

Corpus Christi meeting to decide 25 items

Southwest Texas Conference policy-makers are to vote on eight constitutional amendments and at least 17 legislative proposals June 1-4 in Corpus Christi.

The votes are to be cast during the 147th session of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference. It is to meet in Corpus Christi's American Bank Center. That's the new name of the remodeled and expanded convention center where United Methodist leaders have gathered each year since 1991.

The 2005 session is to be historic. That's because the Southwest Texas Conference is to meet jointly for part of the session with the Rio Grande Conference. Representatives of the two conferences are to attend a joint awards banquet June 3 and a joint ordination service June 4. Both combined sessions are firsts for the two conferences that share a bishop.

Theme for the Southwest Texas Conference meeting is "Offering Christ to All: Transforming Our World."

Proposed amendments to The United Methodist Church constitu-



tion, other Southwest Texas legislative items and more than 80 reports for information are included in a 140-page *Pre-Conference Report*. It was mailed in mid-April to clergy and laity representatives of the 350 congregations in Southwest Texas.

More than 1,300 voting members of the annual conference session—half clergy, half laity—are expected to take part in the four-day Southwest Texas gathering.

The 2004 session of the General Conference, the denomination's top policy-making body, passed the eight proposed constitutional amendments and sent them to all United Methodist annual conferences this year for ratification.

To be ratified, each amendment must receive "yes" votes from two-thirds of all annual conference members casting ballots in all 63 conference sessions in the United States and 52 conferences overseas.

Besides constitutional amendments, action items in the *Pre-Conference Report* include:

■ A proposal from a task force appointed in 2004 by Bishop Joel N. Martinez to create a Council on

Young Adult Ministry. The new 12-member agency would promote ministries with people from 19 to 30.

■ A measure from the Board of Global Ministries setting Nov. 6 as Harvest Sunday 2005 in Southwest Texas and designating anti-hunger agencies to receive equal portions of the special conference-wide offering collected on that day.

■ Eight proposals from the Council on Finance and Administration outlining the 2006 budget, the apportionments to fund it and financial support for district superintendents.

■ Two proposals from the Commission on Equitable Compensation and Moving Expenses dealing with minimum clergy salaries and increased reimbursements for relocation costs.

■ Three proposals from the Board of Pensions concerning clergy retirement and health insurance benefits.

■ A proposal from the Standing Rules Committee to make multiple changes to the Standing Rules. Most reflect references to paragraph numbers in the 2004 *Book of Discipline* or organizational changes mandated by the 2004 General Conference.

■ Changes proposed to the bylaws of UM-related Southwestern University in Georgetown.

Finance council proposes 3.39% increase for '06 budget

The Southwest Texas Conference finance agency is proposing a 3.39 percent budget increase for ministry and administration during 2006.

The Council on Finance and Administration voted April 1 to send the proposed \$8.57 million spending plan—and the apportionments to fund it—to the June 1-4 annual conference

session for consideration.

The proposed 2006 percentage increase is about 0.5 percent less than local congregations raised spending over the past two years, said Robert W. Woolsey, finance council chair. The fiscal agency tries to limit proposed budget increases to no more than the rate that local

church spending has gone up.

"All agencies were very helpful and cooperative in submitting budgets that did not exceed that goal," said Woolsey, a member of First UMC, Corpus Christi.

Biggest percentage increases in the proposed budget are found in the Administration Fund (up 7.37 percent) and Pensions (up 5 percent).

3 to preach during June 1-4 annual conference session

A noted Latino theologian, a bishop and a retired deacon are to preach during the June 1-4 Southwest Texas Annual Conference session in Corpus Christi.

The Rev. Justo L. Gonzalez, author, retired seminary professor and former member of the United Methodist Uni-

versity Senate, is to deliver the message during the June 4 commissioning and ordination service.

Bishop Joel N. Martinez is to preach during the June 2 service of covenant and confirmation of appointments for pastors.

The Rev. Kathleen Jones, long-

time minister of Christian education at First UMC, Austin, is to speak during the June 1 memorial worship service and opening Eucharist. That first worship gathering of the four-day conference remembers clergy members and clergy spouses who have died during the past 12 months.

San Antonio UMs honor 3 individuals, 1 group

San Antonio District United Methodists honored three individuals and one group March 8 for Christian witness and service.

Genoveva Guerra, Oak Island UMC, received the 2005 Bishop's Exemplar Award for the San Antonio District.

Debra Baker, Coker UMC, San Antonio, earned the Ted Caravantes Christian Service Award.

Robert Mitchell, Floresville UMC, took home the District Superintendent's Youth Ventures in Ministry Award.

The Jolly Jubilee Jammers of Windcrest UMC were given the District Superintendent's New Ventures in Ministry Award.

The four awards were presented at Bulverde UMC during the district's annual celebration for laity and clergy. Some 340 people attended the event.

Bishop Joel N. Martinez presents the Exemplar Award annually to laypeople picked by each district board of laity "for witness, commitment and service after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Guerra was selected from 16 nominees representing 13 congregations.

Guerra was singled out for her sacrificial support of various ministries at Oak Island, a 240-member congrega-

tion in southern Bexar County.

"She cannot support our church as much as she'd like monetarily because she and her husband live solely on Social Security," said Phyllis Allen in her nomination. "Both are aging, with health problems, no car and no central heat or air conditioning. She gives what she can and does what she can to build up the body of Christ."

Those gifts have included thousands of cookies for various church functions, homemade jellies for sale at church fundraising events and items sewn for various causes. Proceeds have supported the stained glass window fund and the campaign to build a new kitchen.

Baker was one of 13 nominees for the fourth Caravantes Christian service award. Established in 2002 by Coker UMC, the award recognizes church leaders who demonstrate their faith by helping the needy. The memorial award is named for a former district United Methodist Men president.

Baker and her husband formed Guide Dogs of Texas. As executive director, she worked with Girl Scouts of San Antonio, schools and service organizations to teach members about pet care and working with the visually impaired.

After retiring from Guide Dogs of Texas, Baker became active in Coker's

Mission Committee. She has made two trips to Guyana to work on tile in a children's hospital.

Mitchell was one of six nominees for the second youth ministry award. He was cited for exemplary service to the 286-member Floresville congregation.

Mitchell helped establish a new youth praise band and planned a pancake breakfast to raise money to buy equipment for the group. He's led the youth Sunday school class, been a lay reader during worship services and helped with Vacation Bible School.

In the community Mitchell is an Eagle Scout, member of the Floresville High School band and Leos Club. As his Eagle Scout service project, he provided a first aid tent staffed with volunteers and supplied with water for late summer afternoon band practices.

Windcrest's Jolly Jubilee Jammers was one of 11 groups considered for the New Ventures in Ministry Award.

Formed in February 2004, the 22-member musical ensemble visits church members in retirement communities and nursing homes to play tunes from the 1930s and 1940s—as well as old-time gospel favorites—on homemade instruments. Audience members take part in the concerts by singing along, dancing and keeping time with shakers made of water bottles.

Conference changes mailing address

The Southwest Texas Conference is changing its mailing address. Letters, packages and other items sent by U.S. Mail should now be addressed to 16400 Huebner Road, San Antonio 78248-1693.

After Sept. 30 the conference will no longer receive mail at its post office box.

Until then, Southwest Texas Conference offices—including the San Antonio District—will have mail delivered to both addresses.

Conference officials urge all local church leaders to begin using the street address now on all mail sent to the conference.

This address change doesn't apply to mail sent to Bishop Joel N. Martinez or the Rio Grande Conference offices at the United Methodist Center.

The bishop's office and the Rio Grande Conference will continue to use the separate post office boxes they have maintained since the United Methodist Center opened in 1996.

The conference is making this address change as a result of new procedures at the local post office. It no longer guarantees delivery to post office boxes before 10 a.m.

The transition to exclusive street delivery for Southwest Texas Conference mail is expected to take 18 months.

May 22 ceremony set at Mount Wesley

A May 22 ceremony is to consecrate the new Health, Wellness and Nutrition Center at Mount Wesley Conference Center.

Bishop Joel N. Martinez is to preside at the 5 p.m. event in Kerrville. A reception is to follow the consecration.

The 12,000-square-foot center opened Feb. 25. A \$600,000 grant from Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas during the 1998-2000 Stepping Out in Faith capital campaign for Mount Wesley helped pay for the facility.