



Mission Ministries seeks requests for 2008 Annual Conference offering

due Feb. 18

The Conference Mission Ministries office is accepting through Feb. 18 suggestions for the 2008 conference offering.

Any agency or cause may submit their suggestion for consideration for this offering which is received each year at Annual Conference in June.

The amount varies each year, generally determined by the cause and the effectiveness of the organization's promotion of the offering. The organization receiving the offering is responsible for promotion of the offering in the conference.

Suggestions/requests must be submitted in writing and include:

- Name of the organization with contact person, address, phone and e-mail
- Name, position and contact information for the person submitting the request
- Brief description of the mission/ministry of the organization
- Brief description of how the funds would be used if selected.

Send requests by Feb. 18 to Mission Ministries Executive Director Dr. Doyle Allen, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, Texas 76107-2153.

Countdown to General Conference

Pre-General Conference Briefing comes Jan. 24-26

The 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church is preceded by a number of meetings and conferences in preparation for the General Conference April 24 - May 2 in Fort Worth.

Among those events is the Pre-General Conference Briefing underway Jan. 24-26 in downtown Fort Worth. The three-day Briefing is an invitational event offered to help first-elected lay and clergy delegates, church and secular journalists and other interested parties prepare for the issues to be considered by the denomination's top legislative body when it meets in Fort Worth.

Topics include the denomination's first State of the Church report; the growing focus on leadership development, church growth, ministry with the poor and global health; the first-ever young people's address; the church budget; and the ever-increasing worldwide nature of the church.

There will be 992 delegates at this year's General Conference which meets every four years to set policy and direction for the 11 million-member global denomination. More than a quarter of the delegates are from outside the U.S.

The Central Texas Conference

will be helping to prepare those delegations from outside the U.S. by video taping the Briefing sessions with copies to be sent to Central Conferences in Europe, Africa and the Philippines.

The Briefing will be held at the Hilton Fort Worth Hotel with tours for delegates and journalists of the nearby Convention Center, site of the General Conference plenaries and legislative sessions, and the surrounding area.

The 2008 General Conference will be unlike its predecessors in key ways, such as its messaging and its emphasis on four areas of focus for



United Methodist ministries. Session at the Briefing will focus on these topics as well as on legislation and issues facing General Conference, with panel discussions featuring church leaders and other expert speakers.

The communicators and heads of delegations will also have the opportunity to focus on specific topics of interest to their groups in breakout sessions. The delegates will work on holy conferencing, while the communicators will discuss covering General Conference before, during and after the assembly. *(Some information drawn from UMNS)*

"Lives in the Balance"

Aldersgate Enrichment Center 2008 Special Offering Feb. 27
Call 325-646-5608 to order your 2008 information packet.

"We came, we saw, we worked hard, and we absolutely fell in love with Aldersgate Enrichment Center. The Associates, the mission, everything about this place strengthens your faith and encourages you to do all you can to see this ministry grow." — *a recent volunteer worker at Aldersgate Enrichment Center*

The Central Texas Conference is home to one of the most unique, most rewarding, and most needed ministries you'll ever find — Aldersgate Enrichment Center just outside Brownwood.

Just over 20 years ago a group of men from the conference found their hearts strangely warmed by the concept of a very special ministry designed to serve mildly to moderately mentally and physically challenged adults. The concept for a residential and vocational center was envisioned to help meet the needs of these special individuals, a place



Aldersgate associates are gainfully employed and enjoy community service like keeping our highways litterfree .

where employment and life-skills training would be provided in a safe environment grounded in Christian faith.

In 1987 the Central Texas Conference, inspired by the vision of the United Methodist Men, approved the actual development of

this special ministry. Since that time, Aldersgate has grown and become a model for others around the country. AEC is a not-for-profit sheltered workshop with both a vocational program that employs 85+ associates, and a residential program serving 21 associates.

This amazing Christian training facility and special ministry is designed to help those individuals with limited abilities to maintain dignity and self-respect as they reach their potential intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Employment and activities are provided for those members of our society who otherwise would be considered unemployable.

In keeping with the belief in the value of each individual, all associates at Aldersgate are paid minimum wage, and through their ability to earn wages, many have become more independent, more responsible, and ultimately more self-fulfilled as individuals.

The Aldersgate program receives no state or federal funding. It was built on faith and continues to grow through contributions from individuals and other organizations

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A Kernel of Truth

Reflections of the Bishop

By BISHOP BEN. R. CHAMNESS

This is one in a series of articles on "If I Could Do My Ministry Over ..."

If there is one area of the main-line churches' ministry that has been consistently weak over the past 50 years, it would have to be youth ministry. Unfortunately in many of our churches an intentional ministry to young people has been nearly non-existent. In other churches the frustrations have been frequent because the church has not been able to attract or keep youth involved in the life of the congregation.

On the other hand, in churches where the youth ministry has been vibrant and strong, the whole church has been significantly buoyed and energized. The church is usually more open to innovation, more willing to financially support their youth, and more engaged in things that matter to the younger generation. A respected staff member and energetic adult lay members who love young people are almost always engaged in the youth program that is successful.

We have all seen the pattern of children starting out in church school and Vacation Bible School, but by the time they get to high school they have lost interest and dropped out of church participations. Or they come just to activities that the parents force them to attend. Then they go off to college, and/or

age at which men and women get married. That has had tremendous impact on a number of areas of our common life. Perhaps the impact is felt as much in the church as anywhere else. It means that people have children later in life, and that has traditionally brought young people back to church. So it is now longer

between the time when young people drop out of church and the time they decide to come back to church. If and when they do return to the church the average age of church attendees has gone up.

But even more important the teen years are very

formative years, and the presence of the church in their lives can make a very significant impact in the decisions they make, the course of life they choose, and the satisfaction and fulfillment they attain in life. I am convinced that the high suicide rate could be reduced and the trafficking in drugs could be greatly reduced if the youth of our society had a sense that some adult(s) cared

"If I had my ministry to do over, I would spend more quality time with the youth in the families who attend church ... learn their interests ... relate to their concerns."

they start a family. Before anyone knows it, they have been out of church for several years before they have children of their own and suddenly realize the children should have the benefit of religious education.

Someone has pointed out that the most dramatic shift in our culture over the last two or three generations has been the increased



for them and if they were given encouragement and provided healthy environments for interaction with adults and youth with a message of hope and meaning.

I do not propose to have all the answers to youth ministry, but I do know that if I had my ministry to do over, I would spend more quality time with the youth in the families who attend church. I would try to learn more of their interests and show them that I could relate to their concerns. But I would also try to lead them to healthy and fulfilling choices that could open windows of hope and future development for them. I would find a way to show them how Jesus Christ is real in my life and how the Lord wants to be real in their lives.

Ben R. Chamness

The Social Creeds

*Reflecting the
signs of our times*

When the General Conference of The United Methodist Church convenes in Fort Worth April 23-May 2 delegates will be looking at revising the denomination's Social Creed. The Creed was developed in 1908, revised in 1972, and may undergo another change if approved by the General Conference in 2008.

Each version, shown here and on the facing page, reflects the church's response to the social concerns of the times when they were written — child labor and worker rights in the early 1900s and affirming individual human rights later in the century.

The proposed Social Creed reflects the global nature of the church with input and feedback from Methodists in Europe, Africa and the Philippines as well as the U.S. There is also a musical version that will be presented in June to General Conference delegates.

The denomination's *Book of Discipline* recommends congregations emphasize the Social Creed regularly in their worship services.

The Social Creed - 1908

The Methodist Episcopal Church stands:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational diseases, injuries and mortality.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of labor for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community

For the suppression of the "sweating system."

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, with work for all; and for that degree of leisure for all which is the condition of the highest human life.

For a release for [from] employment one day in seven.

For a living wage in every industry.

For the highest wage that each industry can afford, and for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

For the recognition of the Golden Rule and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.

Conference Cabinet changes announced

Bishop Ben Chamness announced Jan. 13 several Cabinet-level changes in leadership for the Central Texas Conference.

Rev. Jay Beavers, superintendent of the Weatherford District, will retire in June 2008 with 20 years in ministry, six years on the Cabinet. Succeeding him in the Weatherford District will be Dr. Georgia Adamson who has served since June 2004 as superintendent of the Waxahachie District.

Rev. Donald F. Scott, senior pastor at Austin Avenue United Methodist Church in Waco, has been named superintendent of the Waxahachie District. He has been in ministry in the Central Texas Conference for 34 years. The appointment to Austin Avenue will be announced later.

Metropolitan Board of Missions celebrates outreach programs

The Metropolitan Board of Missions, the mission arm of the Fort Worth and Mid-Cities districts, will celebrate and recognize achievements of the missions in the Tarrant County area at their annual dinner meeting Thursday, Feb. 21, at the Will Rogers Center's Round-Up Inn.

Guests are requested to order their tickets (\$15/per person) by Feb. 18. There is reserved seating for 10 or more. Order forms are available at local churches. For more information, call the Metro Board office at 817-569-1454.

Among the 34 outreach ministries that benefit from Metro Board support are church-sponsored food and clothing outlets, community/faith-sponsored programs to protect and help victims of crime, assistance for immigrations clinics and for building stronger families where one member is incarcerated, support for ethnic ministries, a multi-faith based countywide organization, neighborhood aid programs, and community centers where families are strengthened and empowered.



Conference Calendar

January

- 26: Nurture Council
- 26: Disability Concerns Committee at Glen Lake
- 27-29: United Methodist Women Legislative Event at Austin
- 29: Conference Charter of Racial Justice event at Joshua UMC
- 29: Fort Worth District Nominating Committee

February

- 1-2: United Methodist Men's Retreat at Glen Lake Camp
- 2: Global church Lecture event at Arlington Heights UMC, Fort Worth
- 2: Mission Forum at St. Luke Community UMC, Dallas
- 7: Brownwood District Clergy meeting
- 8-9: Mid-Winter #1 at Glen Lake Camp
- 9: UMW School of Christian Mission Planning Team
- 9: Stewardship Task Force at First Cleburne UMC
- 10: Deadline for District Nominating Committee's Talent Bank Forms to be delivered to Conference
- 10-15: Appointive Cabinet/Inventory
- 12-13: Board of Ministry at First Fort Worth UMC
- 15-16: Intensive Spanish Weekend at First Mansfield UMC
- 16-17: Mid Winter #2 at Glen Lake Camp
- 18: Conference Executive Ministry Team at Conference Center
- 21: Metropolitan Board Annual Dinner at Will Rogers-Round Up Inn, Fort Worth
- 22-24: Fifth Annual Meeting/Training for Lay Speakers at Glen Lake Camp

Dos and don'ts in an election season

Churches and religious organizations qualify for exemption from federal income tax, and are generally eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions.

However, there are ways churches may jeopardize or even lose this status, and one is a concern each election season.

According to the IRS Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations, churches must not "participate in, or intervene in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office."

But there are more "dos" than "don'ts" regarding churches' political activity.

Churches can:

- Discuss issues, provided the discussion does not exhibit preferences

for or against specific candidates.

- Distribute voter-education materials and sponsor "get out the vote" campaigns.

- Host a candidate if all other candidates are invited.

- Serve as a polling place.

- Invite a candidate in a nonofficial capacity, such as a groundbreaking ceremony, provided the person is not introduced as a candidate, no mention is made of his or her candidacy and the event is not promoted as an appearance by "Candidate X."

- Lobby for certain issues, provided the time spent in this endeavor is "insubstantial" compared to other church activities.

- Rent out their property to

candidates or political parties provided the space is not provided for free or for a discount not offered to anyone else.

Churches cannot:

- Openly take sides in an issue specifically espousing or denouncing the views of any particular candidate.

- Distribute materials biased toward or against a particular candidate, or distribute materials provided by a candidate or political party.

Clergy members may take sides for or against a candidate or issue

provided they are doing so in an individual capacity, not as a church representative. They may not use the pulpit, church publications or any other forum related to the church to declare their individual preferences.

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Proposed Social Creed (2008)

God is the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ, calls us by grace to be renewed in the image of our Creator, that we may be one in divine love for the world.

Today is the day

God cares for the integrity of creation, wills the healing and wholeness of all life, weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God deplores violence in our homes and streets, rebukes the world's warring madness, humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace, celebrate where justice and mercy embrace, exalts when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

And so shall we.

Today is the day

God brings good news for the poor, proclaims release to the captives, gives sight to the blind, and sets the oppressed free.

And so shall we.

The Social Creed 1972

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by mankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the World. Amen.

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

Jurisdictional event cares for God's good creation

So often the word “green” is used casually in reference to the environment. But this spring, Mount Sequoyah Conference Center is not just using the word, but doing something about it.

Mount Sequoyah, the retreat center for the annual conferences of the South Central Jurisdiction which includes the Central Texas Conference, will hold its first annual **SCJ Caring for Creation Conference** March 7-9 in Fayetteville, Ark.

Participants can expect this conference to move beyond awareness of environmental issues and offering creative solutions to actually address recognizing and fulfilling their responsibility for stewardship in creation and how environmental care is a natural part of being a disciple of Christ.

Dr. J. Matthew Sleeth, author of *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*, will be the keynote speaker. Plenary speakers and leaders for 12 different workshops will include:

- John Hill, United Methodist General Board of Church and Society
- Mark Davies, Ph.D.,



Oklahoma City University

- Interfaith Power & Light
- The Creation Care Movement
- United Methodist Women

Green Team

Workshops will cover such environmental issues as community food initiatives, green buildings and starting a green team.

For more details and to register, call 800-760-8126 or visit online http://www.mountsequoyah.org/CaringforCreation_Info.pdf.

Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation offers retreat for lay/clergy

The Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation, a retreat for lay and clergy to experience God in an intentional Christian community, is sponsored jointly by two faith groups, two Methodist conferences.

The Trinity Brazos Area of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Central Texas and North Texas conferences of The United Methodist Church will conduct the Academy March 4-9 at the Prothro Center at Lake Texoma, a ministry of hospitality set in Pottsboro, Tex.

The Academy is designed to those who are seeking:

- study and practice of methods for spiritual formation,
- time for spiritual renewal and rest,
- new insight and learning about spiritual traditions of the church,
- to be formed and transformed for Christian living and ministry.

Faculty for the Academy are Rev. Greg Clapper of the University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Ind. who will focus on the “History of Christian Spirituality,” and Sr. Dawn Annette Mills, a Benedictine Sister of Perpetual Adoration at Clyde, Mo., whose focus will be on “Discernment and Ways of Prayer.”

Rev. Clapper is an ordained elder in the Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and currently serves as Professor of Religion and Philosophy at the University of Indianapolis. He also teaches regularly at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. He is a graduate of the Upper Room's Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation.

His presentations at the Academy will draw on the strengths of all three major streams of Christian traditions — Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant — illustrating the commonalities and a few of the noteworthy different approaches to living in the three traditions.

As a Benedictine sister, Sr. Mills has been a part of her religious congregation at the Monastery of Perpetual Adoration for 30 years, 25 of those years as a spiritual director leading retreats. Her recent book and audio recording, *The Gospel According to Dawn: A Woman's Work of Spiritual Imagination*, represents an example of her love of Sacred Scripture and her rather “interesting” approach to spirituality.

Often described as a word weaver and storyteller, she is a staff writer for the *Spirit & Life* magazine and devoted to promoting a lively and prayerful relationship with the Holy and the work of seeking God. Her presentation will illustrate ways to approach issues of spirituality and decisions that must be made in everyday life, through prayer.

For more details and to register, visit the conference Web site at www.ctcumc.org or contact the office at 817-877-5222 or 800-460-8622.

District Nominating Committee Talent Bank forms due Feb. 10

Aldersgate Enrichment Center | Continued from page 1A

as well as receiving funds through sales and contract opportunities in the vocational program.

The staff and associates work hard to make this ministry the most efficient use of mission dollars, and are constantly seeking new vocational opportunities for the Center. Still, individual contributions are the life-blood of Aldersgate Enrichment Center. For information on how to join the support team, contact AEC at 325-646-5608. Also, be sure your church has information and bulletin inserts for Aldersgate Sunday February 17, which this year carries the theme of “Lives in the Balance.”



Lunchtime at Aldersgate doubles as an opportunity for fellowship.

Aldersgate Offering

“Lives in the Balance” is the theme for this year's conferencewide Special Offering for Aldersgate Enrichment Center. We live in a “discount” world, or so it seems sometimes. Discount times, clothes, food stores, even discount luxury cars and discount malls!

Most of all that is not so bad, but it should serve as a reminder that there are human beings that are “discounted” as well. This year's Special Offering theme is designed to create an awareness that there are literal “lives” in the balance, the balance in your bank account.

Every person can participate in his/her church's Special Offering for Aldersgate next month, and they prayerfully consider becoming a monthly supporter of this worthy mission. Just ask yourself if you can find room in your bank balance for a \$5 or \$10 monthly gift. Then, find an opportunity VERY SOON to visit Aldersgate and be touched by the “Lives in the Balance” at Aldersgate Enrichment Center.

A word from AEC's Executive Director

“It seems so many folks in our conference are only marginally aware of what Aldersgate is all about, and what opportunities exist here. We are hoping that this year's designated “Aldersgate Sunday” February 17 will be the springboard to help us spread the word about the on-site mission opportunities, campus needs and goals, and about our associate services — both vocational and residential. I hope everyone will realize there really are “Lives in the Balance” of the financial blessings God has given each of us.” — Tracy S. Ebarb, AEC Executive Director