



Youth Between Cultures ... 8A



Theological Wilderness ... 4A



Thanksgiving Offering ... 8A

15-year-old Central Texan represents youth from around the world on the denomination's Connectional Table

Stefanie Schutz, a member at Wellspring United Methodist Church in Georgetown, has been chosen from the Division of Ministry with Young People as the sole youth representative to the denomination's Connectional Table.

She was selected out of 30 students from the South Central Jurisdiction to represent DMYP during a September meeting of the Jurisdictional Youth Ministry Organization in Nashville. She will also be on the DMYP Executive Committee.

During the course of her service over the next few years, Stefanie has agreed to journal her experiences for the Central Texas Conference. The first of her journal messages appears on page 5A.

Methodist bishops call for kinder, more respectful election process

By BISHOP GREGORY VAUGHN PALMER
PRESIDENT, THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Public discourse, especially in this season of presidential elections, has often deteriorated into acrimonious, disrespectful and divisive rhetoric.

Such speech, in the interest of short-term political gain, will make it more difficult for the nation to unite to work together on the great challenges that face the United States and the world today.

As bishops, we can call on people of faith to raise their voices to challenge all political parties and leaders to embrace a public discourse that is free of divisive and demeaning rhetoric.

Respectful, principled and vigorous debate on the issues

which demand attention is the only way to move into a future that offers hope and solutions to our common problems.

Let us urge all the presidential candidates, vice presidential candidates and campaigns to focus on the critical challenges that threaten the future of our nation and the world: poverty, war, racism, inequality of opportunity, the current financial crises and terrorism in all its forms.

It is my fervent prayer that whoever is elected the next president of the United States will receive respect and loyalty from all and will,



through positive words and deeds that transcend party and perspective, help lead our nation and world into a more hopeful future.

Finally, I urge ... United Methodists and all people of faith to:

- Daily intercessory prayer for all candidates, voters and leaders in the United States.
- Urge local religious leaders and groups to develop and circulate calls similar to this in their communities.
- Circulate this message as widely as possible to local, state and national leaders and candidates in the United States.
- Urge the presidential and vice presidential candidates and their campaigns to commit themselves to conduct their debates, their advertisements and all their public speech in ways that honor the principles of fairness and accuracy.

Resources

An election guide that compares the platforms of the two major political parties with The United Methodist Church's *Social Principles* and *Book of Resolutions* can be downloaded from the Web at www.umc-gbcs.org. It is meant to be a discernment tool, nothing more. For further study:

- Democratic Party**
<http://www.democrats.org/agenda.html>
- Green Party**
<http://www.gp.org/platform.shtml>
- Libertarian Party**
<http://www.lp.org/platform>
- Ralph Nader**
<http://www.votenader.org/issues>
- Republican Party**
<http://www.gop.com/2008Platform>

John Wesley's advice on the economy

The year was 1772 as John Wesley addressed a letter to the editor of Lloyd's Evening Post regarding the causes of and cures for high unemployment, food shortages and dismal economic condition.

More than two centuries later, the United States is struggling

with a meltdown on Wall Street, skyrocketing gas prices and inadequate health care. But our diminished economy would scarcely rival that of England in 1772. Wesley, who was 69 at the time, starts by asking why. "Why are thousands of people starving —

perishing for want, in every part of England?"

... Wesley believed that most of the economic problems of the day were caused by a growing disparity between the rich and the poor. He felt the cure was to repress "luxury, either by example, by laws, or both."

He also expressed concern about future generations and called for a reduction of the national debt.

... In short, Wesley called for higher taxes upon the wealthy and laws that would prohibit the wasting of natural products. ...

Contemporary application of

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The Wilderness Way

BY BISHOP MICHAEL LOWRY

2. The Theological Wilderness

We live in a theological wilderness of uncertainty. There is not a clear trumpet that sounds the call of orthodoxy for the old mainline denominations. To paraphrase from I Samuel, the world of the Lord is rare in these days; visions are not widespread.¹

Mainliners are clear that they are not fundamentalist. They often know with some vehemence what they are against (i.e. rigid fundamentalism exemplified by Jerry Falwell and his ilk). What they struggle mightily to do is define a new theological identity in an age of religious anarchy. On more than one occasion this writer has heard a well-intended Methodist (both clergy and lay) say something like "I'm a Methodist. I can believe whatever I want." Church law in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* clearly states otherwise. "United Methodists profess the historic Christian faith in God, incarnate in Jesus Christ for our salvation and ever at work in human history in the Holy Spirit."² And yet, despite its official stance, the entire issue of what constitutes both core beliefs and core practice remains up for grabs.

One of the great Christian leaders in the 20th century was the missionary, bishop, evangelist and theologian Lesslie Newbigin. He made his mark in courageous and pioneering work spreading the gospel and speaking out for justice in India. Two decades ago in *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, Newbigin wrote as a cultural analysis that "The result is not, as we once imagined, a secular society. It is a pagan society, and its paganism, having been born out of the rejection of Christianity, is far more resistant to the gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which cross Christian missions have been familiar."³

Late in life this great Christian leader returned home to his native Britain. William Abraham, in his perceptive work *The Logic of Renewal*, conveys some of Newbigin's insights. He writes: "A moving point of entry into Newbigin's thinking about the prospects for the church in the West can be found in the penultimate chapter of his memoirs. In 1979, Newbigin found himself presiding over the Birmingham District Council of the United Reformed Church. In the course of the meeting, they had to face the possibility of closing an old church outside Winslow Green prison. Newbigin could not contemplate such a decision. In the end, he became the pastor on a part-time basis.

"On 2 January I was duly installed and since then I have been struggling to fulfill the obligations of this ministry. It is much harder than anything I met in India. There is a cold contempt for the gospel which is harder to face than opposition. As I visit the Asian homes in the district, most of them Sikhs of Hindus, I find a welcome which is often denied on the doorsteps of the natives.

"I have been forced to recognize that the most difficult missionary frontier in the contemporary world is the one of which the Churches have been — on the whole — so little conscious, the frontier that divides the world of biblical faith from the world whose values and beliefs are ceaselessly fed into every home on the television screen. Life others I have been accustomed, especially in the 1960s, to speak of England as a secular society. I have now come to realize that I was the easy victim of an illusion from which my reading of the Gospels should have saved me. No room remains empty for long. If God is driven out, the gods come trooping in. England is a pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism

is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the church."⁴

To our great consternation the gods have rushed in. Polytheism has reemerged in hidden guise. There are the standard culprits of materialism, hedonism, racism, power, greed and the like. In a profound sense they are always present. What is different in these times is the assertion that basic standards of judgment largely no longer apply. The very claim to "Truth" as standing above and in some sense beyond our human pretention and cultural claims is in dispute. Pilate's age old question "What is truth?"⁵ is being asked again in dramatically new ways.

Today, more than ever before, we are aware of challenges to a Christocentric view of reality. Appropriately C. David Grant writes: "Part of the Enlightenment's quest for sameness was the hope that a single religion could absorb the many religions of the world. For some, this was a hope that Christianity could be shown to be the most advanced and, hence, the best expressed of the world's religions."⁶ Most are deeply aware of the failure of this quest. For a time it appeared that through examination of the various phenomenological aspects of religion some form of common ground might be established. While there are phenomenological similarities, we are increasingly aware of the fact that the world's great religions are competing truth claims. At their core, they are mutually exclusive. And yet, our current state of cultural relativism works to deny such reality.

I recall taking a required course in Methodist Doctrine and Polity taught by the great 20th century theologian Albert C. Outler at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Carefully, Professor Outler laid out the notion that the fence line for Methodist doctrine was wide, very wide but that there was clearly a fence line. More recently Professor Justo Gonzales in introducing a popular new theology class for the United Methodist Church called *Christian Believer* employs a baseball imagery to describe core theological concepts.

He states that doctrinal truth exists between the foul lines. Like Outler, Gonzales is willing to allow for a generously wide field. There is plenty of room between right foul and left foul lines. However, he insists that the foul lines do exist. In the theological wilderness of today's Methodism the very notion of foul lines is up for grabs. The famous Methodist quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason and experience) offered as a theological method threatens to replace the content of doctrine. "It is fascinating that after 1968 the Doctrines and Discipline becomes merely the Book of Discipline. It is difficult to imagine a more telling symbol of the deep shift which took place among United Methodists."⁷ Furthermore, the quadrilateral is often reduced to a bilateral or simply the citation of one point of the quadrilateral to support a predetermined position.

Quite famously John Wesley said, "But as to all opinions which do hot strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think."⁸ Such a grand theological stance as John Wesley's presumes that there are in fact roots. Those who quote Wesley's openness with such ease fail to properly understand the context which he addresses. He could assume a mother church steeped in ethos, ethic and theology of Christendom. Today we can make no such assumption. Indeed, another Wesley quote, a plea really, is more apropos. "I am sick of opinions. I am weary to bear them. My soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion. Give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man."⁹

The Wilderness Way ... to be continued,

(See footnotes on page A-8)



Stefanie Schutz begins journal on DMYP and Connectional Table experience

“Who would have guessed that a 15-year-old girl who had no connections with anyone higher than her home church would be representing youth from all over the world on the Connectional Table.”

This is my first year to be involved with the Conference Student Leadership Team through the United Methodist Church. As a member of Wellspring United Methodist Church in Georgetown, I was elected to Conference at my first Temple District SLT meeting. I attended the jurisdictional event (JYMO) this summer and was elected to Division on Ministry with Youth People (DMYP) for which I am now the jurisdictional representative.

I recently attended a five-day DMYP meeting in Nashville. This was a productive meeting in which we formed four sub-tables and three networks. The tables are:

- Resource Development (including leadership development),
- Outreach & Diversity,
- Communication/Representation/Networking and
- Advocacy.

The networks are:

- Youth
- Young Adults
- Youth & Young Adult Workers.

I am serving on the Resource Development Table and on the Youth Network. We have two main goals for the Resource Development Table:

1. Get more resources to and from the Central Conferences.

2. Develop more young adult resources.

We are going to, as a table, apply for a grant to foster a writing work-shop in Africa, to train people in other countries to write their own resources and also received resources from them. We are going to work with the Upper Room South Africa to print the resources developed there.

We as the Resource Development Table feel that there is a great need for more young adult (ages 19-35) resources. The generation of young adults today is different enough from today's adults and different enough from today's youth that they need their own curriculum and Bible studies.

We are also going to develop a handbook that is going to combine contemporary and traditional worship. This handbook will contain music for guitar and other instruments to traditional hymns.

I also sit on the Youth Network which is taking on one big project, YOUTH 11! This is going to be a huge youth event in 2011 that is going to take place in two locations

this year. One will take place at Purdue University, Indiana and one in Sacramento, Calif. We are expecting around 800 youth at each.

We are planning on hiring a popular Christian band to lead our worship. We will have a dream team meet to start dreaming up ideas. We will then have a design team meet twice a year until the event to work out details and make things happen.

A large part of the youth who attended the Nashville meeting sat down for about a six-hour period and reviewed 40 grant applications and gave out \$98,000 in grant money from the Youth Service Fund (YSF). This went to 18 different organizations that are for youth by youth. All of this money was raised by youth over the last year.

Also while I was there, I was elected to the Connectional Table, which was formed to serve as both the visioning body of the church and the steward of resources to carry out the vision of the denomination worldwide.

The structure of the Connectional Table is designed to make sure all voices are heard around the



table. Each jurisdiction and Central Conference elects representatives to the table as well as each racial caucus and the DMYP. This ensures that each group's individual unique needs and ideas are heard.

The Connectional Table works with and beside the Council of Bishops to carry out the work of the denomination. I have not yet had a Connectional Table meeting and am very excited to go to Georgia for my first meeting in early November.

I have learned so much from this experience already!

Who would have guessed that a 15-year-old girl who had no connections with anyone higher than her home church would be representing youth from all over the world on the Connectional Table. At the beginning of this year, I don't think anyone would have guessed this for me.

I have come to find out that one of my spiritual gifts is leadership and nothing is going to stop me from using it to my full potential. God has been by my side through this whole experience and has guided me in all the decisions that I have had to make to get to where I am today.



November

- 1: Campus Ministry Task Force at Wesley Foundation, Texas Christian University
- 2: Bi-lingual/Bi-cultural "Strength in Unity" worship service and fellowship at St. Luke UMC, Fort Worth
- 3-7: Mid-Cities Older Adult Mission Trip to Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center in Fayetteville, Ark., & fun trip to Eureka Springs
- 8: EXCITE: Jr. High Youth Rally at Woodway UMC, Waco
- 8: Commission on Inclusiveness at Conference Center
- 10-14: Academy of Christian Education training event at Still Water Lodge, Glen Rose
- 11-12: Appointive Cabinet
- 12: Waco District Minister's meeting
- 13: Central Texas Methodist Foundation Board meeting at Conference Center
- 14-15: 30-Hour Famine at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center
- 15: Conference Board of Laity at Glen Lake Camp
- 15: Our Gift of Love auction benefitting Metropolitan Board of Mission at First UMC Burseson
- 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

News Briefs • News Briefs • News Briefs • News Briefs

Clergy appointment changes announced

Bishop Mike Lowry and the Cabinet announce the following changes to clergy appointments in the Central Texas Conference:

Jana Wear — Elder in full connection from 3/4 time to full time pastor at Light of the World United Methodist Church in Weatherford, effective Oct. 1.

Juanita Montemayer — Part-time local pastor from 1/4 time to supply pastor at Diamond Hill United Methodist Church in North Fort Worth, effective June 1.

David Chavez — Elder in full connection from pastor at Grace United Methodist Church in Fort

Worth and Eagle Mountain United Methodist Church to retired status, effective Jan. 31, 2009.

China Springs UMC looks ahead to spring for 125th anniversary

Next spring the congregation of China Springs United Methodist Church will celebrate its 125th anniversary.

The celebration, which coincides with the congregation's growth beyond its facility's capacity, also recognizes the purchase of land on which to relocate as they are blessed with the funds.

In celebrating their past and their future, the congregation is planning their Heritage Celebration for Sunday, April 26 when they will also dedicate their new property debt free to the glory of God.

Summer camp dates change at Glen Lake

Since publication in the last issue of *Central Link*, the summer camp schedule at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center in Glen Rose has changed slightly. Please make the following changes to your schedules:

Explorer Camp — June 8-12
Journey Camp — June 22-26

Bike Camp — 22-26

For more details on the full summer camp schedule, please visit www.glenlake.org.

Booking Glen Lake

Glen Lake and Still Water Lodge staffs are eager to host any conference events or meetings with lodging, meeting spaces, meals — all in a beautiful setting of God's creation.

However, due to high demand reservations should be made as early as possible to ensure priority consideration for CTC groups.

If interested, please contact Guest Services at 254-897-2247 or guestservices@glenlake.org.

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

Youth Between Cultures: Ministry to Bilingual/ Bicultural Youth

A coffee cup is the modern symbol of youth ministry. Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, associate professor of Religious Education at Claremont School of Theology (California), explained Oct. 11 at a Central Texas Conference event that the coffee cup represents the most important tool for doing youth ministry today: Authenticity.

Over a cup of coffee, adults and young people can get to know one another. Over coffee, they can listen, share and relate.

Conde-Frazier talked about how to be effective in youth ministry at the *Youth Between Cultures: Ministry to Bilingual/Bicultural Youth* training event at First United Methodist Church in Arlington. The event was sponsored

jointly by the Conference offices of Student Ministries and Hispanic Ministries and the Bridges of the Spirit Institute for Hispanic-Latino/a Ministries.

The event specifically focused on ministry with Hispanic youth who are caught between the dominant culture of the United States and the culture of their families. She listed what Hispanic young people want and don't want out of church.

What they do want are relationships with adults who aren't their parents. Youth leaders have the opportunity to fulfill this need and also to help young people become Christians and grow as disciples.

What they don't want is to be entertained. "They know where to get entertainment," she said. "Youth want to go to church to talk about spirituality because it is important to them."

Young people want to know about God and participate in God's mission. They want to delve into the meat of the Bible. They also want a pastor and not a friend. "They want me to share the Word and to hear their fears and to be able to get into that place with them as well," she said.

Hispanic young people have unique circumstances and needs.

First generation Hispanics in this country, who moved here after age 18, operate mainly out of the paradigm of their native country. The "1.5 generation" — made up of those who moved here between the ages of seven and 11 — operate out



Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, associate professor of Religious Education at Claremont School of Theology, leads participants in exercises that will help them in relationship building with youth who are struggling to live between two cultures.

of the paradigm of both cultures.

Second-generation Hispanics, or those who were born here or moved here before the age of five, operate out of the paradigm of the U.S. culture.

There is a tension between

generations, particularly the first and second.

"They are looking different ways. They are formed in different worlds," Conde-Frazier said. "There are pressures on the young people. They have to be one way at home

and one way in the world. Their parents may remind them that they brought them to this country to give them a better life and then they turn around and face discrimination in the world."

These young people have a tremendous need for acceptance and belonging. Church can fulfill this role if church is warm and welcoming.

Conde-Frazier said young Hispanics need to be woven into the fabric of our churches. They can do this by embracing them, empowering them and placing them in leadership. "Who should be doing missions at your church? Young people. Who is passionate and idealistic? Young people. And what are we doing with them? Entertaining them," she said.

Rather, the church should help young people find their vocations and apprentice them in these vocations. When this happens, a truly healthy relationship is formed — one in which adults and youth contribute to the growth of one another.

"In the church, it's not about age," Conde-Frazier said. "The culture of the reign of God is led by the example of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost." She cited Joel 2:28, which says: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

John Wesley's economic advice

Continued from page 1A

Wesley's advice would suggest that the U.S. Congress should reduce taxes on the poor and middle class, add taxes to luxury items, eliminate taxes upon necessities, introduce laws that govern the use of natural resources and take steps to reduce the \$10 trillion national debt — a debt that has increased by 71.9 percent over the last eight years.

A record 28 million Americans are now receiving food stamps. While he did not write about his personal actions, Wesley's life serves as an example to United Methodists about our personal obligation to care for poor and vulnerable persons through a variety of means.

— Drawn from a United Methodist News Service article by J. Richard Peck, a retired clergy member of the New York Annual Conference and the communications director of the Commission on United Methodist Men. For the full article, visit <http://umns.umc.org>.

Thanksgiving Offering



The 2008 Thanksgiving Offering will fund ministries initiated by the Central Texas Conference congregation that address hunger in our communities. Some of the reasons:

- 16.2% of Texans live in poverty
- 22.3% of children in Texas live in poverty
- 16.4% of Texas households lack access to enough food to fully meet basic needs at all times due to lack of financial resources
- 1 in 4 people in soup kitchen lines in the U.S. are children

Visit www.ctcumc.org

Strength in Unity

(Fuerza en la Unidad)

**Bilingual/Bicultural Worship Service
6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 2**

All are invited to experience a bilingual/bicultural worship service at 6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 2, at St. Luke United Methodist Church in Haltom City.

This worship service, sponsored by the Central Texas Conference Committee on Hispanic Ministries, is a unique opportunity to personally experience the strength in unity.

Wilderness Way | Continued from page 1A

1 I Samuel 3:1

2 *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* 2004, paragraph 101, p. 41

3 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Foolishness to the Greeks*, p. 20

4 William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Renewal*, p. 26 (internal citation: Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished*

Agenda, p. 249)

5 John 18:38

6 C. David Grant, *Thinking Through Our Faith*, p. 61

7 William J. Abraham, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia*, p. 45

8 Albert C. Outler, ed. *The Works of John Wesley*, p. 34

9 Albert C. Outler, ed. *The Works of John Wesley*, p. 321