Annual Conference 2008

‘Sanctifying You Through and Through’ is 2008 theme

BY BETTY BACKSTROM

More than 1,000 United Methodists from around the state gathered at Centenary College in Shreveport June 1-4 for the 2008 Annual Conference.

“Sanctify You Through and Through” was the theme for this year’s event. The focus on Sanctifying Grace continued a quadrennial theme of Grace from the Wesleyan Tradition, with previous themes being Prevenient Grace (2005), Justifying Grace (2006), and Means of Grace (2007).

The Memorial and Communion Service was held Sunday night at Asbury United Methodist Church in Bossier City. Retired Bishop J. Woodrow Hearn, elected to the episcopacy by the South Central Jurisdictional Conference in July 1984, served as speaker. Bishop Hearn, born in Mcintyre, La., served a number of appointments in the Louisiana Conference, including Lake Charles District Superintendent, pastor of First UMC in Baton Rouge, and Secretary of the Conference.

Ken Medema, music leader for the 2008 session of conference, performed a concert on Monday night during a worship service in the Gold Dome on Centenary’s campus. Medema, a nationally popular musician, lives in the San Francisco Bay area of California. He has performed for many denominational youth gatherings, on globally televised religious programs and other annual assemblies of national organizations.

Ten persons were ordained elder in full connection with the conference during the Service of Ordination and Commissioning, held Tuesday night at

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Standing in My Father's Socks

When I dressed for the day on Sunday, April 27th, I dug in the socks I had taken to General Conference with me and found an old gray pair that would work fine with my gray suit. When I put them on I realized they were "old timers", but they would work. Soon I was out of the hotel and down the street to the convention center ready for the activity of the day.

One of the agenda items that morning was the recognition of those Bishops who would be retiring as of September 1, 2008. Of course, my name was among them and I stood proudly but with mixed emotions when my name was called. There's just something unnerving about the official announcement that your active days as a professional are coming to a formal end and you will soon be "unemployed" except for the ways in which you design work for yourself and for the things for which you have personal passion and commitment.

The time of recognition was relatively short and we were then plunged into the business for the morning. My mind quickly was engaged in all that was before us for consideration and thoughts of ending my term as bishop were relegated to the back of my mind.

At the end of the day, when I sat down to remove my socks, it suddenly dawned on me just what socks these were. When my father died in November of 1971 I took several items of his clothing, especially good pairs of socks, and put them in my wardrobe. I think nearly every item I took at that time has either been worn out or discarded by now. This one lone pair of socks is about all I have left. Was it by divine design or by accident that I ended up in the same room as Bishop W. Hutchinson? I like to believe it was more than happenstance. It was a divine sign for me.

My father was 56 years old when he died suddenly on November 29, 1971 of cardiac arrest. He was an active, robust man, full of life and fully alive! His death was a major shock to all of us. He was in the height of his professional life and everything was positive for him. He hadn't even begun to think about a time of retirement. That was something for the future. But for him it never came.

It was sobering on that Sunday night to realize I had stood for the announcement of my own retirement while wearing my father's socks! In a way it felt good to know that I had lived long enough to reach this place in my professional life. I am now a little more than ten years older than my father was when he died. Frankly, there were several years when I was convinced I would never be able to achieve this age.

The next day, Monday, April 28 was even more revolutionary for me. In the evening session of the Conference, legislation was introduced that would extend the mandatory retirement age for bishops by two years. It was well received by the delegates and then an amendment was proposed that it become effective immediately.

Without discussion, the new legislation passed and suddenly my mandatory retirement had flown out the window and I was now faced with the option to continue in the office of bishop for four more years or continue with my plans for retirement. Talk about a shock! I've never had anything quite so dramatic laid at my feet.

Ever since that legislation passed Kay and I have been in a whirlwind of decision making. What to do? Do we extend our service years, or do we follow through with the plans we have been making the past several years for retirement? It has certainly brought us to our knees and has enlivened our conversations considerably.

And I have thought about my father's socks. Were they a divine sign that I had reached a milestone that should be observed? Or were they a reminder that although I stood in his socks, I was standing in my own shoes! And as an inhabitant of my own shoes, I have to charter my own steps and walk my own path. His socks got me to something he never reached. My shoes can get me to something I still have the privilege of doing - continuing to serve in an active capacity and leading Louisiana United Methodism into a new quadriemnum with a new emphasis on the gifts of God for us and how we respond to those gifts as a grateful and willing people.

Prayerful discernment has led Kay and me to the decision to continue in our service for another four years. We are excited, energized and fully at peace with this decision and are eagerly looking toward the future! I am grateful for reminders of the shoulders on which I stand as I enter this phase of my life. And I am ready to take responsibility for my own decisions as to what my next step should be. Shoes, socks and everything that go with a long walk are together. "Guide my steps Lord, while I run this race, for I don't want to run this race in vain."

In Christ's love,

Bill Hutchinson

Delegates to General Conference discuss the petition dealing with clergy effectiveness and annual appointments during the meeting in Fort worth, Texas.

Assembly sets guidelines on clergy effectiveness

FORT WORTH, Texas (UMNS)-Delegates to the 2008 United Methodist General Conference approved a petition dealing with clergy effectiveness and annual appointment, and also outlined conditions under which a pastor's appointment may be terminated.

The delegates, following the recommendations of the ministry and higher education legislative committee, voted 696-24 to amend and approve a petition related to Paragraph 334 of the denomination's Book of Discipline to give bishops procedures for terminating an ineffective pastor's appointment.

The Book of Discipline specifies responsibilities that an elder in The United Methodist Church must fulfill. Those responsibilities, outlined in Paragraph 340, are derived from authority given by ordination, according to the book. Elders are responsible for the "ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service" within the church and serve in the church and the world.

The delegates voted on the process for a guaranteed or annual appointment and what would occur if an elder does not fulfill his or her responsibilities. The basis for an elder's continued eligibility for appointment includes availability; annual participation in an evaluation process with a pastor-parish relations committee or comparable authority; annual evaluation with a district superintendent; evidence of continuing effectiveness reflected in annual evaluations by the pastor-parish relations committee, the district superintendent or comparable authority; professional growth through continuing education and formation; and willingness to supervise or mentor.

The delegates gave bishops an evaluative process to complete when an elder's effectiveness is being considered. The approved petition allows bishops to identify the concern, engage in conversations with the elder, design a corrective plan of action, and set a realistic expectation of future effectiveness.

After evaluation, if an elder has not increased competency or effectiveness as defined by the conference board of ordained ministry or cabinet "and/or does not accept the appointment determined by the bishop, then an appointment may be forfeited and the provisions of Paragraph 362 (of the Book of Discipline) may be invoked."

Paragraph 362 deals with complaint procedures, the supervisory response and due process, and remedial action.

The delegates rejected petitions requesting that bishops appoint a pastor to less than full-time service. The petition involving clergy evaluations would have allowed a district superintendent to initiate changing a pastor's conference relationship if three evaluations found the pastor to be ineffective and not likely to become effective through training and counseling.

Louisiana Conference NOW!

William W. Hutchinson Resident Bishop
Don Cottrill Provost
Betty Backstrom Editor

Louisiana Conference NOW! is the newspaper of the Louisiana Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church and is published twice a month. Subscriptions are $20 for one year, $30 for two years. (Please make checks payable to Louisiana Annual Conference.) Send subscriptions, news and information to:

Editor
527 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
E-mail: lanow@bellsouth.net
(888) 239-5286 ext. 227
(225) 346-1646, (225) 383-2652 fax

You can find the Louisiana Annual Conference on the Internet at http://www.la-umc.org
Ordination and Commissioning Service held

Ordination and Commissioning Services were held June 3 at 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of First United Methodist Church in Shreveport.

Bishop William W. Hutchinson served as preacher at the service, with a sermon title of “Carryin’ Fire in a Horn.” Immediately following, a reception was held for those being commissioned, ordained and retirees in the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium.

Pre-service music was performed by Ken Medema, music leader for this year’s annual conference. The Chancel Choir of First United Methodist Church, Monroe performed during the service under the direction of Rev. Kem Alexander, Director of Music Ministries for First UMC in Monroe.

Ten persons were ordained elders and received into full connection with the conference. They are: Elaine Melissa Burleigh, Eunice Neube Chigumira, Simon Chigumira, Elonora Mackey Cusenberry, Shannon Casey Deaureal, Joseph Zhong Guo, Juan Carlos Huertas, Jerry Lee Johnson, Anice Nichols Moses and Jimmy Lee Owens, Jr.

Bruce Lenal Brown, Sr. was received into full connection by having his elders orders recognized from another denomination.

Sarah Williams Shoup, Ann Mangham Trousdale and Dawn Buchanan Young were ordained deacon and received into full connection with the conference.

Eddie Carpenter, Joseph August Robideaux, Lane Cotton Winn and Gloria Lynne Youngblood were commissioned as probationary elders.

Laralee Wiggins DeHart and Valerie Olson Robideaux were commissioned as probationary deacons.

A special offering taken during the service was dedicated toward helping the Conference provide ordinands with an opportunity to tour the Holy Land.

Glenmora UMC to hold concert

Glenmora United Methodist Church will host one of America’s most exciting gospel Artist, Ivan Parker, at a concert on Friday, Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. in the Glenmora High Dramatic Arts Building.

Parker is “taking the country by storm” with numerous appearances on national television, including guest appearances on the Gaither Homecoming video series.

Several conferences and thousands of churches have turned to Igniting Ministry, the denomination’s Advertising and Welcoming Ministry at United Methodist Communications, for tips and tools to implement “Radical Hospitality.”

Through the language of television, United Methodist Communications offers messages with the identity promise of “Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.” In addition to these public invitations, the ministry also encourages churches to embrace a lifestyle of intentional welcoming of all people.

In the next four years, the Louisiana Conference will partner with United Methodist Communications to implement and help track the impact of Igniting Ministry. Welcoming training and certification, special advertising test activities, and many free resources will be part of this arrangement. To begin our work together, we encourage you to participate in the Back-to-School emphasis on “The Gift” message.

We hope that you will support this effort in these ways:

Plan a special “Open House” activity during September. ve a picnic or concert on the church lawn. Do a community clean-up day and invite the neighborhood to help you. Be creative! Look for more “Open House” ideas at IgnitingMinistry.org.

Be intentional about inviting friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors (FRAN) to worship and other church activities during September. The national message of "The Gift" also has many advertising and worship materials you can use at your church. Explore and download these free resources at the Igniting Ministry Media Warehouse (MediaWarehouse.org).

Help track the number of first-time guests that come to your church. Ask how they found your church.

Work toward becoming a Certified Welcoming Congregation. More than 720 churches around the country have attained this status. Get started by downloading the certification checklist at IgnitingMinistry.org. If you have questions, contact Betty Backstrom, director of Communications, at (225) 346-1646.

Daughenbaugh - Matheny scholars honored

The recipients are listed below by the school each is attending:

**Centenary**
- Andrew Karr Bowers, Betsy Carpenter, Sara Carpenter, Anna Connell, Emma Cook, Jessica Cosenza, Leah Dark, Sarah Duet, Danielle Dupree, Jason Harris, Priscilla Hawthorne Caitlin Hogan, Carrie Ann Jones, Noah O’Dell, Macy Stockton, April Stutts, and Marissa Teaseau.

**Dillard**

**Cook**
- Lynn Carpenter, Sara Carpenter, Anna Connell, Emma Cook, Jessica Cosenza, Leah Dark, Sarah Duet, Danielle Dupree, Jason Harris, Priscilla Hawthorne, Carrie Ann Jones, Noah O’Dell, Macy Stockton, April Stutts, and Marissa Teaseau.

**New Orleans**
- Michael Childers, Nathan Harris, Jason Dupree, and Amanda Hawthorne.

**Monroe**
- LaRae Carpenter, Sara Carpenter, Anna Connell, Emma Cook, Jessica Cosenza, Leah Dark, Sarah Duet, Danielle Dupree, Jason Harris, Priscilla Hawthorne, Carrie Ann Jones, Noah O’Dell, Macy Stockton, April Stutts, and Marissa Teaseau.

**Lake Charles**
- Craig Carpenter, Betsy Carpenter, Sara Carpenter, Anna Connell, Emma Cook, Jessica Cosenza, Leah Dark, Sarah Duet, Danielle Dupree, Jason Harris, Priscilla Hawthorne, Carrie Ann Jones, Noah O’Dell, Macy Stockton, April Stutts, and Marissa Teaseau.

**Acadiana**
- Michael Childers, Nathan Harris, Jason Dupree, and Amanda Hawthorne.

**Centenary**
- Andrew Karr Bowers, Betsy Carpenter, Sara Carpenter, Anna Connell, Emma Cook, Jessica Cosenza, Leah Dark, Sarah Duet, Danielle Dupree, Jason Harris, Priscilla Hawthorne, Carrie Ann Jones, Noah O’Dell, Macy Stockton, April Stutts, and Marissa Teaseau.

**Shreveport**
- Conner,湄李 Cook, Jessica Cosenza, Leah Dark, Sarah Duet, Danielle Dupree, Jason Harris, Priscilla Hawthorne, Carrie Ann Jones, Noah O’Dell, Macy Stockton, April Stutts, and Marissa Teaseau.
The 2008 class of clergy retirees were honored June 3 during the traditional “Passing of the Mantle” service, held in the Gold Dome on Centenary College’s campus in Shreveport. Bishop William W. Hutchinson led the congregants in the recognition and blessing of the retirees.

Rev. Paul E. Sabin represented the retiring class and placed the ceremonial mantle over the shoulders of Rev. Shannon Casey DeLaureal who represented the new full member class.

The members of this year’s retiring class included the following pictured persons: Lawrence K. Benson, Burton F. Blair, Alonzo J. Campbell, Carl E. Rhoads III, John H. Sewell, Robert E. Townsend, Carolyn Volentine, and Regina L. Wren.

Also in the 2008 retiree class were Larry G. Maxwell Sr., Paul E. Sabin, and Brunetta A. Shamblin. Their pictures were not available at press time.
ACADIANA DISTRICT

District Superintendent

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UMW announces 2008 mission projects

Editor's Note: The following article was left out of a recent issue of the Louisiana Now! that contained a special supplement on La. United Methodist Women. Members of UMW are asked to note the following information.

The Louisiana Conference UMW Executive Committee approved the following mission projects for our mission agencies for 2008. They are: Dulac Community Center (personal care items and supplies, shampoo, lotion, bar or liquid soap, coloring books and crayons); MacDonnell Children's Services (personal care items, hair combs, hair brushes, shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, deodorants); North Rampart Community Center (recreational equipment, leather baseballs, heavy duty jump ropes and hula hoops.) These items will be collected at our School of Christian Mission at the Wesley Center July 23-26, 2008 and at our Annual Conference.

Conference, from page 1

First UMC in Shreveport, with Bishop William W. Hutchinson as keynote speaker. Hutchinson, who has served the Louisiana Annual Conference as its Episcopal leader for eight years, has decided to remain as an active bishop for another quadrennium. During Ordination, three persons were ordained as deacon in full connection and one elder was brought into full connection by having his orders recognized from another denomination. Four were commissioned as probationary elders and two were commissioned as probationary deacons. Members voted on making it mandatory for conference churches and agencies to adopt Safe Sanctions guidelines to guarantee the safety of our children and youth involved in church programs and ministries. A report was made by Louisiana Conference delegates to General Conference, held April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas. Information was shared regarding our Conference’s participation in a building campaign for Africa University. A delegation from Louisiana recently went as ambassadors to the university, and outlined a plan to erect a badly needed dorm at Africa University. Special offerings were collected at the Conference session. The offering from Sunday night’s Memorial/Communion service is designated for the “Nothing but Nets” initiative. Funds collected will be used to purchase treated mosquito bed nets to protect people from contacting malaria. The cost of each net (including delivery) is $10. The Conference surpassed its goal by raising $111, 111. The offering taken at Monday night’s concert will support the construction of the Louisiana Friendship Plaza at Mt. Sequoyah, Ark. The Plaza is the Conference’s way of visibly showing our appreciation to the conferences in our South Central Jurisdiction for their assistance in our recovery from Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. The Tuesday night offering received during Ordination will be used to provide Conference ordinands with an opportunity to tour the Holy Land.

Rev. Grace Imathiu, pastor of Brown Deer UMC near Milwaukee, served as Bible Study leader for this year’s annual conference. Imathiu was born in Kenya and raised in the city of Nairobi. She is ordained in the Methodist Church of Kenya and has served congregations there and in Washington, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin. The scripture for the Conference was 1 Thessalonians: 23-24: “May the God of himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one whose calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

Appointments for 2008-2009 were fixed and the Baton Rouge District Superintendent, Rev. Ellen Alston; the Lake Charles District Superintendent, Rev. Ralph Ford; the LaPlace District Superintendent, Rev. Stephen Spurlock; and the New Orleans District Superintendent, Rev. Ramonaynn Bethley. Rev. Roger Lathan (Acadiana), Rev. Bob Burgess (Monroe), and Rev. Doug Cain (Shreveport) will return to their respective positions as District Superintendents. The new Director of Administrative Services for the conference is Rev. Larry Miller and the new Conference Director of Multicultural Ministries is Rev. Martha Orpe.

Other highlights of the 2008 La. Annual Conference included: the Passing of the Mantle on Tuesday, celebrating the ministries of the retirees and their spouses; commissioning and ordaining for ministry; a report on conference hurricane response and UMCOR; greetings from United Methodist Communications and the announcement that the La. Annual Conference will be a partner with Igniting Unleash the Power, Inc. for the 2008 General Conference. Bishop William W. Hutchinson spoke during the April 6 service, which featured a performance by the Centenary College Music Ensemble.
Sibley UMC

Sibley United Methodist Church has been operating "Kids Kamp," a program for at risk kids between the ages of 5 and 15. Since 2004, the program has given children a place to come once a week to vent, learn and just feel loved.

Today, the program serves 10-18 children every Tuesday, providing a light meal, a Scripture lesson applied to real life, and some "down time" to just share a kids life in a safe place with caring adults.

The group has participated in The Weekend of the Cross (Shreveport) for the past two years and just recently completed a three-day hands-on learning experience at Heifer International Ranch in Perryville Arkansas. The kids also volunteered to paint several houses in Sibley.

The "can do" spirit of the children was so infectious that a ramp ministry has been started by members of Sibley UMC, with the help and training of folks from North Highlands UMC. Through the ministry, called "Ramp UP," volunteers have built four ramps with more on the horizon.

Sibley UMC also recently hosted a fish fry for which over 300 tickets were sold. Proceeds from the event will fund at least three more ramps and some of the planned trips for "Kids Kamp." A 15-passenger van is getting plenty of use by the kids and the ramp ministry. The purchase of a trailer to haul and store materials is on the horizon.

SCJ Lay Speaking Ministries Conference

The South Central Jurisdiction Speaking Ministries Conference, slated for July 11-13, will focus on "Back to Basics with Wesley". Participants will revisit our roots and examine what allowed the Methodist movement to be a powerful influence in America. Come "experience the excitement" and be challenged as Doctors Jim and Molly Davis Scott help us to look at our modern day United Methodist Church in light of its Wesleyan heritage. Other sessions will include a Friday training session for conference and district directors and a Liberia VIM Mission trip report from the Oklahoma Conference. For more information go to www.mountsequoyah.org or call (800) 760-8126.

UNplugged Retreat set

UNplugged, a retreat for singers and songwriters sponsored by Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, is scheduled for Aug. 14-17 at the Conference Center in Fayetteville.

The retreat will feature a workshop and showcase concert on Saturday by Grammy nominated songwriter and 2007 Folkwax artist of the year, Gretchen Peters. Singer/Songwriter of the year; Emily Kaitz, Northwest Arkansas Music Hall of Fame Inductee; and others.

The retreat is open to artists of all ages and skill levels. Details about the retreat and registration information are available online at www.mountsequoyah.org or call (800) 760-8126.

Gift Annuity Rates Are FALLING

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New gift annuity payout rates set by the American Council on Gift Annuities will be .2 to .8% lower when they take effect July 1, 2008.

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Two of the children in the Kid's Kamp program sponsored by Sibley UMC take time out to welcome folks to the home that they have been painting.

Local Pastors recognized

The Recognition of Local Pastors and those completing License to Preach School was held June 3 in the Gold Dome. Seventeen people were recognized for completing License to Preach School. Those with an asterisk by their name are also receiving their first appointment to serve as local pastors. They are: Phillip Bates, Ivy Bell, Gladier Dabon Dalton, Reid Gregory Day*, Betty Carolyn Fletcher, Felton Wayne Franklin, Jason Klay Harrison*, Stephen Hebert, Anna Jackson, Katina Lane, Samuel Lynn Neal, Marshall Andrew Sevier*, William Edward Smith, Ronald Southall, Dave Stewart, Patrick Wiggins and John Henry Wilkins*.

Albert Warren Clifton, II, Jessica Lynn Ward, Isaac Leon Hammond, Jr. and Caroline Marie Wilkinson completed License to Preach School last year, are approved, and are receiving their first appointments.

Those to be recognized as local pastors having completed the Course of Study School are Lawrence Kern Benson, Jr., Richard Wayne Davis, William Hartley McLain, Doris Riley Sheppard, William Madison Turner, Sr. and William Vise Turner.

Sibley UMC

Sibley United Methodist Church has been operating "Kids Kamp," a program for at risk kids between the ages of 5 and 15.

Since 2004, the program has given children a place to come once a week to vent, learn and just feel loved.

Today, the program serves 10-18 children every Tuesday, providing a light meal, a Scripture lesson applied to real life, and some "down time" to just share a kids life in a safe place with caring adults.

The group has participated in The Weekend of the Cross (Shreveport) for the past two years and just recently completed a three-day hands-on learning experience at Heifer International Ranch in Perryville Arkansas. The kids also volunteered to paint several houses in Sibley.

The "can do" spirit of the children was so infectious that a ramp ministry has been started by members of Sibley UMC, with the help and training of folks from North Highlands UMC. Through the ministry, called "Ramp UP," volunteers have built four ramps with more on the horizon.

Sibley UMC also recently hosted a fish fry for which over 300 tickets were sold. Proceeds from the event will fund at least three more ramps and some of the planned trips for "Kids Kamp." A 15-passenger van is getting plenty of use by the kids and the ramp ministry. The purchase of a trailer to haul and store materials is on the horizon.

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