

Newgate Awards ... 5A



Ice Maker Needed! ... 8A



Together at the Table ... 8A

God calls us in different ways to different ministries Is God calling you?

Has there been a time when you've sensed an urging to consider full-time ministry? Perhaps during a mission trip, a church retreat, prayer, communion or even during everyday activities? Have friends or church members said they recognize something special in you? Could this be God calling you to use your gifts and talent as an ordained minister?

Exploration 2009 offers an opportunity for young people to explore these questions Nov. 13-15 in Dallas. High school seniors through those age 24 who might be considering ordained ministry will learn that all baptized Christians are called to ministry, and that some are called to ordained ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service through the church.

The ordained ministry of deacons and elders offers incredible opportunities for service in a variety of settings like the local church, campus ministry, hospital or military chaplaincy, mission at home and abroad, college teaching, social work, counseling, music, youth ministries and more.

At Exploration, participants will learn:

- how you can discern God's call in your life
- the nature of ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church
- steps to ordained ministry

For more details, visit www.gbhem.org/exploration (the source for information in this article) or talk to your pastor or district superintendent.

Thank You for the Offering

To the churches of the Central Texas Conference we say thank you for your generous outpouring of love and support as evidenced in the gracious gift of the Annual Conference Offering for restorative justice ministries: Parents & Children Together, Methodist Justice Ministry, Tarrant County Restorative Justice Center/Home of Greater Joy and Crime Victims Council. These ministries are a sign of grace, mercy, justice and hope. Your offering will enable us to reach more people, spread love and reconciliation and enable individuals to accept the gift of God's transforming power. On behalf of Central Texas Conference United Methodist churches, we witness for being followers of Christ in a world of great need. (See more about these ministries on page 5A)

— In appreciation,

Suzie Boeglin, Brooks Harrington, Penny Yaites & Sandra Lydick

Episcopal Committee gives perspective to potential conference boundary changes

By BLISS DODD
CHAIR, CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE
COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY

Several concerns about the Central Texas Conference episcopacy came out of the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, as African delegates pled for help. While the U.S. church membership had steadily declined, African United Methodist Church membership increased far beyond their ability to supply pastors or bishops.

Typically, spiritual revivals occur in small villages; laity organize churches; then they request that a pastor be assigned. It seems that in Africa, the organized church cannot keep pace with the work of the Holy Spirit!

They are desperate for bishops, so to solve this problem, the decision was made to decrease U.S. Episcopal Areas in four of the five jurisdictions. The Southeastern Jurisdiction will lose its option under the 2004 *Book of Discipline* criteria to create an additional area. The Northeastern Jurisdiction is already engaged in this process under the 2004 criteria.

So, the mandate most directly affects the South Central (of which the Central Texas Conference is a part), North Central and Western jurisdictions. In other words, in 2012, one retiring bishop in our jurisdiction will not be replaced. The funds that would have been

spent for U.S. bishops will go to meet this need in Africa.

Remember, our jurisdiction consists of eight states: Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico. Within those eight states, there are 15 conferences, including the Indian Mission Conference and the Rio Grande Conference. Currently, there are 11 bishops in our jurisdiction.

Those 11 bishops comprise the College of Bishops and our *Book of Discipline* gives them the responsibility to set the boundaries of Episcopal areas. The possibilities for dealing with the loss of a bishop seem endless, and our College of Bishops has assertively sought opinions and solutions from conference leaders and persons in the pew.

Of course, we are concerned that Central Texas might be combined

with the North Texas Conference as it has previously been, but there seems to be a plethora of other brainstorm. Here are just a few:

Combine Kansas and Nebraska.

✓ Realign all of Texas, or realign Southwest Texas, Central Texas and North Texas.

✓ Place Kansas East with Missouri and Kansas West with Nebraska.

✓ Move Nebraska to the North Central Jurisdiction.

✓ Send New Mexico to the Desert Southwest Jurisdiction.

✓ Just raise from each conference the number of dollars needed for Africa, and leave everything as it is.

On March 28 our CTC delegates and other interested persons held



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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

16. The last district I visited in finishing my shepherd visits was the Brownwood District. It wasn't planned that way. It is just the way the visiting played out in trying to correlate my schedule with the schedule of the various district superintendents. I couldn't help but think of the passage from Matthew 20:16: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The Brownwood District is such a joy, and it also represents such a challenge. All across the district the demographics are changing; really, have been changing for decades. Once prosperous towns are disappearing and our evangelism ministry has failed to engage a new and often different group of people. One lay person in Valera commented to me, "Bishop, for a while every time someone new moved into the community they were Baptist and every time someone died in the community they were Methodist." This part of the district was tied to the railroad line. Now communities are dying.

And yet, there is also great new life. Many of these same communities are having an influx of young retirees. Trickham, Blanket and May show similar characteristics. They are warm churches struggling to reach a new generation. The communities are in flux and the school districts under demographic pressure.

At Eolian there is a Union church (Methodist and Baptist) with vibrant community outreach. May participates in Angel Tree Food Ministry as do a number of other churches. In some of our communities, we have multiple churches. The distinctiveness, deep commitment to mission (above "taking care of each other"), and the critical component of risk taking lay and pastoral leadership will make the difference in not

just surviving but thriving. As tempting as it is, churches can not live in the past.

There are a number of churches in the same area that are reaching forward with mission and ministry for a new day. Cross Plains rebuilt after a terrible fire. Ballinger and Winters both have faithfulness and fruitfulness. DeLeon is reaching out with evangelistic block parties! Hico is truly open to others and reaching out to a new generation. Coleman is providing strong leadership to the whole community and is an exciting vibrant community of faith.

Up on the northern end of the district, a number of communities are in rapid decline. Ranger is a prime example. The church is wonderful. It has excellent leadership and a great faithful Spirit. The town's changing demographics put the church's future in jeopardy. This can be said in a number of places. Reaching out to a new generation is crucial. The gospel demands it and our future necessitates it.

Breckenridge and Eastland were among my last visit. They are both strong and growing churches with futures of faithfulness and fruitfulness. Breckenridge has a calling to those who are disadvantaged. Their focused sense of mission and purpose is a powerful witness.

I thank God for the joy and future of the Brownwood District. The challenges are present, but so are great possibilities. Tremendous ministry is being down in those places that are stepping up and out with risk taking service and unapologetic evangelistic witness.



Rethink Church - If you use it, they will come! Why Find-A-Church is important

Surely churches of the Central Texas Conference will not want to miss one of the best new "doors" to introduce your church family to potential visitors and newcomers to the community.

That's been the message of Bishop Mike Lowry as he has contacted pastors over the past week or so with reminders to update their Find-A-Church listing on the general church Web site.

The revised Find-A-Church listings are part of the Rethink Church campaign. It is much more than a directory of churches. For starters, it is a powerful online tool for evangelism and a modern take on a timeless way to communicate. Find-A-Church connects your church with busy people in your community on their terms, on their time and in their comfort zone. Jesus worked in a similar way

during his earthly ministry.

For those who haven't already heard about Find-A-Church, the newly enhanced version helps churches to:

- Welcome visitors personally to your congregation
- Display your church's ministries and activities
- Introduce members
- Add details about your worship schedule
- Link to your church's Web site for a closer look

Find-A-Church lists more than 35,000 United Methodist churches and almost 300,000 people a month already go there to learn more about congregations just like yours. More visitors are on the way.

Find-A-Church is a key component of a new Web site featured in Rethink Church, the next evolution of The United

Methodist Church's Open Hearts national advertising and welcoming campaign. People will come. Are you ready?

Roll Out Your Online Welcome Mat

The ad campaign sends visitors to 10thousanddoors.org. When they arrive, they will discover many "doors" through which they can walk to find a church that matches their interests and preferences. However, if your information is not updated on Find-A-Church, they will not learn much about your or the "doors" that can lead them into your church. They could miss the opportunity of a lifetime.

Update Your Listing Today!

More and more seekers will be looking for the right church in your community. Make it easier for them

to find you. Update your Find-A-Church profile today and get ready. Your church may be exactly what seekers look for when they "click" on your door.

Updating your profile begins at www.umc.org with a dropdown menu under "Find-A-Church." Choose "Personalize Your Find-A-Church Page" and begins to share all the aspects of your church that makes it special. It's that easy. Help icons are provided to guide you through the process along with instructions that can be viewed online or printed out. If you have questions about updating your Find-A-Church profile information, contact United Methodist Communications at FAC@umc.org or call 800-251-8140.

— Information drawn from an article by Newcombe Holis



Newgate Award recipients have compelling stories of God's grace through justice ministry

The Newgate Initiative Awards advocate for change by connecting and equipping churches, agencies and individuals to minister to those incarcerated, their families, justice workers and victims of injustice of any kind.

It is through the four justice ministries of the Central Texas Conference — honored to be this year's Annual Conference offering recipients — that congregations and individuals are enabled and inspired to extend God's grace to others.

For Men Only Clothes Closet

Rev. Brooks Harrington, Methodist Justice Ministries: Recipient of this Newgate Award is the United Methodist Men at Morningside United Methodist Church. This group of individuals proactively sought to participate in justice ministries by partnering with the Tarrant County Restorative Justice Center to provide clothing for men recently released back into our communities.

Through their sacrificial efforts and determination, within one month, they established a clothing closet "FOR MEN ONLY." The facility is neat, clean, well organized and offers clothing that ranges from casual to dress/business attire to help these men in job searches and reestablishing their lives with dignity. The store is second to none. The Rev. Beverly Gilliam accepted the award on behalf of the UMM.

Celebrating a Lifetime of Service to Others

Rev. Sandra Lydick, Crime Victims Council: Susan Lee Bragg is program manager of Victim Services for MADD-North Texas and a recipient of the Newgate Award. She has served both offenders and victims for the past 32 years, working in the domestic violence field for 10 years. She opened the first nonresidential "Help Center" for battered women and their children in Dallas, and she cofounded Lawyers Against Domestic Violence, a pro bono advocacy group of the Dallas Bar Association that has since become a permanent program of Legal Aid of North West Texas, Inc. While working with juvenile offenders, she developed the first "Outdoor Diversion Program."

As program manager of Victim Services, she is responsible for the operation and supervision of one of the largest victim services programs in the MADD system. She is a member at St. Barnabas United Methodist Church, lay spiritual director for Walk to Emmaus, and a trainer for area police on death notification and special victim issues.



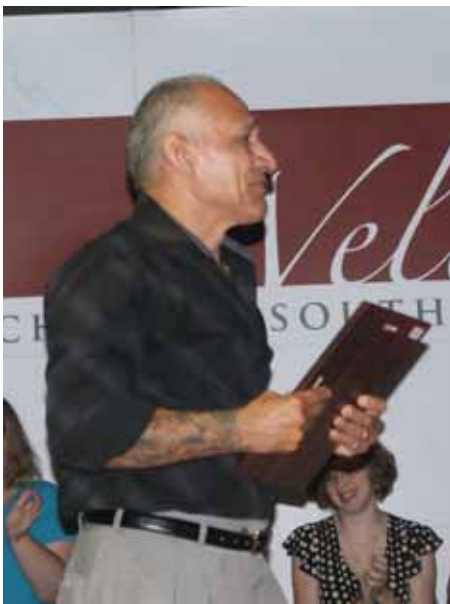
Susan Bragg is both surprised and delighted to be recognized with the Newgate Award. She is pictured with Rev. Sandra Lydick and Bishop Mike Lowry.

Faithful, Compassionate Pastoral Care in Times of Crisis

Rev. Suzie Boeglin, Parents & Children Together (PACT): Pastoral care is a critical and essential element of ministry that often leads to a covenant relationship between pastor and parishioner. Such is the case with the Rev. John Beckling of Cisco who responded to a parishioner's crisis by offering God's grace.

For two years prior to judicial proceedings, he became a friend to the family of an incarcerated loved one, helping them to cope and navigate the unfamiliar territory of our judicial system. Following sentencing, Pastor Beckling faithfully visits and continues to make the 10-hour round trip visitation each month without fail. His faithfulness and compassion have never wavered.

Three-Striker Uses Unexpected Freedom to Return to Prison — to Help Others



Photos by Troy Chapman

Piano Hernandez clutches his Newgate Award, a symbol of how God's grace and a group of caring people offered the love that helped him turn his life to helping others.

Rev. Billy Strayhorn, Joshua UMC: Justice ministry involved people in all sorts of places and stations of life, but rarely do we get the opportunity to honor someone who has been both the recipient of justice ministry like Kairos as well as being an active participant in serving in justice ministry.

This Newgate Award goes to Victor Hernandez or Piano as he is better known. He was a "three striker" who was never supposed to see the free world again. He was living the prison life to the fullest. Then, in May 1998, Piano experienced a Kairos ministry weekend. His

life was profoundly changed by the unconditional love of God in Christ shared by the Kairos team. That weekend, he truly became God's man.

Still in prison, with little or no hope of parole, the chains fell off and

Piano experienced the freedom only Christ can bring. Everything about his life and his lifestyle reflected that freedom.

In 2005, Piano met with the Parole Board for a routine hearing. If nothing happened it would be another eight years before his next parole hearing. They asked him only one question: "If you got out today, where would you go live?"

Piano's answer was, "Joshua, Texas." When asked why, Piano explained, "Because there is a United Methodist Church there that support and loves me." (One of the Kairos team members was a member at FUMC Joshua and maintained a relationship with Piano, which grew into the local church's involvement.)

The prison system saw such a profound change in Piano's life over the years from the Kairos that on Aug. 19, 2005, he was paroled. True to his word, he moved to Joshua,

got a job, bought a car and a house, and has married. He and his wife, Nancy, are active and respected members of the congregation and deeply loved.

Piano has helped open the door to the church's deeper involvement in justice ministry by helping establish Overcomers, a Christian-based 12-step program that the county and district courts support. Piano was the first inmate ever invited back to the prison from which he was paroled to tell his story to his former inmates. He continues to serve in the Kairos ministry and now sites on the State Kairos Board.

Piano's nickname is another story for another day, but Piano Hernandez is a fine-tuned instrument who God is using to play a symphony of grace and witness. If you ask, he will share his story with your congregation. I am proud and honored to call him my friend and my brother in Christ.

- July**
- 13-17: Pilgrimage 2 Camp at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose
 - 16: Meet New Weatherford DS at Antonio's Mexican Restaurant, Weatherford
 - 17: Face2Face Youth Worship Service/ Dinner at Davis Memorial UMC, North Richland Hills
 - 17-19: Discovery 2 Camp at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
 - 19-24: CTCYM Jr. High Mission Trip
 - 20-24: Voyager 2 Camp at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
 - 27-31: Voyager 3 Camp at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
- August**
- 1: Nurture Council at Lone Star Cafe, Hillsboro
 - 1: First Saturday Gospel Sing at Trinity UMC, Coleman
 - 2-8: Local Pastor Licensing School at Texas Wesleyan University/Polytechnic UMC, Fort Worth
 - 7-8: Mid-Cities District Live Out LOUD Youth Event at First Eules
 - 14-15: CTC United Methodist Women Executive Team meeting at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
 - 17: Weatherford District Pastors Meeting at First Weatherford
 - 18: Central Texas Methodist Foundation board meeting at Conference Center
 - 24-26: Extended Cabinet meeting with Bishop Grant Hagiya

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

Episcopal boundaries | Continued from page 1A

a lively discussion about this at First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth. Bishop Janice Riggle Huie listened and took notes to be shared with the College of Bishops. Our Bishop Mike Lowry held the same type of meeting in the Texas Conference.

CTC Generated Comments

Here are some of our comments that we hoped would be considered before the final decision is made:

√ A conference with a small number of churches may generate a more time-consuming workload in terms of appointment making, so just considering the size of a conference doesn't tell the whole story. Central Texas is relatively small, but the bishop's workload is intense.

√ Ethnic congregations and those who are underserved deserve concentrated episcopal time and energy. The most rapid growth in Central Texas is in Hispanic and African American populations. Don't dismiss these persons!

√ Look for ways to structure conferences so there are ample options for ministry and opportunities for longer tenures for pastors.

√ Remember that Central Texas has a success story to tell, and statistics indicate that we have

done better with our own bishop. We are in a rapid-growth area and continue to increase our 34-year history of growth in membership. When General Motors pares down to meet economic limitations, it doesn't cut the successful dealerships to concentrate on the least productive. The UMC should, similarly, enhance its strengths. The Central Texas Conference has been a strength for United Methodism, and with strong leadership, we will be even more successful in making disciples for Jesus Christ. That great intellect and philosopher Dizzy Dean said, "If you can do it, it ain't braggin." We have earned the right to brag on our conference.

√ Concentrate on major media markets, to assure the availability of episcopal leadership in those heavily populated areas.

√ Remember that changing conference boundaries will create a "headache" for the Board of Pensions & Health Benefits because benefits vary among the conferences.

These were some of the comments from our group, but Bishop Huie shared a similar list of concerns that had been used in a survey that was completed by Jurisdictional Conference delegates and other interested persons who

responded online.

Perhaps you participated in that online survey. The purpose of the survey was to prioritize concerns that had been anticipated. Here is the resulting "Prioritized Considerations for Shaping New Episcopal Boundaries." This list will be used by the College of Bishops.

Prioritized Considerations

Positioned for the future. What alignment best positions the church to reach mobile populations where they will be living in the coming decades?

Workload. What alignment most balances the workload among the bishops?

Stewardship. What alignment makes best use of money and time?

Churches. Which alignment best balances the number of United Methodist churches among episcopal areas?

Geography. What alignment most balances the physical size of the episcopal areas?

Underserved populations. What alignment best positions the United Methodist Church to reach populations underrepresented today?

Clergy. Which alignment best balances the number of clergy among episcopal areas?

Membership. Which alignment best balances the United Methodist membership among episcopal areas?

Social and cultural affinities. What alignment best takes account of social and cultural commonalities?

Conferences per bishop. What alignment best provides the most one conference/one bishop assignments?

Population. Which alignment best balances the population among episcopal areas?

History. What alignment most preserves historic connections and relationships?

States. Which alignment best takes account of state boundaries?

The South Central Jurisdiction Episcopal Areas Study, quoted previously, was provided by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. The detailed report and statistical analysis of the jurisdiction is available online at lewiscenter@wesleyseminary.edu.

The College of Bishops still welcomes thoughtful suggestions, but it's important that you know the process for making the final decision.

This October, the South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops

will meet with the Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy to receive any recommendations they wish to give. Dr. Tim Bruster and I are your representatives on that committee and we will be certain that each idea that we receive from you is considered. Please let us know your thoughts.

In January of 2010 the College of Bishops will develop the first draft of a proposal. If annual conference boundary changes are being proposed, a called session of Jurisdictional Conference will be required. Only Jurisdictional Conference has the authority to change conference boundaries. If this is necessary, it will be held in October 2010. Otherwise, the final proposal will be presented to Jurisdictional Conference delegates in November 2011.

Nobody wants to share a bishop or lose the current bishop. None of our conferences want to be transferred to another jurisdiction. I doubt that any churches want to be moved to another conference.

Change will be painful wherever it occurs; but if God's will is done, joy through successful service will follow. Pray for those who deliberate, that God's kingdom will be advanced by their wise decisions.

"Together at the Table" theme to be highlighted at 2009 Cooperative School of Christian Mission

For generations the table has been an important symbol for the gathered community. It is around the table that food is shared, discussions are held, decisions made, crafts are created and board games are played. As Christians, we are reminded of the significance of the table in Jesus' life and ministry.

Christ calls us to a higher standard of living and loving as together we work for peace and justice for all creation. In the sacred circle of life, enfolding the world and all that dwells therein, all are together at the table of God's love.

That will be celebrated at the 2009 Cooperative School of Christian Mission, sponsored by the Central Texas Conference United Methodist Women and missions ministries, at two times and two locations.

The weekday school will be held Aug. 4-6 at First United Methodist Church of Hurst, and the weekend school Aug. 7-9 at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center. Study areas will focus on:

- Spiritual Growth Study: Food & Faith
- Geographic Study: The Beauty & Courage of Sudan — Why a Dream of Peace Is Possible
- Issue Study: Giving Our Hearts Away — Native American Survival
- Children's Study: Piece Work/Peace Work
- Youth Study: Food, Faith & Me

All the studies are aimed at helping to understand God's work in the world, how United Methodists are involved, and what challenges we face in our personal lives and local congregations.

The deadline for registration is July 20, and interested persons are urged to download their study resources or order books before the school at www.missionresourcecenter.org.

For more details and a registration form, visit the conference Web site at www.ctcumc.org. Vanessa Nunn (ctc-registscsm@sbcglobal.net or 817-429-3256) is the registrar.

How do you define a crisis?

... Try hundreds of young campers, 100 degree Texas weather and an ice machine that doesn't work!

That's the situation at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center as campers struggle to stay cool with an on-again, off-again ice maker. Could there be a worse time than summer for an ice machine to quit?

GLC's Executive Director Steve Nance reports that a new machine — not in the budget! — will cost \$6500 without an ice bin or \$8000 with the bin. He has put a patch and lots of prayers on the old machine, but it's a moment-to-moment situation.

"This is something we have to replace right now — whether we have the money or not — and we'll worry about how to pay for it when the bill comes in," says Nance. If your church, Sunday school or youth group would like to contribute to providing an ice maker for campers and other visitors to Glen Lake, please send a check to Glen Lake Camp Ice Fund, P.O. Box 928, Glen Rose, TX 76043. As Steve always says, "God bless from the greatest place on earth, GLC."

