the Central Link

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Central Texas Conference
United Methodist Church

an edition of The United Methodist Reporter

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Section A | Three Sections
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Saving lives 3-on-3

Malaria-carrying mosquitoes are the major cause of 300 children's death every day in the sub-Saharan area of Africa. But that can be greatly reduced, even stopped, with the simple use of insecticide-treated bed nets. The nets cost about $10, something far beyond the reach of those who need them most.

Joining United Methodists and others throughout the United States, the people of the Central Texas Conference are raising money for bed nets and awareness of this preventable disease. Already, the Central Texas Conference raised over $100,000 for bed nets at the 2007 Annual Conference last June, adding to the $18,114,147 nationally. Another way is

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30 Central Texas students are among TUMCA scholarships recipients

Students from the Central Texas Conference have taken a significant stride toward completing their college degrees by being selected to receive a Texas United Methodist College Association scholarship for this current academic year.

TUMCA scholarships are funded by the faithful apportionment giving of congregations across Texas and are awarded to United Methodist students attending a United Methodist college or university in Texas.

TUMCA funds are distributed to the various schools and TUMCA scholarships are awarded to the respective students in keeping with the criteria used by each school.

TUMCA scholarship students are preparing themselves to serve God, the church and the world through their participation in programs of academic excellence and service learning. Within the context of Christian higher education, our United Methodist students are deepening their faith and sharpening their skills to be transformative leaders.

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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 ..."

There is an age-old question: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Long arguments have been made that the chicken had to come first in order to produce and hatch the egg. But opponents have argued just as vigorously that the egg had to come first in order for there to be a chicken because the egg is part of the process by which the chicken is born.

A similar question has sometimes been asked: Which is the most important, Christmas or Easter? Certainly one could argue that Christmas is the season in which we honor the birth of Jesus, and without His birth none of the teachings of the Lord would have been recorded and none of His miracles would have been performed. One could even declare that without the birth there would be no death or resurrection. Therefore, the argument goes, Christmas must be the most important.

However, one could forcefully make the case that Easter is the most important because it celebrates the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus was an astounding event that had a global impact and demonstrated the eternal goodness of God in overcoming death and the mortal nature of humanity. The resurrection made the teachings of Jesus and the miracles of Jesus worth recounting. In fact, without the resurrection the birth of Jesus would have been very notable in the whole scheme of things. This would have been just one more human life that began and ended. Yes, one could maintain that it was a very good life with a strong personality and a loving spirit, but it still would not have had the wide impact on humanity without the resurrection.

> *"Easter ... makes Christmas relevant."*

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that separates this life from all others. It is the resurrection of the Lord that make Christianity stand out from all other world religions. It is the resurrection of Jesus that has the greatest impact on our lives. Because God redeemed Jesus' life and brought Him to a new life, we can trust that God will also give us new abundant and eternal life with God. Jesus promised, "Because I live, you shall live also." Also He said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:2c-3). Again, Jesus said, "He who believes (in me) has eternal life" (Jn. 6:47b).

So Easter, it could be argued, makes Christmas relevant. Easter is the most important celebration in the Christian year because it makes all the remainder that we celebrate as Christians appropriate that we fill our churches on Easter Sunday and extol the high and holy name of Almighty God. We appropriately sing our praises and hallelujahs. So let us lift our voices with one accord at this beautiful time of the year.

Bishop calls for Day of Prayer April 6

As the days of General Conference are nearly upon us, it is increasingly important that we, as the Central Texas Conference, become ever more diligent in offering prayer and personal support for this great gathering of The United Methodist Church from around the world.

As such, I am calling for April 6 to be a "Day of Prayer for General Conference" in the Central Texas Conference. We ask that all churches in our conference use the liturgy below at some point in your worship services on this date. The idea is to have nearly 48,000 worshippers in all of our churches praying the exact same prayer on Sunday morning, April 6.

There is power in prayer. And with your support, we are confident that, not only General Conference, but the role of the Central Texas Conference in offering gracious hospitality to our brothers and sisters from all around the globe will be both a blessing and a joy for all involved.

Ben R. Chamness

LEADER: On this day, with all the churches of the Central Texas Conference, we lift our hearts in prayer and joyous thanksgiving for the opportunities and blessings of the upcoming General Conference of The United Methodist Church.

ALL: We lift our hearts in thanksgiving and praise for the privilege of gathering as the United Methodist body in Christ's name at General Conference. We pray for: the bishops, the Judicial Council, the delegates from the United States, the delegates from other countries, the paid staff, the Host Committee, the volunteers, and finally the guests and visitors.

For them all, we pray they may be strengthened, guided, and filled with the wisdom and power of Your Holy Spirit, O God. We pray that the warmth, light, and love of Christ be shown to the world through our conference. We pray that all involved freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal, that Your will be done, and that Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

TUMCA scholarships | Continued from page 1A

We congratulate and pray God's blessings upon the following students from our conference, listed along with their home churches and the schools they are attending:

McMurry University
Alyssa A. Cox
Richland Hills UMC
North Richland Hills
Jacob W. Fields
First UMC, Mansfield
Jason D. Owens
First UMC, Stephenville
Catherine E. Qunell
First UMC, Brownwood

Southern Methodist University
Ashley L. Bruckbauer
First UMC, Round Rock
Jami Lynn Jeffcoat
First UMC, Cisco
Jason E. Ballmann
Austin Avenue UMC, Waco
Samantha G. Thomas
King Memorial UMC, Whitney

Lon Morris College
Rebecca J. Hicks
First UMC, Fort Worth
Rebecca R. Oden
New World UMC, Arlington

Texas Wesleyan University
Weldon Bomar
First UMC, Watauga
Jenna Shupp
Davis Memorial UMC
North Richland Hills
Jessica Steels
St. Andrew UMC, Corsicana
Vickie Kohl
First UMC, Cleburne
Karen Tilary
First UMC, Granbury
David Riddile
Arborlawn UMC, Fort Worth
Michelle Hicks
St. Luke UMC, Haltom City
Cathy Hicks
St. Luke UMC, Haltom City
Eric Douglas
Benbrook UMC, Benbrook
Betty Taylor
Arborlawn UMC, Fort Worth
Allison Davis
Godley UMC, Godley
Chalyse Dishmon
Grace UMC, Arlington
Keith Anderson
Lighthouse Fellowship UMC, Fort Worth
Zachary Davidson
First UMC, Watauga
Kathy Jean Lynch
St. Paul UMC, Hurst
Christian Baker
Wm. C. Martin UMC, Bedford

Southwestern University (Georgetown)
Samantha Belicek
First UMC, Round Rock
Sarah Ferrero
First UMC, Round Rock
Jonathan Jonse
First UMC, Round Rock
Alyssa McClure
Blooming Grove UMC, Blooming Grove

More information about scholarships on page 8A

2008 Annual Conference offering will fund Justice For Our Neighbors church/community missionary

Justice for Our Neighbors has been selected for the 2008 Annual Conference offering at the Central Texas Conference Mission Leadership Team annual meeting March 3 at Arlington Heights United Methodist Church, Fort Worth.

JFON follows a long line of mission-oriented organizations to receive funds to further their outreach ministries. The following article, contributed by JFON staff member Amy Spaur, provides insight into JFON's purpose and operations.

Jose was just a young boy in Honduras when his mother passed away. His father, who had a wife and family of his own to care for and having only a scant relationship with Jose, was not inclined to take him in.

So Jose was left at the mercy of grandparents, aunts, uncles and other family members who took turns caring for him. Life became even more difficult for Jose when the person closest to him, his Aunt Maria, immigrated to the United States. Unfortunately, because Aunt Maria never formally adopted him, there was no way for her to petition to bring Jose.

At the age of 13, Jose found himself living with his aging grandparents in a tiny house with 10 other people. Without even consulting his Aunt Maria, Jose decided for himself to make the treacherous journey through Mexico and the U.S. to be reunited with his aunt.

But the trip did not go as well as Jose had hoped. He was caught by Border Patrol agents, detained and placed in proceedings in immigration court. When Aunt Maria learned that Jose had made the journey and was now in detention, she bonded him out, brought him to Fort Worth and contacted Justice For Our Neighbors.

After reviewing their situation, attorney Mary Beth Garcia advised them of a provision in immigration law for special juvenile immigrants. This provision is for juveniles who have been abused, abandoned or neglected by both biological parents. It must be determined by a U.S. civil law judge that it is not in the best interest of the child to be returned home and that under the circumstances the child would be eligible for long-term foster care.

After a long and tedious process involving both family and immigration courts, Jose was finally granted his green card last week, allowing him to stay in the U.S. with his aunt.

JFON operates under the umbrella of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) as a faith-driven ministry, welcoming immigrants into our churches and communities by providing quality immigration legal services, education and advocacy at no charge.

A licensed immigration attorney is available to assist low-income immigrants with family petitions, naturalization, religious worker visas, adjustment of status (green cards), advice and counsel, self-petitions under the Violence Against Women Act and other case situations. Through these services JFON has helped thousands of immigrants like Jose with a variety of immigration needs.

Serving the Central Texas Conference Area

Justice For Our Neighbors has been an active ministry of the Central Texas Conference since 1999, and is currently housed in Polytechnic United Methodist Church, Fort Worth. JFON provides valuable services to a population that is vulnerable to people who exploit their situations for personal economic gain.

In addition to ministering to the immigrant population, JFON seeks to educate our congregations and communities about the complex topic of immigration by providing a Biblical framework from which to approach it. This includes explaining current immigration laws, addressing widespread myths and helping individuals and churches understand the plight of immigrants in their communities.

To that end, the Central Texas Conference, along with the North Texas Conference, jointly sponsored an immigration symposium in October 2007 where people of faith could gather to learn more about the issue. The need for similar educational opportunities and assistance in understanding the complexities of immigration will only grow as it continues to be at the forefront of our national, state and local agendas.

As this year's recipient of the Annual Conference offering, JFON will be using contributors' donations to sponsor a "Church and Community Worker" to meet this growing need. Church and Community Workers are commissioned missionaries of the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries who, in response to God's call, are devoted to uplifting the poor and disenfrancised in rural and urban areas throughout the U.S.

Church and Community Workers seek to change the social inequities of poverty, racial injustice and domestic violence. As their name implies, they take the church into the community and bring the community into the church, serving at the grassroots level to assist the church and community in coming to grips with issues, needs and problems facing them.

We celebrate Justice For Our Neighbors choice as this year's Annual Conference offering recipient and encourage congregations to give generously to this important ministry. For more information about JFON, please contact Amy Spaur at 817-534-3293 or spaura78@yahoo.com.

Conference Calendar

March

21: Good Friday (Conference Center closed)

23: Easter Sunday

24-26: Appointive Cabinet

25: Administrative Leadership Team at Conference Center

27: Council on Finance & Administration at Conference Center

27: Fort Worth District Laity Banquet at Will Rogers' Round Up Inn

28-30: United Methodist Women South Central Jurisdiction meeting at Albuquerque, NM

28-30: GoodNEWS Seminar at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Still Water Lodge

31-May 2: Spring Interviews for Clergy Candidates at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center

31: Board of Ordained Ministry meeting at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center

April

2-3: Residency Retreat at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center

3: Brownwood District Clergy meeting at First UMC, Gorman

4-5: UMC Singles Retreat: Voice of Grace at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center

5: Committee on Hispanic Ministries meeting at Arlington Heights UMC, Fort Worth

7-9: Appointive Cabinet

8: Bishop's dinner with ordinands at First UMC, Fort Worth

11-12: Glen Lake Spring Bible Retrat at Glen Lake Camp

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

3-on-3 to save lives

Continued from page 1A

basketball, a natural fit since the National Basketball Association is one of the founding partners with The United Methodist Church, the United Nations Foundation and *Sports Illustrated* magazine in the Nothing But Nets initiative to stamp out malaria.

The conferencewide 3-on-3 basketball tournament, in process over the last three months, collected $10 per player at the local church, district and conference-level competitions. On Saturday, March 8, the conferencewide playoff was held at Glen Lake Camp with a team (mostly) from First United Methodist Church of Fort Worth as the conference champs. Coming in second place was the (mostly) Richland Hills United Methodist Church team, followed by the Silver Creek and Waco District teams in the men's division. Winning by default in the Male Youth Division was a group of youths from the Alvarado area.

Obviously, there was some creativity in pulling the teams together, but the real challenge comes at 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 26, when they play the winning teams from the North Texas Conference! Team supporters are welcome at the gymnasium of First UMC, Fort Worth, as they go on to victory!

Also planning to be present at the playoff April 26 will the Bishop Thomas Bickerton, United Methodist spokesperson for the Nothing But Nets initiative, and several of the bishops from the annual conferences in Africa where the Nothing But Nets initiative is saving lives.

Ready for the next playoff are team members (at left) from First UMC of Fort Worth Michael Malloy, William Brewer, David Elizalde, Jason Proctor and Brian Marks who also won the free throw competition. The challengers are (below left to right) Richland Hills players Howard Martin, Paul Gravley, Chris Martin and Terry Huston; Silver Creek players Jason Hamilton, Jaron Lucas, Justin Zacek and Daniel Sims; Waco District players Clifton Howard, Louis Carr Jr., Wesley Perry and Daniel Hawkins.

Scholarships/ recognitions are available to qualifying students/ congregations

The Conference Higher Education Task Force awards the Merit and Stephens Scholarships each year at Annual Conference to a newly admitted student in a school identified as United Methodist by the university Senate of The United Methodist Church.

The number and amount of the Merit Scholarship(s) is determine by total monies given to the UM Student Day offering the previous year. The Stephens Scholarship for any year student in the area of Accounting/Finance is always $1,000. Added this year is the Stephens Scholarship for any year student in the area of Journalism/ Public Relations for $1,000.

Applicants for the Merit and Stephens scholarships must meet the following qualifications: (1) membership in a UM church for at least one year; (2) acceptance to a UM-related school; (3) nomination by the pastor and chairperson of Higher Education of a congregation within the bounds of the conference that participated in the Student Day offering in the year preceding nomination; (4) evidence that the student is one who will help undergird the church now and, potentially, in the future and that the individual merits this special recognition.

Application forms are on the conference Web site at www.ctcumc.org or by contacting Susan Briles at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or susan@ctcumc.org. The deadline for applications is May 1.

Scholarships available through BOM — The conference Board of Ministry is accepting applications for the several scholarships it administers. These scholarships require that the applicant be a certified candidate for clergy, currently enrolled in a seminary approved by the University Senate.

Applications must be post marked by midnight April 3 or delivered to the BOM office on the Texas Wesleyan University campus by 5 p.m. April 3 to be eligible for consideration. The application form is located on the board webiste, www.ctcbom.org, on the Board Policies & Forms page. Scholarships will be awarded at Annual Conference in June 2008.

Five Star Program Recognition — The conference wants to recognize your church's mission efforts through the Five Star Program, and the April 15 application deadline is just around the corner. At the 2008 Annual Conference churches that have completed the requirements of the Five Star Program during the 2007 calendar year will be recognized.

The requirements are:

- Give 100% of assigned apportionments
- Have an ongoing program of mission education
- Serve the local community through outreach
- Contribute to a conference, national, international or UMCOR Advance Special
- As a step toward becoming a Global Mission Partner, make a financial contribtuion of any size to a UM missionary.

Download an application for recognition at www.ctcumc.org/globalmission. Please direct any questions to Rev. Tom Beaty, Five Star Program coordinator, at 254-675-3984, 254-675-8831 or tomcindybeaty@embarqmail.com, or Jennifer Bellamy, CTC director of humanitarian services, at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or jennifer@ctcumc.org.