



an edition of The United Methodist Reporter

Official Publication for the Central Texas Conference



Connecting in Uganda ... 8A



A great fish tale ... 8A



Free health clinic ... 5A

60 buckets of hope

When the call came for flood buckets to help recovering victims of Hurricane Ike and to replenish the depleted supply of flood buckets at The United Methodist Church's Sager Brown storage warehouse in Baldwin, La., members of First United Methodist Church of Stephenville stepped up their giving.

Together, the congregation donated enough funds and supplies to provide for 60 five-gallon flood buckets. Their contributions will help to restock Sager Brown Depot, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) regional warehouse facility.

Sager Brown has nearly depleted its supply of flood buckets after shipping thousands of buckets in response to Hurricane Ike and recent floods. UMCOR Sager Brown Depot and other United Methodist depots in the connection collect, package and ship buckets to flooded areas all over the United States.

Depot Executive Kathy Kraiza reports, "Since June 17, 2008, we have shipped more than 5,000 flood buckets in response to requests from annual conferences in the Midwest. We are down to only 200 flood buckets in stock." Sager Brown distributed 4,008 buckets in all of 2007. Increasing the supply of flood buckets has become the most urgent need as communities along the Gulf Coast and in the Midwest continue the cleanup process.

"We are proud of the Christian witness our congregation is making by helping to meet the need for more flood buckets," said Cynthia Rives, chair of First Stephenville's Missions Committee.



Assembling 60 flood buckets involved even the children at First United Methodist Church of Stephenville.

Flood Buckets:

- bleach • scouring pads • sponges
- scrub brush • cleaning towels • liquid laundry detergent • household cleaner • disinfectant dish soap • clothes pins • clothes line • dust masks • latex gloves • pair work gloves • heavy-duty trash bags • insect repellent spray • air freshener

Mission trips are geared to two specific groups

Young Adult Mission Trip to Aldersgate Enrichment Center — March 26-29 —

College age and young professionals are invited to participate in a Central Texas Conference-sponsored mission trip to Aldersgate Enrichment Center in Early, Tex. March 26-29.

Aldersgate Enrichment Center is a ministry dedicated to providing a work/residential program for physically and mentally challenged adults who find meaningful employment and life skills training. Mission trip participants will learn about this important ministry located right in our own backyard by:

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Single Adults in Mission at Dulac, La. Community Center for Houma Indians — January 15-19 —

All adult singles are invited to join in an exciting journey to Dulac, La., to serve God and others as they help in cleanup operations and repair homes devastated by Hurricane Gustav.

Participants in the Central Texas Conference-sponsored Singles Mission Trip Jan. 15-19 will experience fellowship and an opportunity to serve in a primarily Houma Native American community and learn about their culture.

You will make new friends, enjoy Cajun food, experience worship and fellowship and

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Central Texas Conference
United Methodist Church

the Central Link

An edition of
The United Methodist Reporter
November 14, 2008
Volume 155 | Number 28

Central Link, an edition of *The United Methodist Reporter*, is the official publication of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Opinions are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect official United Methodist positions. The Central Texas Conference does not endorse any product or service advertised.

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The mission of *Central Link* edition of *The United Methodist Reporter* is to inform, enlighten, inspire and equip leaders for mission and ministry in our connectional church.

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The Central Link edition is published every other week and is the official publication of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107-2153.



The Wilderness Way

By BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY



In a temporary departure from *The Wilderness Way* column, I wanted to share with you the message the Council of Bishops, meeting in their semi-annual session as this newspaper goes to press, sent to President-Elect Barack Obama on his election. It is signed by Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer and represents the entire Council of Bishops.



November 5, 2008

Dear President-Elect Obama:

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church is pleased to join with the chorus of United States citizens and international partners in congratulating you on your election as the forty-fourth President of the United States of America. The Council is currently convened in its semi-annual session at Epworth by the Sea, St. Simons Island, Georgia. The Council includes bishops from the United States, Europe, Africa and the Philippines.

We applaud your willingness to articulate a vision of change for the United States that is based on hope for all the people, especially those who are disinherited and disenfranchised. We are also encouraged by your desire to construct a landscape for the United States that is inclusive of all people. We affirm your desire for a more peaceful and just world.

The United Methodist Church has a long history of publicly-expressed concern for social justice based on Christian principles. Our desire for justice extends to the natural world, the nurturing community, the social community, the economic community, the political community and the world community.

We are praying that God will grant you wisdom, courage and protection in your presidential leadership. We are also praying for all the leaders of the world's nations, who will collaborate with you in the arena of common concerns that impact the global community.

In the months following the inauguration, we would like to present you and Mrs. Obama with Bibles signed by the members of the Council of Bishops. A visit with the President by representatives of the Council of Bishops is a tradition which dates back to our first bishop, Francis Asbury, who visited with President George Washington. The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church will convene in Washington, DC, during the week of May 3-8, 2009. It is our desire to meet with you at this time or another.

We pray that God's abundant grace and abiding peace will be with you as you shoulder the mantle of presidential leadership as the first African American. As you lead the United States of America, the bishops of The United Methodist Church will be upholding you in our prayers.

With our gratitude and hope,

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer, President
The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Celebration of cultures

A teacher stood in a quiet, empty classroom and offered up a prayer to God. "Send me students who want to learn," he asked the Lord.

The teacher's prayer was answered. A short time later, he found himself in the midst of a room full of enthusiastic students participating in a group project.

The Rev. Armando Alvarado, associate pastor at First United Methodist Church of Grapevine, was that teacher several years ago.

He recounted his experience in his sermon, "Estamos Vivos?" ("Are We Alive?") at the annual bi-lingual/bi-cultural worship service held by the Central Texas Conference Committee on Hispanic Ministries. This year's theme was "Fuerza en la Unidad" ("Strength in Unity").

Alvarado preached his sermon in both English and Spanish to a diverse crowd that included those who speak only English or Spanish and those who speak both.

The service was held Sunday, Nov. 2, at St. Luke United Methodist Church in Haltom City.

Alvarado said the project he assigned his students was to design a strong bridge. On the day the bridges were tested for strength, the class came together. "They came alive together,"

he said. Our lives are like bridges, Alvarado explained at the worship service.

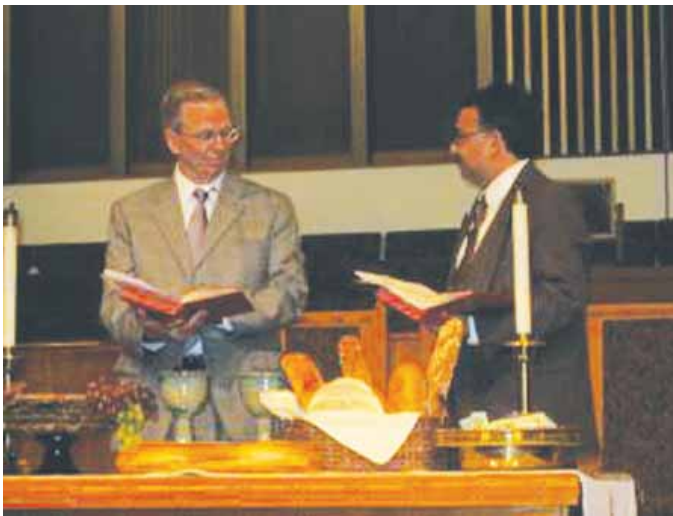
"We find ourselves in situations of tension and pressure, but like the students working together, together we have friends, family and a community of faith," he said. "I say we are alive. Together, united, we can serve and be a bridge that witnesses to God's Spirit."

Indeed, the service was one of tremendous unity. The congregation came together for the sacrament of Holy Communion and joined voices in song and in saying the Hispanic Creed, read at the same time in both English and Spanish.

Those who participated represented many cultural backgrounds and congregations.

Musicians included St. Luke Ekkesia Band, El Grupo Los Diamantes from Diamond Hill United Methodist Church and Rev. Carlos Careaga of Aldersgate United Methodist Church.

Those who led liturgy in the service included Rev. Jeff May of St. Luke, Sam Rodriguez of the Conference Office of Hispanic Ministries, and representing other United Methodist churches were Rev. Raul Guttierrez of Arlington Heights, Rev. Martha Bessac of Good Shepherd, Rev. Katie Meek of



Above, assisting in the worship are Rev. Tom Connolly of Edge Park UMC and Rev. David Martinez of El Buen Samaritano UMC.



Bethel in Weatherford, Rev. Robert Flowers of Polytechnic, Rev. Juanita Montemayor of Diamond Hill, Rev. David Martinez of El Buen Samaritano, Rev. Tom Connolly

of Edge Park and MeOsha Bell of McMillan.

— By Sunny Farley,
Central Texas Conference
Office of Hispanic Ministries

Acton UMC delivers medical, immigration assistance to needy

"Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord."

Through its dedicated volunteers, the Rancho Brazos Community Center of Acton United Methodist Church carries out this mandate in a low-income community in Hood County. The center has free after-school individual tutoring for neighborhood children where individualized attention is improving their school work and increasing self-confidence.

Within the past month, the center has also sponsored a free Health Clinic with flu shots, screening exams for cholesterol, diabetes and hypertension. Additionally, when eye examinations indicate a need for vision adjustment, eye glasses are provided at no charge to neighborhood

children in need.

On Oct. 24, the center sponsored its second annual Immigration Forum led by Justice for Our Neighbors attorney Mary Beth Garcia. JFON, a free immigration clinic supported by individual donations in the Central Texas and North Texas conferences, makes this program available to all churches in the Central Texas Conference. JFON was also the recipient organization of the 2008 Central Texas Annual Conference offering.

Full Spanish-English translation services for the Immigration Forum were provided by Amy Spaur of JFON.

— Submitted by Ed Vela
Acton United Methodist Church



Above, a nurse from Harris Methodist Hospital administers free flu shots, even to youngsters who may be a little hesitant. At left, a nurse from Cook Children's Hospital offers the nasal flu vaccine to a more willing youth.



Conference Calendar

November

- 18: Ethnic Local Church Concerns interviews at Conference Center
- 18: Conference Disaster Response meeting at First UMC Hillsboro
- 18: Executive Ministry Team at Conference Center
- 24: Mid-Cities District Hispanic Committee
- 27-28: Conference office closed in observance of Thanksgiving
- 30: United Methodist Student Day Offering (only participating churches are eligible for their students to apply for United Methodist Merit Scholarships)

December

- 4: Waco District ministers meeting at Methodist Children's Home
- 6: Brownwood District clergy Christmas brunch at Early UMC
- 6: Mid-Cities District clergy Christmas brunch at First UMC Colleyville
- 6: Waxahachie District clergy Christmas brunch at the District Parsonage
- 13: Student Leadership Team Christmas party, location TBA
- 13: Weatherford District clergy Christmas party at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Glen Rose
- 19: Last day to mail apportionments
- 24-26: Christmas observance, Conference Center closed

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

Reconnecting with Hope of Africa Children's Choir and much more

BY ERIC HARRISON
MEMBER, SILVER CREEK UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH



Eric and Rebecca Harrison of Silver Creek United Methodist Church revel in reconnecting with the children of the Uganda choir.

In September, my wife Rebecca and I were invited to visit Uganda by the bishop of the East Africa Annual Conference. Bishop Daniel and Patron Betty Wandabula started Humble School and The Hope for Africa Children Choir in Mukono, Uganda.

During the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, our church, Silver Creek United Methodist Church, was one of many that hosted the children from the Hope for Africa Children's Choir.

We spent considerable time with the children for the 10 days they were here and we grew to love them. There is so much love these children have to offer, and we decided the best way to show our love for them was to go and see where they are from.

Our trip was amazing. I thought we were emotionally, physically and spiritually ready for it, but we were not. Uganda is a country like no other we have ever been to. The people are proud though they have very little, compared to American standards, but they have a faith in our Lord that is amazing. A faith that was shared, and

now is a large part of our lives.

Our trip had a two-fold mission. First, we wanted to see the children, spend time with them, play with them and worship with them. The second part of the mission included the opportunity to travel throughout the country with the music academy staff and participate in the interviewing of children for the 2009 choir. This was the hardest thing we have ever done.

We visited many villages all over Uganda. Some villages were displaced people camps, so as you can imagine the conditions were quite rough. Harder than that was the fact that only certain children were eligible for the choir. Many were too old and some too sick to be able to participate in the choir.

Once interviewed, the children must be screened for HIV which is one of the determining factors for whether or not they qualify for the choir. Many times we were brought to tears by the sheer number of orphans in these villages.

Uganda is a country that has been

terrorized by war and AIDS for many years. But there is a light through all of this — Humble School. While it is one of many schools helping to educate the children, it is but one run by The United Methodist Church. The conditions at the school are amazing — safe, clean, three meals a day and a place where children can be children.

Humble School needs help from the Central Texas Conference — sponsorships is a great way to help the children. Many have had the opportunity to meet the children of the choir, but there are so many more children who will not have the chance to see America. They do not get the chance to sing their way into the hearts of our churches.

Being a pen pal is another way to help these children. There is no financial obligation in the pen pal program, but donations in any amount are greatly needed. Unfortunately, while the cost of housing is not very expensive in Uganda, food, medication and clothing is.

We are putting together a trip in



Humble School offers a brighter future for the orphaned children of Uganda — something volunteers can help to support.

2009 for anyone interested in going to Uganda. We are still in the planning stage of the trip. We would like to include some teachers, some medical professionals (doctors and dentists) and some people with willing hands to help with general maintenance. Of course, the most important thing that

any of us can bring is our love. Our love for people, children and Christ.

For more information about sponsorships, pen pals or the 2009 Uganda trip, please contact Rebecca Harrison at mommyonthego@juno.com or Rev. Jason Hamilton at jason@silvercreekumc.org.

Two mission trips | Continued from page 1A

Young Adults

right in our own backyard by:

- providing a new prayer garden to enhance the spiritual lives of Aldersgate residents
- experiencing a time as part of the community life of the center
- involvement with minor tasks and repairs to the center (painting, computer work, etc.)

For more details about the trip, download a participant packet at www.ctcumc.org/umvim or contact Jennifer Bellamy (jennifer@ctcumc.org) or Joy Roberson (joy@ctcumc.org) or 817-877-5222 or 800-460-8622.

Single Adults

make a difference in the lives of those affected by this natural disaster.

There will be opportunities for everyone to serve — tasks include preparing meals to cleaning up yards to driving vans to repair of homes. For more details or a brochure, please contact Rev. Charles Graff (cgraff@myfumc.org) or call the Conference Office at 817-877-5222 or 800-460-8622.



Polly Deen and Vicki Eldredge ... walk for life!

Dear Friends,

I would like to thank each of you for supporting my walk in the Breast Cancer 3day Nov. 7-9. When my sister Polly and I decided to participate we had no idea she would be fighting for her life when it came time for the walk. It will be even more meaningful than we ever considered, and each of you have helped make it possible.

Words cannot fully express how much your donations mean for me. Polly and I will walk for all of you and all the people whose lives have been touched by this horrible disease.

*God bless and keep you,
Vicki Eldredge
Church Growth & Development*

Gift of Love Auction

5 - 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15
First UMC, Burleson

The 10th Annual Gift of Love Auction benefits the ministries of the Metropolitan Board of Missions.

High bidder for the 2007 auctioned fishing trip was Henry Radde who took his grandson Sam. "This is the perfect place, large enough that you aren't fishing the same water all the time and loaded with fish. We caught 27 and kept 23 — 9 bass and 14 crappie. We took our fishing gear and snacks, and Troy Chapman provided the boat and guide work. Good fun, no hassle, great time!"

What items will you bid on this year?

