



More on Mid-Winters ... 8A



One simple message ... 5A



Metro Board of Ministries ... 8A

Mid-Winter retreats inspire youth to 'Shine God's light!' 'Shine it bright!'

"Shine God's light!" "Shine it bright" were the call and response for the Central Texas Conference's youth-led Mid-Winter 1 worship service.

This became the mantra for the service as each speaker and prayer leader ended with "Shine God's light!" and the congregation responded with "Shine it bright!"

The theme for the 2011 Student Leadership Team Mid-Winter retreats was "Radiate." Focused on leadership, each retreat encouraged the youth attending to "Radiate" God's love through the gifts God gave them.

For the first retreat, held Feb. 19-20 at Glen Lake Camp, youth chose a fine art that they felt gifted in and

created a contribution to the closing community worship service.

For the second retreat, youth took a spiritual gifts inventory and worked through how those god-given gifts can be used in their lives and their local church.

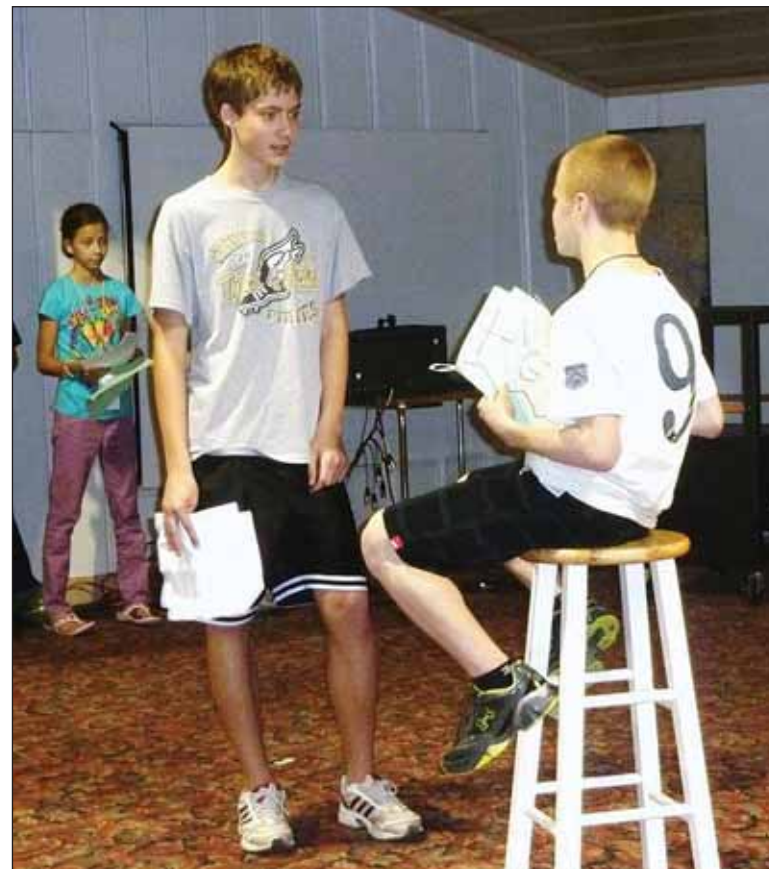
Rev. Joseph Nader, director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Texas at Arlington, spoke to the youth about how God has called them to use their gifts now. Youth filled out commitment cards and placed them on the altar during Communion, sharing what they were going to do with their gifts at their local churches.

The commitment cards were mailed to their churches so the leadership could encourage the youth to get involved.

In another statement of commitment, participants contributed a total of \$867.82 to the Youth Service Fund. Youth at Mid-Winter 1 gave \$309.32 and from Mid-Winter 2 gave \$558.50. A special love offering was taken at the Mid-Winter 1 that contributed \$426.12 for the denomination's Imagine No Malaria initiative.

For a copy of the spiritual gifts inventory that can be used with other youth groups, please contact Joy Roberson (joy@ctcumc.org). For a copy of the youth-led worship DVD (still in production) or youth-created photo slide show, please contact Joy Roberson (joy@ctcumc.org).

| More pictures on page 8A



TUMCA scholarships recognize 25 Central Texas Conference students

Twenty-five students attending local churches in the Central Texas Conference have been recognized for the potential and commitment with scholarship funds for the current academic year by the Texas United Methodist College Association (TUMCA).

TUMCA funds come from the United Methodist congregations for use by students from these congregations to attend Southwestern University, Lon Morris College, Southern

Methodist University, McMurry College or Texas Wesleyan University.

Bishop Dan E. Solomon, president of TUMCA, states: "These funds make the vital difference in opening the door to academic and spiritual growth on one of our fine campuses. TUMCA funds are preparing leaders, both lay and clergy, for our churches and for Christ's mission in the world."

A TUMCA student shared, "I am

more than ready to join the ranks of the church's lay ministers. As I pursue my degree in anthropology, I am humbled by the support of the church."

A United Methodist pastor in Texas reflected on the importance of TUMCA for students from his congregation: "To see one of our own, who models faithful Christian witness, go beyond the valley schools of South Texas and succeed is a real blessing. It is an

encouragement to families who are in extreme circumstances."

TUMCA is not about a lot of money. It is about a lot of determination to help students and their families experience the partnership of their congregation in helping the dream of a college education become a reality.

Below is a listing of students, their schools and their home congregations. All are to be commended and supported with

prayers and continuing gifts.

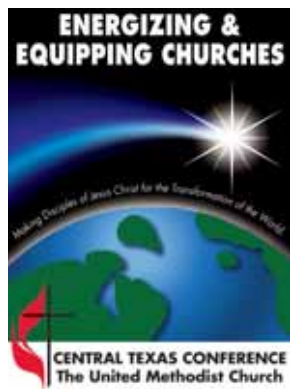
Lon Morris College

Bethany Hinkle - Church of the Good Shepherd UMC, Arlington
Katie Schmidt - Good News UMC, Leander

McMurry University

Dillon Addison - First UMC, Hico
Megan Curry - First UMC, Grandview

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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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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

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The Wilderness Way

By BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

53. For years I wore a T-shirt until it literally fell apart around me. It was given to me as a joke by a staff member at Asbury United Methodist church. The big, bold letters on the front of the shirt proclaimed “CHICAGO CUBS WORLD CHAMPIONS.” In very small print beneath the lettering was the notation – 1908.

I long for the return of the glory days of my beloved Chicago Cubs. At the turn of the 20th century they were consistently one of the most powerful teams in baseball; routinely in the World Series and routinely often World Champions. Sadly, at least for me, such is no longer the case. Now I live with the lingering aspirations of a hope for glory.

When the Apostle Paul writes about discipleship, he too speaks of the hope for glory. I think it was the Danish theologian Soren Kirkegaard who once said, “Now at last we can become ourselves.”

The Christian hope in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (our stated mission as The United Methodist church and as the Central Texas Conference) is for a return to the Eden glory of being fully human. Paul put it this way: “To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27)

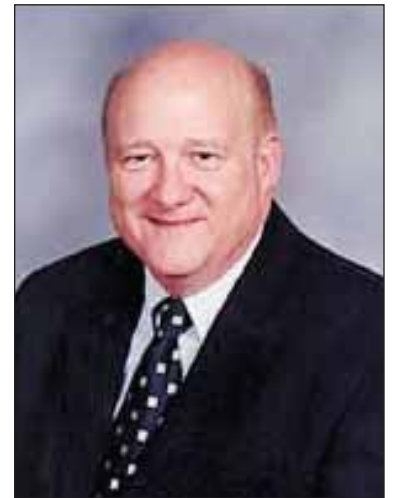
Reaching to understanding such deep discipleship, the *Reveal* study noted the “central conclusion of all our research – which is that spiritual growth is not about increasing activities; it is about growing an increasingly intimate relationship with Christ.” (*Follow Me* by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, p. 74)

The five key catalysts for discipleship development (spiritual growth), which *Reveal* identified, are:

1. Giving my life away
2. Christ first
3. Identity in Christ
4. Authority of the Bible
5. Reflection on Scripture

In previous Wilderness Way columns, I have written about the importance of reflection on Scripture (what John Wesley called “searching the Scriptures”). (In an upcoming *Wilderness Way* I will write about “giving my life away.”)

It is important to keep our focus on Christ being first in our lives (Lord and Master). With this focus (hopefully) we are growing our identity in Christ. Challenge and admonition are important, but real growth does not come from nagging (especially by the pastor). There is a sense that most churches focus on one person of the Trinity.



Thus, in a first-person church, the reference is commonly to God. Phrases referring to God abound; references to Christ and the Holy Spirit are less present.

In a second-person church, the references are most often to Christ, Lord, etc. In a third-person church, the most common language is in reference to the Holy Spirit (or often simply the “Spirit”). When I look at historical period when the church is the healthiest there is a Trinitarian emphasis. The Irish shamrock came from St. Patrick’s emphasis and teaching on the Trinity.

As we seek to make disciples, the implications around our common language and practices are profound. Is the phrase “What would Jesus do?” more than just a trite quotation? It needs to be a part of our planning and conversations in our life together – board meetings, finance, worship, personal spiritual conversations, etc. In preaching, how do we help people (including ourselves!) know Christ more clearly, love Jesus more dearly, and follow the Lord more nearly?

My son once commented to me that “You’d think church was a place you would come to talk with each other about how Jesus was active in your life, but that is something we rarely do.” Is it rare in your church or a part of the common conversation? Pastors and lay leaders have to model putting Christ first and gaining their primary identity in Christ (ahead of all other claimants to the throne – money, self achievement, country, personal happiness, etc., etc.!).

We are making disciples of Christ. Put the accent mark on Christ. Put Christ first and build identity. Reggie McNeal writes: “People may and do begin their spiritual journeys from many starting points, but truth ultimately converges at one door, one path, and one life – Jesus. He is the only hope for salvation, for he alone is the Incarnation of God in human flesh. His nature as God, along with his sacrificial visit to this planet, gives him the right to set the rules.

“He says no one comes to the Father except through him. That is an exclusive claim, and it is offensive to people who are busy working their way to God on their own terms. The cross is always offensive, in every culture and in every generation, because it is the reminder that humans are in need of salvation and can’t do anything about it except on God’s terms. This claim of exclusivity cost the early Christians their lives. It will stick in the throat of a religiously plural 21st century world just as it did in the first century.” (Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*, pp. 142-143)

25 students get TUMCA funds | Continued from page 1A

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Karlie Dieterich - First UMC,
Crawford | Jason E. Ballmann - Austin Avenue
UMC, Waco | Worth | Fort Worth |
| Sarrah Friend - First UMC,
Grapevine | Texas Wesley University | Daniel Baldwin - Saginaw UMC,
Saginaw | Karla Rodriguez - El Buen
Samaritano UMC, Fort Worth |
| Timothy Henderson - First UMC,
Arlington | Kaeley Albus - First UMC,
Mansfield | Danielle Barnett - Edge Park UMC,
Fort Worth | Rhett Peel - St. Luke UMC,
Haltom City |
| Tara McMullen - Woodway UMC,
Waco | Bradley Alexander - Edge Park
UMC, Fort Worth | Ray Cox - Arlington Heights UMC,
Fort Worth | Bethany Smith - St. Luke UMC,
Haltom City |
| Southern Methodist
University | Melissa Bates - Polytechnic UMC,
Fort Worth | Amanda Heron - First UMC,
Grandview | Barbara Taylor - Poolville UMC |
| | Spencer Baker - Genesis UMC, Fort | Michael Hicks - St. Luke UMC,
Haltom City | Patrick Turkett - Meadowbrook
UMC, Fort Worth |
| | | David Rai - Meadowbrook UMC, | Kylie Wrinkle - First UMC, Azle |

Intentional Faith Development

Mansfield/Waco churches are reaching around the world

“God Is BIG Enough” is the message twin brothers Revs. Mike and Steve Ramsdell shared last year. They had no idea the message would travel around the world and encourage so many people’s lives.

This special message began with Waco First United Methodist Church where Steve serves as senior pastor, according to his brother Mike who is at Mansfield First United Methodist Church. “Steve got the idea when he was designing a sermon series for the fall of 2010 while under treatment at MD Anderson,” Mike said.

According to Steve, “I was looking for a strong theme to launch our fall ministries as we came off First Waco’s 160th birthday celebration in September. Podcasts of those sermons are available in the archives of our website: fumcwaco.org. Our white wristbands with red and blue lettering were designed by Mary Meadows, our director of communications and evangelism, with an initial order of 1500.”

Steve continued, “At first the distribution of the bracelets was slow to catch on, then as people began to take them and share them with others, the distribution seemed to explode. People found the bracelets to be conversation ice-breakers that allowed an opening to discuss matters of faith. As the stories of these connections began to pour in, more people found the courage to talk about their faith. We have re-ordered four times for over 11,000 bracelets.”

As the phenomenon of the effective outreach of the wristbands grew, Steve wanted others to be aware of its potential. Brother Mike was the first one to be contacted and invited to “borrow” the theme, artwork, sermon outlines, etc. Mike took the concept, adapted it to Mansfield FUMC, and began passing out their newly designed blue wristbands on Christmas eve 2010. Within a week they had distributed 10,000 bracelets and stories of their impact filtered back to the church and to Mike’s Facebook page.

The local ABC-TV affiliate



Pete Cole, shown in the inset photo, took about 50 bracelets on a mission trip to Honduras and gave them to boys and girls he met there. The girls had such tiny wrists, they had to wear the bracelets on their ankles.

(WFAA-TV) recently aired a story about how the 6,000-member Mansfield congregation is reaching thousands of people around the world, including some high profile wrists (<http://www.wfaa.com/news/local/116788623.html>). The story was picked up KENS-TV in San Antonio.

Steve explained that a member of the Waco congregation shared a bracelet with Sarah Palin at a book signing, and she has been seen wearing it as news conferences. “I shared a bracelet with Laura Bush,” states Mike, “and members of my brother’s congregation shared a wristband with George Bush.”

Together, Steve and Mike have shared over 55,000 bracelets — with their congregations; orphans in the ZOE ministry the Mansfield church supports in Rwanda, Kenya



and Zimbabwe; the Baylor men’s and women’s basketball teams; local churches, schools, hospitals and funeral homes; police and airline pilots, to name a few. Additional wristbands have been distributed in Peru, Haiti, China, Honduras, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Both churches continue to hand out the bracelets communicating the message that “God Is BIG Enough.” “It continues to grow and expand in unexpected ways,” states Mike, adding that Steve will come to Mansfield on March 19 and 20, and he will be in Waco the weekend of May 7 and 8, to talk about his growing program together in both churches with the theme “God Is BIGGER Than We Thought!”

Steve commented, “Both Mike and I agree that these wristbands are

not ‘good luck charms,’ but rather reminders that our loving, faithful God is in charge and available in all circumstances to meet our needs in this world in ways beyond what we can imagine.”

On a recent weekend, First Mansfield gave out 1200 bracelets to those attending the memorial service for Dr. Ken Diehm who died so unexpectedly Feb. 19. Dr. Diehm had been senior pastor at First United Methodist Church in Grapevine.

Mansfield member Donnie Sherwood said, “I handed a bracelet to a young man struggling with depression about six week ago. He told me today that his life is back on track and he thanked me for caring — God Is BIG Enough!” A Waco Tribune-Herald front-page picture of Melissa Jones, an injured senior member of Baylor University’s Lady Bears basketball team, on March 3 showed her wearing one of Waco FUMC’s bracelets.

Member and visitor attendance has increased at First Mansfield, quite possibly as a result of what has become the bracelet ministry. “Since January, we have had 100 people join the church,” states Mike. Average attendance at the weekend worship services is 2200. Personal stories of the message’s effect on individuals and groups continue to pour in. “Someone wrote on my Facebook page that his father was having brain surgery so he got him a bracelet to wear during the surgery,” Mike said.

The church has been overwhelmed with requests, so they are sending organizations to the supplier through the <http://godisbigenough.us/> website. There is a list of supportive resources from banners to bulletin inserts to a one-minute HD bumper video promoting a sermon series. The four-week worship/sermon series was used by Mike at First Mansfield. Also provided are outlines, scriptures and a link to the church website to view the sermons.

— By Linda Hammond, First United Methodist Church, Waco



Conference Calendar

- March:**
- 23: United Methodist Women Realignment meeting at Conference Center
 - 26: Board of Laity meeting at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose
 - 26: Conference United Methodist Women Committee & Team meetings at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose
 - 31: General Board of Pensions & Health Benefits Retirement Seminar at St. Luke UMC, Fort Worth
- April:**
- 4-6: Board of Ordained Ministry meetings/interviews at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose
 - 5: Extended Cabinet Leadership Training
 - 6-7: Residency Orientation Seminar at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose
 - 9: CSCM Planning Team meeting, location TBA
 - 9: CTCYM Advisory Committee, location TBA
 - 10: Crime Victims Council’s Interfaith Worship Service of Help at Arlington First UMC
 - 16: CTC United Methodist Women Great Day of Service
 - 19-20: Appointive Cabinet
 - 22: Conference Center closed
 - 30: Conference Student Leadership Team meeting

Central Texas Annual Conference • June 5-8 • Waco Convention Center

Details available at www.ctcumc.org/news/detail/156

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

Shine God's light! Shine it bright!

Continued from page 1A



A guitar circle broke out spontaneously during free time at the Central Texas Conference's Mid-Winters events.



Radiating God's love through the gifts God has given them, participants at the Mid-Winters retreat, dancers shared their gifts in the youth-led closing worship.



Sharing moments during small group times are an important part of the youth leadership retreat held each year at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose. Two Mid-Winter sessions take place each year as part of the Central Texas Conference Student Ministries.



Rev. Joseph Nader, director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Texas-Arlington, led the youth in sharing how they use their spiritual gifts in their everyday lives.



There was an offering of spiritual gifts through the lens of the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations.

The communion table at the youth-led closing worship was overlaid with T-shirts that reflected the theme of "Radiate."



FROM PAGE !: Students attending the youth leadership Mid-Winter retreats are shown practicing a drama for the closing worship where they were encouraged to "radiate" God's love through the gifts God gave them.



Representatives of 41 partner ministries line up for recognition and a blessing at the Metropolitan Board of Missions' annual dinner meeting Feb. 24.

Metropolitan Board of Missions recognizes 41 area ministries

A variety of ministries throughout the Greater Fort Worth area were recognized at the Metropolitan Board of Missions' annual dinner Feb. 24 as local church and individual supporters were also recognized.

The Metro Board contributes to and lifts up ministries in six specific areas:

- Advocacy and special services
- Children, youth and young adults
- Emergency assistance
- English-as-a-Second Language
- Homelessness
- Rehabilitation, re-entry, offender services and women's services.

Supporters are a part of the Metro Board's "Partner in Ministry" program and contribute as bondholders (a system of regular contributions), shareholders (semi-annual or annual donations), or investors (one-time donations).

To learn more and help support these ministries, visit www.metroboardofmissions.com.