

Council proposes \$9.26 million budget for 2008

Southwest Texas Conference leaders are to consider a \$9.26 million budget in June for mission and ministry during 2008.

The Council on Finance and Administration voted March 30 to send the proposed spending plan—and the apportionments to fund it—to the June 6-9 annual conference session for consideration.

The 2008 total represents a 3.87 percent increase from the 2007 budget amount.

Budget details were spelled out in a Pre-Conference Report mailed in late April to clergy and laity representatives of the region's 344 United Methodist congregations.

"I'm pleased that the overall budget increase stays well below the increase in what the churches have spent on themselves," said Robert W. Woolsey, finance council chair. "It's

Proposed 2008 apportionments

World Service &		
Conf. Benevolences	\$2.56 million	+5.39%
Africa University	\$0.04 million	+0.23%
New Churches	\$0.61 million	+14.05%
Higher Education &		
Campus Ministry	\$1.08 million	-0.40%
Ecumenical Causes	\$0.05 million	-0.46%
Administrative Fund	\$0.93 million	+3.89%
Pensions	\$2.15 million	+1.03%
Dist. Superintendents	\$1.73 million	+5.20%
Ethnic Ministries	\$0.11 million	+0.69%
TOTAL:	\$9.26 million	+3.87%

below 4 percent. That's where we wanted to be.

"I think the council is being very responsible."

Woolsey said he was pleased with one accounting change in the 2008 budget. The change consolidates all meet-

ing expenses for conference program boards and agencies into one line item.

"Some were concerned that (the single line item) would show that we were spending \$100,000 on meeting expenses," said Woosley, a member of First UMC, Corpus Christi. "I think it's good to see that expense. I think people should know how much we are spending on travel. Furthermore, it will help the council better control agency spending for travel."

The biggest percentage increase in proposed 2008 apportionments is 14 percent for new church development. The asking goes from \$535,663 to \$610,942.

The 2006 annual conference session voted to make new church development and transformation a major initiative and authorized a capital fund-raising campaign for starting new churches.

Ministries agency offers ways churches can boost witness

The Council on Ministries is proposing four ways congregations can join in expanding evangelistic outreach across Southwest Texas.

The council adopted four strategic initiative statements March 17 for transforming local congregations.

The proposals now go to the June 6-9 Southwest Texas Annual Conference session in Corpus Christi for consideration.

The initiatives are designed to help local congregations become directly involved in the conference emphasis on new church development and transformation adopted in 2006, said Carol Loeb, Council on Ministries chair.

"This is not a top-down program you've got to do," said Loeb, a member of Asbury UMC, Corpus Christi. "We're recommending four initiative statements. Churches are to write their own goals and strategies to carry them out according to what works best for

them. But we will offer resources to equip them—if they choose to use them."

The four initiatives call local congregations to:

- Become evangelistic in their faith sharing.
- Strengthen evangelistic presence in the community.
- Call forth younger people for ordained ministry.
- Develop disciples and leaders.

"These ideas came from the laity of the annual conference at a January meeting at Mount Wesley," Loeb said. They are being endorsed by the Council on Ministries and offered to the conference.

"We have heard from the laity about what they think the priorities for our church are right now. The initiative statements are the result of our strategic listening. Local churches will have to decide if they will own them and put them into practice."

Outreach expert to give pointers on faith sharing

Southwest Texas Conference leaders are to get faith-sharing pointers in June from an evangelism expert.

The Rev. Martha Grace "Gay" Reese, author of *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*, is to address the Southwest Texas Conference session in Corpus Christi June 8 as part of the Council on Ministries report.

She is to lead a smaller dialogue session later that afternoon.

"Gay is an exciting speaker and a real resource for helping us learn about faith sharing," said Carol Loeb, Council on Ministries chair. "Her message could change the way we share the gospel with the unchurched."

Theme for the June 6-9 conference session is "Offering Christ to All: Sharing Our Faith Stories."

Victoria District UMs honor retired missionary

Victoria District United Methodists recognized a retired missionary March 16 for continuing Christian service in Port Lavaca.

Ruth Ann Caufield, First UMC, Port Lavaca, received the 2007 Bishop's Exemplar Award during the 12th annual Victoria District Celebration. More than 320 people witnessed the presentation at the Yoakum Community Center

"I never expected anything like this to happen in my life," Caufield said after accepting the award. She expressed appreciation for her experiences as a missionary but noted "this is home for me."

Sixty-three other individuals, three congregations and 11 groups were also honored for Christian outreach and service.

Bishop Joel N. Martinez gives the

Exemplar Award annually to laypeople selected by each district board of laity "for witness, commitment and service after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Caufield served as a United Methodist missionary from 1954 until her retirement in 1994. Assignments took her to Angola, Bolivia and Ecuador. She also worked as a New York-based missionary-in-residence for the United Methodist mission board.

Since moving to Port Lavaca, Caufield has continued to champion various mission causes. She led efforts to sponsor several animals for people in developing countries through Heifer Project International.

Caufield introduced the Port Lavaca congregation to the Personal

Energy Transportation project and brought representatives to the church. Hand-powered P.E.T. vehicles provide transportation for handicapped individuals in developing countries.

Caufield has encouraged Port Lavaca church members to support aid efforts in the United States and abroad through the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Besides teaching adult Sunday school classes, Caufield chairs the missions committee. She has also served on the Southwest Texas Conference mission team.

"Ruth Ann's spirit is infused with the spirit of the living God and shows great love and compassion to all she meets," the nomination from the First UMC Committee on Lay Leadership said.

2 men, 3 groups, 1 youth cited in San Antonio

Two laymen, three organizations and one youth were honored for faithfulness and service March 27 at the San Antonio District laity awards banquet.

Lenny Dagg of Universal City UMC received the 2007 Bishop's Exemplar Award for the San Antonio District.

Larry Warren of University UMC, San Antonio, earned the Ted Caravantes Christian Service Award for his work with the International Justice Mission in "serving the world community."

The Coker Addiction and Recovery Team of Coker UMC, San Antonio, and the Prayer Shawl Ministry at Christ UMC, Stockdale, received the District Superintendent's New Ventures in Ministry awards.

The Joyful Noise Youth Band at La Vernia UMC and Jamyka Williams of Jones Chapel UMC, San Antonio, received the District Superintendent's Youth Ventures in Ministry awards.

About 370 United Methodists gathered at Laurel Heights UMC, San Antonio, to honor nominees and the award recipients.

Dagg, a certified lay speaker and congregation lay leader, was selected for the Exemplar Award because of his

lay leadership, Sunday school teaching and regular worship leadership.

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

"I'm overwhelmed," Dagg said after accepting the Exemplar Award. "I don't know what to say. It's been exciting at Universal City, and it's hard not to catch that spirit and spread the love. Of course, all the glory goes to the Lord Jesus Christ, who waited for me while I was out in the wilderness."

Dagg has served as chair of the church council for two years, chair of the board of trustees, children's Sunday school teacher, adult Sunday school teacher, Vacation Bible School teacher and much more.

The Universal City Committee on Lay Leadership, which submitted Dagg's nomination, wrote, "When you meet Lenny, you can see the change that knowing Jesus has made in his heart and life. His faith is obvious in his attitude toward God and other people."

The nomination called him faithful to God's calling on his life and said

the congregation has witnessed Dagg "grow in his faith and has seen him evolve from a busy and involved church member into a man of deepening faith, ultimately becoming a Christian disciple who represents Christ in all his words and actions."

Warren was chosen from 13 nominees for the Caravantes award for his work exposing illegal slavery in India and other countries. The honor comes with a \$1,000 grant to his charity of choice.

Warren said he was surprised and honored to accept the award.

"To do mission work is phenomenal," he said. "It's what we're all called to do."

Barbara J. Jacobson, who submitted his nomination, said Warren helped initiate University UMC's first "Justice" mission trip to India. He helped educate members of the church about the sex trafficking of young girls and the bonded slavery of children all over the world.

Warren worked undercover with other attorneys and investigators to "access slave holder's documents and photograph evidence of bonded slavery," Jacobson wrote.