



Planning ahead ... 5A



Into the Wilderness ... 4A



Honoring beginnings ... 8A

The bucket challenge!

Responding to the continuing need for flood buckets to help in the flood-ravaged areas along the Texas Gulf Coast, congregations in the Central Texas Conference are assembling flood buckets that will serve an important role in the widespread clean up operations.

Two churches — Foundation UMC and First UMC of Stephenville — are challenging other congregations to meet or exceed their flood bucket and monetary collections drives. Large numbers of the flood buckets are coming into the collection centers each day. A full report will be made in the next issue of *Central Link*.

Below, Rev. Mel Bishara of Saginaw United Methodist Church adds his church's 30 buckets to the growing collection in the Conference Center's hallway.



There's more to Mooreville!

Just how far will a congregation go to support their youth? At Mooreville United Methodist Church, a small but growing congregation in the Temple District, members committed to provide full scholarships to all their youth and adults participating in the summer youth mission trips.

Mooreville's youth and dedicated adults had already been raising the stewardship funds for the Central Texas Conference Youth in Mission (CTCYM) Jr. and Sr. High Combo Trip by collecting aluminum cans and selling hamburger lunches.

But then a new idea surfaced!

As the church was growing in discipleship and numerically from 139 to 169 members, more room was needed. At the same time two buildings across the street from the church were to be removed



Youth and adult helpers were sponsored by their Mooreville congregation to spend a week in mission work projects with the Central Texas Conference Youth in Mission program.

for a new parking lot, the Neuman family made a generous donation to the church of the property next door. This meant there were recyclable and resalable materials involved — far beyond aluminum cans!

They set about salvaging tin from the old barn, metal from a truck, horse troughs, plows and various other items. In all, the

| Continued on page 4A

2009 Conference HealthFlex and Cafeteria Plan enrollment

The annual election period for the 2009 HealthFlex health insurance plan year begins Nov. 10 and ends at 11:59 p.m. (EST) Nov. 30, 2008.

Participants in the plan may change their health benefits election via the WebMD Personal Health

Manager™ — the entry point for the HealthFlex program information (www.webmdhealth.com/gbophb).

Please note that participants already enrolled will remain in that plan in 2009 unless they make an election change by Nov. 30, 2008. Those who wish to add or remove

dependents must send an enrollment change form to the Conference office. Even those who do not have elections to make are urged to log onto WebMD to complete the HealthQuotient™, WebMD's health risk assessment, and to review their 2009 health benefit

information.

The 2009 HealthFlex Annual Election Guide will be mailed from the General Board of Pensions & Health Benefits on Nov. 3, and will provide additional enrollment

| Continued on page 8A



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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

“So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.” Exodus 13:18

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a know God.” Corrie Ten Boom

1. Into the Wilderness

The church has entered into a wilderness. It is not a wilderness of our making, nor did we enter this wilderness of our own volition. Nonetheless, we are now embarked on a wilderness journey. This wilderness is the post-Christian world we live in. It is a wilderness of disestablishment; a wilderness of indifference; a wilderness of rapidly dwindling membership; a wilderness of ignorance of the basics of Christianity; a wilderness of the lack of theological coherence.

Since the battle of Mulvian Bridge in October of 312 and the Edit of Milan the following year, Christianity in the west has operated as some form of the generally state and/or culturally approved religion. While other religions existed, the general culture could be said to be Christian. George Hunter has likened this situation to being a basketball team that constantly plays on its home court. Christianity could count on crowd support, rulings in its favor and the like. Scholars have generally referred this cultural context as Christendom. What has changed dramatically in the west for the first time in approximately 1600 years is that Christendom no longer holds sway.

Indeed, some take the issue further. Walter Dan Burham has remarked, “The American culture clearly and remarkably unraveled from the mid-1960s onward.”¹ While the old has unraveled, to some degree much of the old — segregation, restricted roles for women, etc. — needed (and still do need) to be jettisoned. The change is not necessarily bad.

In a recent sermon Pastor Carol Gibson from St. Andrews United Methodist Church in Fort Worth called time in the wilderness “part of the purification process.” Furthermore, regardless of how one views current reality, the matter is clear. The old mainline Protestant churches have entered into a time of wilderness wanderings. We are moving from the temple of the familiar to the adventure of the wilderness.

The most telling evidence that we are in the wilderness is not secular hostility but general indifference of much of the population. The thicket in which we struggle is marked more by cultural indifference than outright hostility. We are in a wilderness of indifference.

An apt frame for the situation the church and the Christian movement face today was related to me by a colleague who told of receiving a phone call one morning. The caller was a young woman recently engaged to be married. She asked the pastor

if he would be willing to perform the wedding. He indicated he would be glad to do so if they would engage in premarital counseling and if he was available on the day they wanted to be married. She said they were hoping to have premarital counseling. However, the date she had chosen for the wedding was a Sunday morning about three month away. Politely, the pastor indicated he was not available at that time.

“Oh,” she said, “how about ...” and then she named Sunday morning a week later.

“No,” the pastor replied smiling to himself. “I’m not available any Sunday morning. I have a standing Sunday morning commitment..”

“Really!” said the woman, “What in the world could you be doing every Sunday morning?”

It had not even occurred to the woman that as a pastor he would be leading worship on Sunday morning. Dissect this incident for a moment. Culturally, she self-identified as a Christian to the degree that when getting married she desired to do so in a Christian church with Christian vows. However, not only does she not have a home church to which she belongs, but she is so out of contact with Christian faith, life and practice that it does not occur to her that regular faithful worship takes place on Sunday mornings. Her surprise at finding that the pastor had a regularly scheduled Sunday morning commitment was both palpable and genuine. In the deceased world of North America Christendom, even if she did not herself attend worship, she would be easily aware of this fact. Today it comes as a surprise.

But the real surprise for those of us who profess Christ as Lord is that the wilderness is precisely where God wants us! That’s right. It is God who is leading us into the wilderness.

More on the Wilderness Way next week.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Mike Lowry
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¹ Walter Dean Burham, *Democracy*, Summer 1982; taken from Lyle E. Schaller, *The New Context for Ministry*, p. 63

More to Mooreville | Continued from page 1A

youth and Mooreville’s supportive adult members loaded over 36,000 pounds or 18 tons of materials for recycling.

This effort took months, but they raised over \$7,000 — fully covering the cost for the 16 who participated

in the CTCYM trip, an experience that changed their lives!

“There is no congregation that works harder in evangelism, outreach and stewardship than the church at Mooreville,” states Rev. Joel Robbins who adds, “It is a

privilege to serve as their pastor.”

And as their pastor, he tells of a congregation that sees the world as God’s opportunity for them to reach their potential in the Kingdom.

“They view pieces of metal on the

ground as opportunities from God,” he said. “They see people in their midst as opportunities from God to issue an invitation to discipleship. The lay people are the ones who make the United Methodist Church so incredible.”

Planning Ahead | 2009 Glen Lake Summer Camp Schedule and 2009 CTCYM youth mission trips

Glen Lake Camp Summer Camp Schedule

June 8 -12	Journey Camp (7-9 grades)
June 8 - 12	Bike Camp (7-9 grades)
June 15 - 19	Voyager 1 Camp (5-6 grades)
June 19 - 21	Discovery 1 Camp (3-4 grades)
June 22 - 26	Explorer Camp (6-8 grades)
June 26 - 27	Kids Kamp (1-2 grades)
June 29 - July 3	Pilgrimage 1 Camp (9-12 grades)
July 13 - 17	Pilgrimage 2 Camp (9-12 grades)
July 17 - 19	Discovery 2 Camp (3-4 grades)
July 20 - 24	Voyager 2 Camp (5-6 grades)
July 27 - 31	Voyager 3 Camp (5-6 grades)
August 3 - 7	Navigator (7-8 grades)

For more details: www.glenlake.org/summer

2009 CTCYM Schedule

Senior High Mission Trip	June 14-20
Junior/Senior Combo Trip	June 14-20
Junior High Mission Trip	July 19-24

For more details: <http://ctsitem.brickriver.com/page.asp?PKValue=906>



October

- 17-18: Conference Goal Setting at Still Water Lodge, Glen Rose
- 17-18: Group Life Simulcast at Lighthouse Fellowship UMC
- 18: UMW School of Christian Mission Planning Team
- 19: Fort Worth Crop Walk at Texas Christian University
- 21: Temple District Clergy meeting
- 21: Equitable Compensation & Health Benefits meeting at Conference Center
- 25: CTC Student Leadership Team at Hillsboro United Christian Fellowship Center
- 25: Advanced Lay Speaking Course at Genesis UMC, Fort Worth
- 27: Order of Deacons at Conference Center
- 27: Mid-Cities District Hispanic Committee at District Office
- 28: Equitable Compensation & Health Benefits Committee at Conference Center
- 30: Urban Ministries Task Force interviews at Conference Center

November

- 1: Campus Ministry Task Force at Wesley Foundation, Texas Christian University
- 2: Bi-lingual/Bi-cultural Worship Service at St. Luke UMC, Fort Worth
- 3-7: Mid-Cities Older Adult Mission Trip to Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center, Fayetteville, Ark.
- 8: EXCITE: Jr. High Youth Rally at Woodway UMC, Waco
- 8: Commission on Inclusiveness at Conference Center

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

Our Gift of Love Auction

Saturday, Nov. 15
at First UMC, Burleson
590 NE McAlister Road

Silent Auction 5-6:15 p.m.
Live Auction 6:45-7:45 p.m.
Refreshments & Fellowship

Proceeds from Our Gift of Love Auction benefit the many partner ministries of the Metropolitan Board of Missions.

Preach IT! conference Oct. 27-29 in Houston

Preach IT!, a conference developed to provide dynamic preaching from some of today's leading ministers of the gospel, will be held Oct. 27-29 at The Power Center in Houston.

The conference, which is offered through the Beeson Int'l. Center for Biblical Preaching and Church Leadership at Asbury Theological Seminary, will feature several guest speakers:

- Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell, senior pastor of Windsor Village UMC in Houston,
- Rev. Sean Gladding, co-pastor at Mercy Street UMC in Houston,
- Bishop Janice Huie, bishop of the Texas Conference.

General registration is \$195/person. For more information and to register, visit asburyseminary.edu or call 888-523-3766.

Revitalizing the Church Nov. 13-14 in Temple

St. James United Methodist Church in Temple will host a symposium on *Revitalizing the Church for Vital Service* Nov. 13-14 for lay and clergy.

The purpose of the symposium is to explore, vision and implement a plan for clergy and laity to work together in revitalizing the church for vital service in our churches and communities. Workshop leaders and presenters are:

- Bishop Alfred Norris (retired) who served three conferences in Texas,
- Dr. Austin Fredrick, assistant to the bishop of the Southwest Texas Conference,
- Dr. Clifton O. Howard, Waco District superintendent,
- Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe of the North Texas Conference,
- Pastor Harold Dangerfield, senior pastor at Hamilton Park UMC, Dallas, and
- Lay members of St. James UMC.

Send registration (\$50/person) to St. James UMC, 707 S. Third St., Temple 76504, ATTN: Debra Brown or call 254-773-2849 for more details and suggested hotels.

Temple Hall observes 154 years in ministry with historical markers

Temple Hall Day celebration Sept. 14th

On September 14, Temple Hall United Methodist Church, a small faith community located near Granbury, celebrated a major milestone.

With 154 years of service to God and the community, the proud members participated in the dedication of both a Texas State Historical Marker and The United Methodist Historical Site Marker.

Some 119 members and guests filled the sanctuary beyond capacity, and included seven ministers with former ties to the church. During the ceremony, Rev. Helen H. Jones, pastor, introduced Hood County Judge Andy Rash who read the proclamation designating September 14, 2008, as "Temple Hall United Methodist Church Day."

Other highlights were church historian Delle Blackwell's reading of the church history; dedication of the Texas State Historical Marker by Karen Nace, chairman of the Hood County Historical Commission; and dedication of The United Methodist Historical Site Marker by Dr. Georgia Adamson, Weatherford District superintendent.



Above, Temple Hall members participate in the historical markers dedication service.



Left, Jacob Rains unveils the Texas Historical Marker. Right, former pastors and dignitaries (l-r) from row, Mrs. Tim Russell, Rev. Georgia Orr, Rev. & Mrs. Dave Goodrich, Rev. & Mrs. Richard Hunt, Weatherford District Superintendent Dr. Georgia Adamson, Rev. Bob Sanders, and current pastor Rev. Helen H. Jones.



Early worship services set in brush arbor, members sitting on split log seats

Organized in 1854, and one of the oldest institutions in Hood County, Temple Hall United Methodist church was originally called the Methodist Protestant Church.

It was organized by Rev. Robert Tucker of Collin County who served as the first pastor with nine charter members. Regular services were not held the first year, but in 1855 Rev. Canafax became pastor, walking 30 miles once each month to hold services.

For some time, members attended the church services under a brush arbor year round, even at Christmas one year when there was snow on the ground. Seats were trees cut down and the logs split open. Men came armed to services, which ended early on some occasions when there were reports of Native Americans in the area. However, there were no report of anyone being injured on their travels to or from church.

As more people moved to the area, members built a log building for use by the church which also doubled as a school and a lodge called the Temple of Honor. People called it "Temple Hall" because the minister at that time was Rev. Temple. By 1890, members had replaced the log building with a frame structure.

In 1884, Long Creek Methodist Episcopal Church was built two or three miles east of Temple Hall Methodist Protestant Church, and both prospered for many years. However, in 1939, when the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal churches united, Long Creek and Temple Hall also united and chose the site and name of Temple Hall.

The frame building erected in 1900 was replaced with the current structure, which was built and paid for in one year and dedicated on Jan. 8, 1961.

Throughout its history, Temple Hall UMC has played an active role in and outside the community and has contributed volunteer service and financial support to local needs as well as national and global missions.

Today, there are 39 adult members and nine preparatory members who are striving to insure this historic church will continue to be a place of worship for many more years. — *By Delle Blackwell, Church Historian*

HealthFlex enrollment | Continued from page 1A

assistance. 2009 enrollment information, including eligibility, pre-existing limitations, change in family status, enrollment forms, rate, etc., is available on the Conference Web site at www.ctcumc.org under the insurance link.

Cafeteria Plan

Additionally, each fall all employees of the Central Texas Conference and its entities have the opportunity to enroll in the Conference Cafeteria Plan. This is available to both lay and clergy employees who work a minimum of 20 hours per week.

The Cafeteria Plan allows employees to tax shelter certain expenditures as made possible under

Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Conference plan has been developed in conjunction with AFLAC. Three classifications of benefits are available:

- Supplemental Insurance Policies,
- Dependent Day Care Flexible Spending Accounts, and
- Unreimbursed Medical Expense Accounts.

AFLAC is not associated with HealthFlex and Conference participants do not need to be enrolled in HealthFlex in order to participate in AFLAC. The only requirement is the 20-hours or more work per week. AFLAC 2009 enrollment forms have been mailed to current participants only at their prospective churches/

agencies. For those in such an organization who are interested in enrolling in 2009, please visit the Conference Web site (www.ctcumc.org) for policy information and 2009 enrollment materials. There have been no changes in policies or rates from 2008.

Supplemental Policies & Flexible Spending Accounts

Enrollment forms for the AFLAC Supplemental Policies & Flexible Spending Accounts must be returned to the Conference office to be received not later than 5 p.m. Nov. 28. Anyone with a charge conference after that date, needs to decide about the Cafeteria Plan enrollment prior to that time. Late enrollments will not be accepted for any reason. Please include an e-mail

address for receipt confirmation. All enrollment forms should be mailed to the Central Texas Conference, 464 Bailey Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107, ATTN: Cafeteria Plan or faxed to 817-338-4541. Do not send directly to AFLAC. Any forms sent to AFLAC are void. Participants should keep a copy for themselves and give a copy to the payroll administrator in the local church/agency.

Participants who are enrolled in the supplemental policies in 2008 need not re-enroll for 2009 unless they want to add policies or upgrade their current policies. Those policies will carry over into 2009 at the same premium unless the participant completes an AFLAC policy termination form and mails/faxes it to the Conference office prior to Jan. 1, 2009 (policy termination form available on the Conference Web site).

After Jan. 1, 2009, the participants will not be able to make any cancellations without a qualifying event.

Participants currently enrolled in the 2008 Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) need to re-enroll for 2009. Flexible Spending Accounts will not carry over. Those who participate in the FSA in 2008 and do not plan to participate in 2009 must complete the enrollment form and initial the sections indicating their waiving coverage and submit it to the Conference office.

Any questions should be directed to Shawn-Marie Riley, Conference benefits administrator, at 817-877-5222, 800-460-8622 or shawn-marie@ctcumc.org.