training events

About this time each year, the seven districts of the Central Texas Conference provide specialized training for those who are serving in leadership roles in their local churches and the district. The schedule for these training sessions, which are open to all interested persons, are:

Jan. 16 (time TBA)	Waxahachie District	Location TBA
Jan. 16 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.	Weatherford District	Couts UMC
Jan. 17 2:30-5 p.m.	Temple District	Location TBA
Jan. 24 2-5 p.m.	Waco District	Austin Avenue UMC
Jan. 31 3:30-6:30 p.m.	Brownwood District	Early UMC
Jan. 31 2:30-5 p.m.	Joint Fort Worth/Mid-Cities Districts	Arborlawn UMC

# '09 Thanksgiving funds go to UMCOR Advance for Hunger and CTC local church hunger ministries

BY JENNIFER BELLAMY  
DIRECTOR OF HUMANITARIAN SERVICES

Many thanks to all of the congregations who contributed to this year's Thanksgiving Offering, a special offering traditionally taken during the month of November to combat hunger. As of Dec. 1, Central Texas Conference churches have contributed about \$17,000 to the 2009 offering, up slightly from \$16,000 the previous year.

This year's offering will be split between two endeavors. Ninety percent will go to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) special advance for Hunger and Development (Advance #982029).

Your donations will fund health and agricultural development projects that alleviate hunger and poverty. The priority projects in this area emphasize nutrition for children, women's programs, safe drinking water, livelihood improvement and agricultural projects.

By addressing the root causes of hunger, UMCOR aims to reduce the number of people affected by hunger and poverty, and to provide the means to improve the livelihood and access to affordable health care services for communities across the globe.

Ten percent of the offering will continue to fund the CTC's New or Expanded Local Church Hunger Ministry Grants.

The conference's Task Force on Hunger began this fund with the 2008 Thanksgiving Offering with the goal of providing seed money for churches that wish to begin new hunger ministries or to expand the capacity of existing ministries that provide for hungry members of our local communities.

The Task Force on Hunger was

delighted to provide over \$15,000 in grants this year to 16 churches across the conference area. Some of these exciting ministries include food pantries, Angel Food Ministries, community gardens, and community fellowship meals for

vulnerable individuals and families.

One such grant recipient is First United Methodist

Church of Granger, which applied for funds to expand the services of its Community Food Bank that opened in November 2008. This small congregation, with an average worship attendance of 13, provides groceries one day a month to families in the Granger community.

The food pantry, hosted and administered by FUMC Granger,

quickly began to receive support from other local churches and community organizations. In its first year the food pantry has seen a significant increase in families registered for assistance, up from 25 family units to 56.

With the help of the CTC grant, the ministry was able to provide a full Thanksgiving meal to 37 families and planned for full Christmas meals to over 40 families, in addition to its monthly assistance.

With the need in Granger ever growing, First Granger pastor Rev. Judy Gotcher prays for God to continue to bless this ministry to the community. "We are few in number," she said, "but our hearts are big, and we are indeed proud of this new ministry."

Churches wishing to apply for a grant in 2010 may download the application at [www.ctcumc.org/hunger](http://www.ctcumc.org/hunger). For more information about this or other questions about how your congregation can minister to hungry neighbors near and far, please contact the CTC Task Force on Hunger Coordinator Lana Bradley at [revlana@hotmail.com](mailto:revlana@hotmail.com).



## Events offer opportunities to energize and equip church laity and clergy for making disciples of Christ

The new year begins with a number of opportunities for church laity and clergy to build skills, energize and equip themselves for the important mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Read and reap:

### Lenten Sermon Writing Retreat

Jan. 11-15 / Mount Sequoyah Conference Center, Fayetteville, AR

Clergy and lay ministers are invited to undertake in-depth preparation and sermon writing for the season of Lent. The lightly programmed week allows ample time to write and study. On campus and commuter rates available. Contact: Rev. Kim Ross at 800-760-8126 or [spiritualdirector@mountsequoyah.org](mailto:spiritualdirector@mountsequoyah.org). Register at [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org).

### 2010 Clergy Day Apart

Jan. 26-27 / Still Water Lodge, Glen Rose, TX

"Caring for Your Soul" is the theme for the 2010 Clergy Day

Apart. Rev. Tom Albin, currently dean of the Upper Room Chapel and team leader for the Program Unit of The Upper Room, will be the keynote speaker. His academic interests lie in the areas of spiritual formation, Wesley studies, historical theology and evangelism. A registration form is on the conference website at [www.ctcumc.org](http://www.ctcumc.org).

### New Church Leadership Institute

Feb. 8-12 / Mount Sequoyah Conference Center, Fayetteville, AR

This New Church Leadership Institute equips potential new church pastors with the knowledge and skills for a successful new church start. Participants will hear how nine people adapted timeless church planting principles to their unique new church ministry contexts. Register with Dr. Bob Crossman of the Arkansas Conference at [bcrossman@arumc.org](mailto:bcrossman@arumc.org) or Rose Kuonen at [rkuonen@arumc.org](mailto:rkuonen@arumc.org). Housing, meal and

registration information at [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org). On campus and commuter rates available.

### Perkins Masters Program waives application fee

Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, is waiving its \$50 application fee through March 1 for applicants to the master of divinity, master of theological studies, master of church ministries, and master of sacred music degree programs.

For more details, contact Tracy Anne Allred, director of Student Services, at [tallred@smu.edu](mailto:tallred@smu.edu) or 214-768-1480; Herbert Coleman, director of Recruitment & Admissions, at [hcoleman@smu.edu](mailto:hcoleman@smu.edu) or 214-768-2139; or visit Perkins website at [www.smu.edu/perkins](http://www.smu.edu/perkins).

### Small Church Leadership Institute

March 8-12 / Mount Sequoyah Conference Center, Fayetteville, AR  
The Small Church Leadership

Institute equips pastors and laity with the knowledge and skills for leading their small-attendance church into the future. Participants will hear stories of small church transformations with ample time for networking and fellowship. Contact: Marilyn Braswell at 800-760-8126 or [programs@mountsequoyah.org](mailto:programs@mountsequoyah.org). Register at [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org). On campus and commuter rates available.

### Funding Your Congregation's Vision Conference

March 20 / Ellicott City, MD

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership will offer its annual Funding Your Congregation's Vision Conference at Glen Mar United Methodist Church in Ellicott City, Maryland. This year's event explores a number of new subject areas. Further details and registration information is available at [www.churchleadership.com](http://www.churchleadership.com).



### January

- 11-14 Perkins School of Youth Ministry, Southern Methodist University, Dallas
- 12: Temple District clergy meeting at Well-spring UMC, Georgetown
- 12: Mid-Cities clergy meeting at First Bedford UMC
- 12: Evangelism Task Force at First Hillsboro UMC
- 14: Conference Council on Finance & Administration meeting at Conference Center
- 15-18: Civil Rights Road Trip - a weekend designed to help today's young people connect to the radical possibilities their lives hold for the Kingdom
- 16-23: UMVIM Work Tour to Eastern Mexico Conference
- 16: Weatherford District training event at Couets UMC, Weatherford
- 16: Waxahachie District training event / time and location to be announced
- 16: United Methodist Women team meeting at Glen Lake Camp
- 17: Temple District training event, location to be announced
- 19-20: Cabinet meeting
- 19: Agenda Committee meeting at Conference Center
- 21: Local church check-out deadline
- 23: CTCYM group leader training

For the latest updates on the conference and youth calendars, visit regularly [www.ctcumc.org](http://www.ctcumc.org)

## — News Briefs —

### Clergy appointment changes

Bishop Mike Lowry and the Cabinet announce the following clergy appointment changes:

**Steven W. Buchele** — elder in full connection moves from half-time associate at Wellspring United Methodist Church, Georgetown, to three-quarter time associate pastor at St. Philip's United Methodist Church, both churches in the Temple District, effective Jan. 1.

**Mike Wright-Chapman** — deacon in full connection continues his relationship with the North Texas Conference while he serves as associate pastor at First United Methodist Church of Burleson, effective, Nov. 1.

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### Perkins names Resurrection pastor Adam Hamilton as 2010 Distinguished Alum

Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor at United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in the Kansas East Annual Conference, has been named recipient of the 2010 Perkins Distinguished Alumnus Award by the Alumni/ae Council of Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

The singular award recognizes annually one graduate of Perkins who has demonstrated effectiveness and integrity in service to the church, continuing support and involvement in the goals of Perkins and SMU, distinguished service in the wider community, and exemplary character.

Hamilton's service to the church, spanning more than two decades, has taken many forms and found many fruitful expressions. He was appointed in 1990 to a start-up mission in Leawood, Kansas, a southern suburb of Kansas City. He has overseen the growth of that congregation into one of the largest in United Methodism, with a membership of more than 12,000 and average weekly worship attendance of more than 7,500.

Besides his role as pastor and preacher, he has written extensively on the subjects of church leadership, evangelism, family relationship, and spiritual growth and renewal. He is the recipient of the B'nai B'rith Award in Social Ethics, the Denman Award in Evangelism, and the Circuit Rider Award for excellence in church leadership. He was named Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church by the Foundation for Evangelism, as well as one of the "Ten People to Watch in America's Spiritual Landscape" by *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*.

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### REMINDER: You can contribute ideas, responses to the Alignment Task Force

Central Texas Conference laity and clergy are invited to participate in helping make a difference in the future of the Conference and the ministries of local churches.

The Alignment Task Force wants your input on their work through a blog that Pat Stroman (lay member) and Rev. Mike Ramsdell (task force chair) are posting after each meeting on the conference website at [www.ctcumc.org](http://www.ctcumc.org). Rev. Ramsdell posted the latest report following the Dec. 10 meeting of the Alignment Task Force.

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### Congratulations to Edge Park on becoming a "Welcoming Congregation"

Edge Park United Methodist Church is the latest congregation to become a Certified Welcoming Congregation.

This recognition was awarded by the Igniting Ministry Team of United Methodist Communications for Edge Park's excellence in adopting hospitality as a vital ministry.

"Welcoming Congregations" are a select group of United Methodist congregations nationwide that meets criteria including embracing newcomers and providing opportunities for discipleship as a lifestyle. Edge Park is among this select group that includes about two dozen churches in the Central Texas Conference.

For more information on how your congregation can work toward become a "Welcoming Congregation," visit [www.rethinkchurch.org](http://www.rethinkchurch.org) or by calling toll free 877-281-6535.



When Melissa and Keith Ford researched adoption, they found their answer close to home at the Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio.

## Creating a family

### Open adoption was the answer for one couple

**M**elissa and Keith Ford knew they would adopt a child "someday," but never imagined how exciting the process would actually be.

The Fords spent a lot of time researching open adoption. Their family also had questions about what "open adoption" meant exactly.

Methodist Mission Home (MMH) Adoption Services Director Helen Huff says in an open adoption, the birthmother places her child with a family she has chosen. Once a "match" has been made, a cooperative plan is completed by both the birthmother and the adoptive parents. This cooperative plan is a contract that is based on trust between the adoptive parents and birthmother.

"This document serves as a guideline that maps out future contact between the birthmother, adoptive parents, and adoptee," explains Ruttenberg. "In most cases, the birthmother will want yearly updates and photos. In some cases, she may want some contact throughout the child's life. In other cases, the birthmother may not want any contact at all. It depends on the comfort level of all parties. However, MMH educates adoptive families about open adoption."

When the Fords found MMH in 2005 while searching for adoption agencies in Texas, they were pleasantly surprised when they

learned it was less than a mile from their home.

"We immediately loved MMH — the staff, the program, everything," said Melissa. "At first we had questions about whether to adopt overseas or domestic. After attending an Adoption Information Seminar (AIS) at MMH, we decided that domestic was right for us."

Soon after, a birthmother told MMH adoption counselors that she had seen the Ford's family profile and was interested in choosing them as the adoptive family.

"Our first meeting was very short," Melissa said. "The birth mom was very emotional and couldn't stay very long. I think that was the first time the reality of her decision really hit her. Our counselor called to assure us that her tears were only because she liked us so much, and she wanted to know if we would adopt her baby boy."

Thrilled and a little overwhelmed, the Fords met with the birthmother during the two months prior to the birth. The birthmother even invited Melissa to escort her to her doctor appointments.

"It meant a lot that she invited me," Melissa said. "We really wanted to know her. From the talks we had at the doctor's office, I learned things about her that we didn't get from the paperwork. Now, I can tell our son about his birth mom."

Two months later, little Brody Aaron was born. Melissa says she

and Keith feel it's important for him to know his history. They want to have an open line of communication with their son about his adoption.

"I started a baby book for him after we first met this birth mom and his adoption story is in there, along with pictures and his bracelet from the hospital," Melissa said. "He likes to look through the book and talk about it all."

Melissa says the best thing for a couple to do if they are looking into adoption is to do a lot of research before starting the process. This includes reading a lot of adoption books and passing the information on to the rest of the family who also might have questions.

"Clearing up misconceptions is the first big hurdle," Melissa said. "Then you realize it's not as hard as you think it's going to be."

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If adoption is something you are considering, the Methodist Mission Home may be your choice. Through professional guidance and compassionate support, teens and young women facing unplanned pregnancy and families considering adoption make mutually beneficial decisions.

The next Adoption Information Seminar for international and domestic adoption is Jan. 23 in San Antonio. For more details, contact Kristina Garza at 210-696-2410 (ext. 108) or 800-842-5433.