

## Corpus Christi meeting to vote on 20 items

Southwest Texas Conference policymakers are to vote on at least 20 legislative proposals June 6 to 9 in Corpus Christi.

Those votes are to be cast during the 149th session of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference. It meets in Corpus Christi's American Bank Center.



Details of the 20 legislative action items—along with 96 reports for information only—are included in a 128-page *Preconference Report*. It was mailed in April to clergy and laity representatives of the 344 United Methodist congregations in Southwest Texas.

An online version of the report is available at [www.umcswtx.org](http://www.umcswtx.org).

A key business item for the June session is election of clergy and laity delegates to the 2008 General Conference and South Central Jurisdictional Conference. The *Preconference Report* presents proposed balloting procedures.

Southwest Texas is to elect 12 Gen-

eral Conference delegates—six laypeople, six clergy members—and an additional 12 jurisdictional conference delegates—six more laypeople and six more clergy members. To accompany these 24 to the jurisdictional meeting, the Corpus Christi gathering is to pick another eight “reserve” delegates—four laypeople, four clergy members.

The list of legislative proposals in the report includes four initiatives from the Council on Ministries. These initiatives are designed to help local congregations become directly involved in the conference emphasis on new church development and transformation adopted in 2006.

“These four initiatives will give focus to the local church as each seeks to continually transform itself in the ways God calls,” writes Carol Loeb, Council on Ministries chair, in the *Preconference Report*. “The local church will have the responsibility to develop strategies that they believe best enable them to engage each initiative.”

The four initiatives call local congregations to:

- Become evangelistic in faith sharing.

- Strengthen evangelistic presence in the community.

- Call forth younger people for service in ordained ministry.

- Develop disciples and leaders.

The Commission on Communications is proposing a policy authorizing electronic mail as an official mode of correspondence with conference leaders.

The Council on Finance and Administration is proposing seven action items, including a \$9.26 million budget for 2008 and the apportionments to fund it. The spending plan represents a 3.92 percent increase over the 2007 budget.

Other action items include:

- A resolution from the Board of Church and Society. It calls on conference agencies and local congregations to “welcome into membership all confessing Christians without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, social status or economic condition.”

- A measure from the Board of Global Ministries setting Nov. 4 as Harvest Sunday in Southwest Texas and designating four anti-hunger causes to receive equal portions of the special conferencewide offering collected that day.

## Dialogue sessions to explore aspects of faith sharing

Besides electing delegates to denominational meetings and voting on action items this month in Corpus Christi, Southwest Texas Conference leaders will discuss faith sharing.

The Council on Ministries has scheduled 21 one-hour discussion sessions June 8 during the Southwest Texas Annual Conference session.

Conference program agencies are organizing each session. Topics include:

- “Offering Christ to All: Learning to Walk in Your Own Shoes,” presented by the Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

- “Everyone is for Evangelism, Right?” presented by the Evangelism Committee of the Board of Disciple-

ship.

- “Who are our Neighbors?” presented by the Hispanic Ministries Commission.

- “A New Day for New Churches,” presented by the New Church Development Commission.

“Many of the dialogue sessions the Council on Ministries is sponsoring during the conference will offer testimonies and panels on faith sharing,” said Carol Loeb, council chair.

To lead into the dialogue time, the Rev. Martha Grace “Gay” Reese is to address the conference session.

A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) pastor, Reese headed the Mainline Evangelism Project. That four-year project, funded by the Lilly Endow-

ment, explored motivations behind effective evangelism in mainline denominations.

*Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*, which Reese wrote, reports results of the four-year study.

“I encourage members of the conference to read Gay’s book before they come to Corpus Christi,” Loeb said. “Her book will prepare us to hear a message that could change the way we share the gospel.”

Reese is to lead one of the dialogue sessions.

The Council on Ministries proposed dialogue sessions for 2007 because of positive feedback to similar breakout discussion times at the last two conference sessions, Loeb said.

## UM teams join Eagle Pass tornado cleanup

Trained Early Response Teams from the Southwest Texas and Oklahoma Indian Missionary conferences began cleaning up tornado debris in Eagle Pass May 2.

The specially trained teams were the first wave of United Methodist recovery aid that should be flowing into the Maverick County city for at least 12 months, said Susan Hellums, Southwest Texas Conference Volunteers in Mission coordinator.

A tornado ripped through a low-income neighborhood southeast of Eagle Pass around 7 p.m. April 24. The twister destroyed at least 197 mobile homes and 16 permanent homes, the American Red Cross reported. Another 500 homes were damaged.

At least seven people died in the

**Send contributions to help with Eagle Pass tornado relief to the conference treasurer earmarked for Advance 2050 (Disaster Response—Eagle Pass).**

storm in Maverick County.

Another three died in neighboring Piedras Negras just across the Rio Grande in Mexico.

President Bush declared Maverick County a federal disaster area May 2. That made Eagle Pass residents eligible for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Southwest Texas Conference issued a call April 27 for Early Response Teams to help with storm cleanup in Maverick County. Those

specially trained and equipped groups are certified by the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Eugene Hileman of St. Matthew's UMC, San Antonio, organized the Southwest Texas team. It worked May 2 to 4 to help "make things safe, sanitary and secure," Hellums said.

Barbara Tripp, a disaster-response consultant from the relief committee, and George Barnette, Kerrville District disaster-response coordinator, joined Hellums in Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras May 2.

First UMC, Eagle Pass, received a \$10,000 grant April 26 from the conference Disaster-Response Fund (Advance No. 2050). The money is to purchase items needed immediately and support long-term recovery work.

## 2 selected as summer interns for youth ministries program

For the first time in five years, two summer youth interns are to serve alongside the Rev. Rusty Freeman, Southwest Texas Conference youth ministries director.

Five youths applied for the position this year, Freeman said.

Melendy Mathis, a member of Buda UMC in her first year at Trinity University in San Antonio, and Walt Lengle, a member of Northwest Hills UMC, Austin, and a senior at Anderson High School, stood above the rest, he said.

The two complement each other, Freeman said, and possess strengths

that will benefit the conference youth department and the students who attend summer camps.

Interns help oversee youth events and mentor students who join the Servant Team, a new leadership group in the youth department this year.

Interns are to learn about behind-the-scenes programming, worship coordination, discipleship, spiritual leadership and how to mentor other students, Freeman said. They are to shadow Freeman during the June 6-9 annual conference session in Corpus Christi as well.

## 10 teens to serve on new summer team

Ten Southwest Texas youths have been chosen to serve on the 2007 Servant Team.

That group replaces the junior counselor position at Southwest Texas Conference youth summer camps.

Servant Team members are Lauren Birdwell, Kendra Glass, Alecia Hudson, Kellie Kingsbury, Daniel Lumpkin, Sara Nelson,

Samuel Sanderford, Kelly Sonnen, Conner Strickland and Kyle Whittemore.

The Rev. Rusty Freeman, youth ministries director, announced the names April 10.

Members of the Servant Team are to work alongside youth interns Walt Lengle and Melendy Mathis and Servant Team Coordinator Wes Cain.

## Oldest pastors marks 100th year at April 14 event

The oldest clergy member of the Southwest Texas Conference marked his 100th birthday April 12.

The Rev. Ben Bohmfalk celebrated the century mark April 14 with family and friends at First UMC, Lampasas.

Bohmfalk began his ministry in 1929 at 22 as a full-time local pastor in Pattison. He was ordained a deacon in the Southern (German) Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1933 and an elder in 1935.

Bohmfalk was serving congregations in Mason and Art when the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and the Methodist Protestant Church formed The Methodist Church in 1939. He became part of the Southwest Texas Conference.

He served congregations across Southwest Texas. He officially retired to Lampasas in 1977 but later served in Lometa.