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Arborlawn solves need for adult confirmation with 101 course

When Arborlawn United Methodist Church's sixth graders are confirmed later this spring, they will have spent nine months exploring what it means to be a Christian, a United Methodist and a disciple of Jesus Christ, according to Arborlawn's Associate Pastor Rev. Lee Trigg.

It is a wonderful experience for them, one that allows them to enter into a covenant with God and this church in a meaningful and holy way, he says. But Arborlawn takes this introduction to another level.

Since many newcomers and even active members of Arborlawn [and other churches] came to the church as adults or came from another tradition where they did not have the opportunity to really explore their faith, the church is offering Adult Confirmation.

Arborlawn 101, which begins Feb. 22, is a 12-week Adult Confirmation program — open to all who are interested regardless of what church they attend — designed to give participants a solid foundation on which to build their discipleship.

Trigg points out, "The classes will focus on the basics of Christian history and the evolution of the church, basic United Methodist history and doctrine and Christian discipleship."

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United Methodist Men discover the keys that unlock the door

The Central Texas United Methodist Men's annual retreat, held Feb. 6-7 at Glen Lake Camp, was a blend of fellowship, fun and growing spiritually. While Bishop Mike Lowry spent Saturday morning talking about the importance of UMM in local churches, he stressed the need for more churches to reach out into their communities and the world.

He said that while having good preaching, music and nice facilities is good, in today's society we must take Christ out into our world through mission and service, recalls Donnie Sherwood, vice president of the Central Texas Conference UMM and men's ministry coordinator at First United Methodist Church in Mansfield.

The study program centered on spiritual disciplines through which

Christ transforms individual stories. Sherwood shared with the other men the three keys to becoming more disciplined: becoming more passionate in their pursuit, visualizing the goal that is before them, and being in constant communication. The three disciplines emphasized during the retreat included prayer, Bible study and fasting.

"Each session included small group discussions which generated some powerful sharing for growth of the individual," Sherwood said about the 38 participants who represented eight churches. "Together we explored ways to develop a more disciplined life in Christ," he said.

Also providing leadership at the retreat were UMM President Joe Boatman, James Bell, Art Brucks, Roy Hinson and Mark Bramson.



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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

8. In a previous Wilderness Way, I wrote of our need to be open to God's leading. I cited both the Exodus story and the leading of Jesus into the wilderness right after his baptism as evidence that we must trust God's leading. As I visit churches around the conference there is a vain and repeated hope that somehow reality can be reversed and we can return to 1959. The reality is that we are marching toward the Red Sea (or more properly Sea of Reeds). More trials lay ahead! To those who are naive or seeking short cuts, beware! True faithfulness calls for yet greater trust! The wilderness belongs to God!

The great insight of the "Stockdale Paradox" applies to us. The paradox may be summarized simply as: (1) confront the brutal facts; (2) never lose faith. The name "Stockdale Paradox" refers to Admiral Jim Stockdale who was the highest-ranking U.S. military officer in the "Hanoi Hilton" prisoner-of-war camp during the height of the Vietnam War.

Tortured over 20 times during his eight-year imprisonment from 1965 to 1973, Stockdale lived out the war without any prisoners' rights, no set release date and no certainty as to whether he would ever survive to see his family again. When interviewed by Jim Collins, he said, "I never lost faith in the end of the story. I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade." Questioned further, he added, "This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end — which you can never afford to lose — with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."¹

Applied to our current context, we cannot adopt an easy optimism that everything will be better with a new pastor, better denominational leadership or the latest technique. Casual optimism will not contain the rising post-Christian cultural tsunami. Nor will easy fixes recapture the faded glory of the past. As we head into the wilderness, bad as it is now, we still have the sea in front of us. And, like the Israelites of old, only God can save us. We have to face the brutal facts and not lose faith.

As the wilderness way stretches before us into a strange unknown future, they were charged by Moses to remember this day, the day of the Lord's Passover. "Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, because the Lord brought you out from there by strength of hand; no leavened bread shall be eaten.'"² It is also instructive to remember that the Israelites took the bones of Joseph

with them.³ Translated to our current context, the Exodus story reminds us that God's people are to venture into the wilderness as "blank slates."

The past, the traditions, the experiences of God's saving presence that have informed and guided them are not abandoned. There is a significant embracing of the core ways of faith that have been handed on by the tradition of the faith. The modern church on the wilderness way has much sorting to do. Like the Israelites of old, we are represented symbolically by the bones of Joseph.

John Wesley's reformation that led to the original formation of the Methodist movement can serve as a significant guide. The Articles of Religion passed on by Wesley to the nascent Methodist Episcopal Church in America, along with the Confession of Faith and Wesley's Sermons and Notes, form not just the basis of doctrinal standards but our legacy to carry with us into the wilderness.

This legacy is larger and deeper than doctrine. It encompasses the sweep of the experience of God moving us forward as a people of faith. Methodist experience of the past forms in its semi-hallowed parts is the modern equivalent of Joseph's bones. For example, the initial emphasis on class meeting as a crucial vehicle for maturing in faithful discipleship forms a guide to the wilderness future. Our experience of Spirit working in our midst through the significance of spiritual accountability groups educates us of their importance for the future.

There are other examples to embrace as well (traditions of sanctification and justice — just recall the work of Methodist lay leader William Wilberforce in eradicating slavery; or consider the insights of evangelistically reaching out to non Christians exemplified in the efforts of Francis Asbury). When taken together, they form a modern version of Joseph's bones. Practically, when embraced, they give us strength for the wilderness present and hope for the future. They remind us of the Holy Trinity and connect all three — past, present and future.

1. Admiral James Stockdale, taken from *Good to Great* by James Collins, pp. 83, 85; the entire fourth chapter lays out the principle in detail.
2. Exodus 13:3
3. Exodus 13:19



February is Church Growth SHARES month

BY DR. J. ALLEN GOSS
DIRECTOR, CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE CHURCH GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps you have heard about the International Justice Mission in Washington, DC. Most of the employees are logical thinking attorneys, but IJM does not run on logic alone.

There are plenty of law firms in the District of Columbia that pay more. The attorneys at IJM have found a cause much bigger and more important than a pay check.

They are pursuing a God-ordained passion: the alleviation of human suffering. They have found a cause

much bigger and more important than money. They are pursuing a God-ordained passion of helping people who are hurting.

There is another God-ordained passion: starting new churches in the right places at the right time to reach new people for Jesus Christ.

Church Growth & Development has been pursuing this God-ordained passion with the help of persons across the Central Texas Conference for 29 years.

SHAREHOLDERS give \$60 per

year or more, directly to Church Growth & Development to start new churches. It is a cause much bigger and more important than money. It's about inviting people to know Jesus Christ.

The last few months have been difficult financially because of the economy, but SHAREHOLDERS continue to give to start new churches. They are pursuing a God-ordained passion to share God's love with new people. Maybe it is time you found your God-ordained passion. Become a SHAREHOLDER today at www.ctcumc.org or call Church Growth at 817-877-5222 or 800-460-8622 for more details.



SHARE the joy of nurturing new places for new people and watch the church grow!



RETHINK CHURCH 101

“Rethink Church 101” is a free self-directed online course designed to help church leaders better prepare for this new welcoming tool for the denomination.



When The United Methodist Church launches its new 10thousanddoors.com nationwide campaign in May, church leaders will want to be fully prepared to participate and take advantage of this tool which is geared to engaging others in the traditions and causes United Methodists embrace.

You can do that by visiting the “Rethink Church 101” online welcoming course at http://www.umcom.org/site/c.mrLZJ9PFK mG/b.3444135/k.7456/Support_Center_Training.htm and click on “Rethink Church.”

The four-part course allows visitors to work at their own pace as they read information, explore multimedia materials, engage in discussion forums, complete assignments, take quizzes and share feedback. Each of the four models takes about one hour to complete and includes:

- An overview to learn the basics of Rethink Church’s comprehensive approach to media and welcoming.
- An introduction to welcoming as participants consider what welcoming means

and putting themselves in the place of a stranger.

- An exploration of how to make welcoming a personal ministry that demonstrates what the participant can do to live out welcoming as a model for others in their church.
- An opportunity to create an action plan for the participant’s church and organize ideas they have discovered in this course that will help their church become a more welcoming congregation.

Completing the welcoming course meets the training requirements for matching grant recipients. The course is offered to coincide with national advertising campaigns four times a year, each session open for enrollment for six weeks:

- January 21-March 4
- May 13-June 24
- July 15-August 26
- October 7-November 11

Registration opens the same day the course session begins and remains open throughout the session.

Century-old Glen Rose church renovates to create a warm, spacious, a/v-friendly sanctuary

The century-old First United Methodist Church of Glen Rose reopened its newly renovated sanctuary just before Christmas in what is now a warm, inviting space fully equipped for new adventures in worship.

The history church began in 1885 and the sanctuary structure was built in 1926 to replace the earlier church building on the same sight. Among the surprises of the renovation was the discovery of handsome original wood ceiling and beams along with 24 stained glass windows that had been covered up at some point.

Another surprise was the discovery of an unknown fire. When the wall boards were removed to reveal the studs, evidence of a significant fire was found near a chimney. Before gas space heaters came into use, a pot belly stove was once vented into the chimney and had evidently flamed out and caught the surrounding structural wood on fire.

It all appeared to have been suffocated within the walls by lack

of oxygen, but not before doing significant damage to the wood. Part of the second floor structure had been held up by the chimney every since. During the project, workmen uncovered three chimneys. While the one served as a fireplace, the others were smaller and presumably carried smoke from pot belly stoves used to warm the sanctuary.

The old exterior walls — 24-inch thick native stone — were retained but the second floor was removed to create a more spacious ambience in the sanctuary.

The new sanctuary has been expanded to seat 317 worshippers with double the space for the choir, a large adaptable chancel area with total audio visual capabilities and full view of the once covered stained glass windows and handsome wooden beams. Additional stained glass windows have been installed along with a new Rodgers organ.

This approach to the worship needs of the congregation — the



Renovations to the old Glen Rose UMC uncovered some of the congregation’s history and treasures like 24 stained glass windows and handsome wooden beams, both covered over during an earlier building project.

first of two phases — is allowing them to preserve their historic church building while providing an up-to-date sanctuary that will be adaptable to future needs.



Conference Calendar

February

- 20-22: Youth Mid-Winter #2 at Glen Lake
- 20-21: Cabinet Inventory retreat
- 24: Harris Summit on Mental Health at Round Up Inn, Fort Worth
- 26: Council on Finance & Administration at Conference Center
- 26: Metropolitan Board of Mission Annual Dinner at Round Up Inn, Fort Worth

March

- 1: UM VIM Team Leader Training at Salado UMC
- 5: Waxahachie District clergy meeting at First Waxahachie
- 7: Mission Ministries Leadership Team Annual Meeting at Arborlawn UMC, Fort Worth
- 10: Extended Cabinet
- 10: Appointment Beyond the Local Church/ Extension Ministries Annual Meeting & Luncheon, location to be determined
- 11-13: Appointive Cabinet
- 12: Deadline for reports to be included in the Annual Conference Preliminary Report
- 20-22: United Methodist Women Spiritual Growth Retreat at Lakeview Assembly Retreat Center
- 21: “Taking Care ... of the Body of Christ” Spring Leadership Summit at Central UMC, Waco
- 22: One Great Hour of Sharing Offering at all churches
- 23: Weatherford District clergy meeting at First Weatherford UMC

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

— Noteworthy Items — Jurisdictional retreat center suffers ice damage

Clergy appointment changes announced

Bishop Mike Lowry and the Cabinet have made the following clergy appointment changes:

Paul Bellinger — from not previously appointed to supply pastor at Comunidad de Fe United Methodist Church, Brownwood District, effective July 11, 2008

David Chavez — from retired to interim pastor at Eagle Mountain United Methodist Church, Fort Worth District, effective Feb. 1

Alison "Sam" Humann — from 1/2 time to student local pastor at Emhouse/Richland United Methodist churches, Waxahachie District, effective Feb. 1

Linda Freeto — from 1/2 time associate (\$ 331.7) to full-time associate at Central United Methodist Church, Waco District, effective Jan. 1

Alfred Iglehart — from full-time local pastor to supply pastor at Wesley United Methodist Church, Waco District, effective Jan. 6

David Ray — from supply to student local pastor serving as associate at First Hillsboro United Methodist Church and campus minister at UCF Hill College, effective Feb. 1

Eric Earl Smith — from elder in full connection with the Southwest Texas Conference to 3/4 time pastor at First Italy United Methodist Church, Waxahachie District, effective Feb. 8

Ramon Smith — full-time local pastor from not appointed to associate at Lighthouse Fellowship United Methodist Church, Fort Worth District, effective May 15

Rickie D. Springer — deacon in full connection from retired status to transitional leave, Dec. 1, 2008

Dale Wilbanks — from supply pastor to student local pastor at Sardis/Venus United Methodist churches, Waxahachie District, effective Feb. 1

Bruce J. "BJ" Williams — from 3/4 time to 1/2 time local pastor at Meier Settlement United Methodist Church, Waco District, effective Jan. 1

Judy R. Williamson — full-time local pastor from not appointed to associate at Arborlawn United Methodist Church, Fort Worth District, effective Feb. 1.

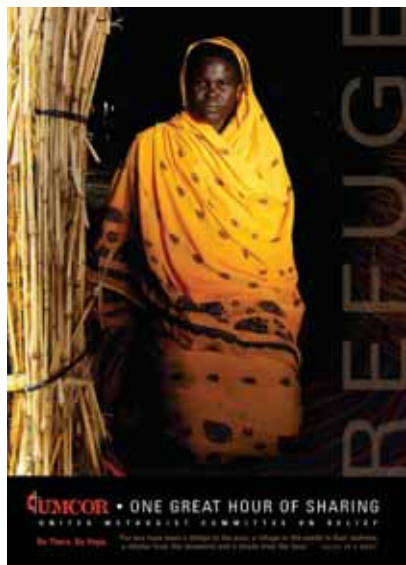
Christian video licensing renewal

The deadline is upon us (Feb. 20) for churches and other ministries to renew their umbrella policy for video licensing. If your church would like to participate in the conferencewide policy, please contact Susan Briles at susan@ctcumc.org, 817-877-5222 or 817-460-8622 as soon as possible.

The cost to enroll is \$180 and the policy renewed Feb. 1, 2009 and expires Feb. 1, 2010. Please consider the following as to whether or not your church should participate:

Prerecorded home videocassettes or DVDs, those commonly available in retail or rental stores and those offered from the Conference Resource Center, are intended for personal home use only. These videos and DVDs generally do not carry licenses for non-home showings and viewing outside of the home, such as in church sanctuaries, meeting rooms, classrooms, fellowship halls, etc. This requires a license which specifically authorizes the video to be shown regardless of location as long as there is no admission fee charged or the video having been purchased.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering



Congregations across the denomination will be celebrating One Great Hour of Sharing March 22 with a special offering.

The OGHS offering covers the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) work in the world allowing the church to keep its promise that 100 percent of every other gift made to a specific UMCOR project can be spent on that project and not on administrative costs.

UMCOR provides emergency relief in many areas of the world. To find out more about UMCOR's ministries, please visit www.umcor.org and add your contribution to the offering plate on March 22.

By BETTY BACKSTROM
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center in Fayetteville, Ark., is slowly recovering from a destructive ice storm that slammed a four-state area on Jan. 27.

Close to two inches of ice accumulated on every branch and limb of the nearly 2,000 trees growing on the 32-acre campus, which serves as a conference and retreat center for the South Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.

"On our first damage inspection, we noted that almost every tree was topped, split or has lots limbs," said John Altland who serves with his wife Sheri as part of Mount Sequoyah's executive team.

Five power lines were downed and four transformers exploded during the icy storm. Fortunately, all but one auxiliary line was restored and full power was restored after five days of being without electricity," said Sheri Altland.

Fifteen of the 43 buildings located on the Mount Sequoyah campus have damage, with four suffering major damage. "Basically, these heavy limbs coated with two inches of ice came crashing through roofs, causing the worst of it," said John. Those structures hardest hit were Miller Lodge (the Center's youth retreat building), Cate Administration Building, Oask Cottage and Galloway Cottage.

Six buildings have significant exterior damage and 10 other buildings have roof damage and ceiling leaks, including the Louisiana Cottage.

To date, six chain saw teams from three different states have rushed to



Storms on Jan. 27 left an accumulation of two inches of ice that damaged nearly all the trees at Mount Sequoyah, the South Central Jurisdictional Retreat Center in Fayetteville, Ark.

assist the staff of Mount Sequoyah as they work to restore full operations.

"It will take months to finish the job. We need more teams to clean up. And we will need teams and donations to repair the damage done by the storm," said John, who is optimistic about the progress being made so far. "We are expecting 150 clergy ... at the

New Church Leadership Institute. We have cleared roads and problem areas and have enough housing to receive them."

For more information about how you can help, contact Marilyn Braswell at 479-443-4531, 800-760-8126 or programs@mountsequoyah.org.

Arborlawn 101 | Continued from page 1A

Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger of Beth El Synagogue will lead the first of three components on Sunday, Feb. 22. In Christianity 101, he will focus on the Jewish roots of Christianity with "Back to Basics: Exploring Our Jewish Heritage" to explore the religious and cultural history shared by contemporary Christians and Jews and discuss how the early church was shaped by ancient Judaism and Jewish theology.

The second component, Methodism 101, will focus on the

development of The United Methodist Church from its origins in John Wesley's Church of England to its merger with the United Evangelical Brethren Church in 1968. This series will also explore the unique connectional structure of the UMC and the beliefs it embraces.

The third component, Discipleship 101, will explore the basic call of the Christian disciple. When one joins Arborlawn or any other United Methodist church, he or she promises to uphold the congregation with their

prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. "We will unpack what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, using this United Methodist promise as a framework," Trigg said.

Among the other outside speakers for the various series will be Dr. James Duke, professor of Christian History/History of Christian Thought at Brite Divinity School.

All are welcome to attend from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Sundays beginning Feb. 22. Contact: Lee Trigg at lee@arborlawnumc.org