



*A Spiritual Oasis Committed to Christ,
to Peace, and to Service*

July 2017

Cedar Park First United Methodist Church

Connections

Newsletter



Another Successful Vacation Bible School!

Over 50 children, ranging in age from 4 to 10, participated and it was a terrific week. Many thanks to Carolyn Smith for leading the charge and to all of the other volunteers, both adult and youth, who helped coach, feed, teach, and otherwise care for the VBS students. What a great team to be a part of!

Rio Texas Annual Conference 2017

Notes and Observations from both Lay Representatives of CPFUMC

Submitted by Karen Packard

The United Methodist Rio Texas Annual Conference opened Wednesday, June 7 with communion served by Rev. Lupina Villalpando Stewart and Bishop Robert Schnase.

The Thursday session started with an address from Bishop Schnase in which he celebrated the fruitfulness of numerous ministries within our conference. Videos of this address and numerous others can be viewed at www.riotexas.org in the new section titled Recap. We then focused on Conference business. The Conference budget has been revised and reduced. This means our apportionments (2/20) will be reduced. We were encouraged to use that

KAREN PACKARD continued on page 5

Submitted by Bob Packard

The Rio Texas Conference of 2017 was bustling with energy. Progress was slow as there were many old friends to meet and greet. There were nearly 400 churches represented with over 2000 individuals. The contemporary Praise Songs were fast and carried over the hum of conversation.

BOB PACKARD continued on page 8

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JESUS ROCK STAR CORNER

Submitted by Carolyn Smith

Our young ones again showed how much they care for others. We had a busy month of preparing Mother's Day and Father's Day cards. The children shared personal stories of relationship with their parents and other family members. Although these stories were amazing the best were when they shared stories of other adults outside of their home which help to guide them.



We made Mother's Day cards.



Gwen and Jozi shared a skit during Children's Moment telling us about amazing mothers

A DAY OF FUN. Our last day before the June break was spent with a day of games, starting off with Charades.



Can you guess the animal?



It was time to make Father's Day cards.



Then there were games with balloons.

Our time of games was complete as we enjoyed homemade ice cream. Ms. Carolyn needed to work on her home ice cream recipe and the children were glad to be taste testers.

Gwen finished up our sessions of Father's Day by reading a "Letter to Dad" during Children's Moment.

We look forward to getting back into our regular routine in July. Hope to see you there.



Open heARTS summer camp July 24th through July 28th

Spread the word! CPFUMC has a summer art camp! This is the 2nd year to sign your kids up for a fun and educational summer camp.

Activities include ART, MUSIC, MOVEMENT, and SCIENCE.

Creative art projects, Shrinky dinks, Water Colors

They will learn about various composers and musical styles in music.

In movement they will be learning fun games and dances from various parts of the world.

In science we will explore and conduct experiments.

Please go to www.cpfumc.org for more information.

POTATO JAR SUNDAY

Steve Howard

Each fifth Sunday during the year Cedar Park First UMC helps combat hunger through its "potato jar" collection. So why is this called potato jar Sunday?

The potato jar collection supports the Society of St. Andrew, a national nonprofit organization, and its donation of tons of potatoes, and other produce, to agencies across the country serving those in need. United Methodist Men are a national partner with the Society of St. Andrew.

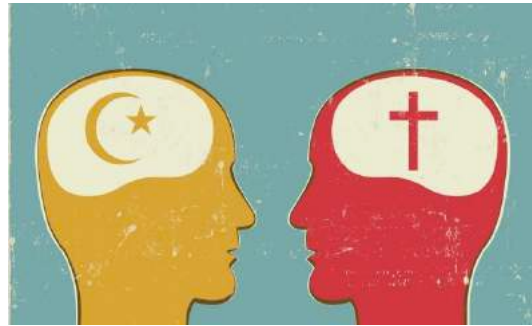
Millions of Americans struggle to get enough food to eat each day. And yet millions of pounds of food are wasted every day in this country. The Society of St. Andrew was formed in 1979 to help address this hunger dilemma. They salvage tractor-trailer loads of potatoes and other produce that are rejected by commercial markets or potato chip factories due to slight imperfections in size, shape, sugar content, or surface blemishes. Donations are used to bag and transport this produce.

In addition, through its national gleaning network, the work of thousands of volunteers is coordinated to rescue perfectly edible food left behind in farmers' fields and deliver it to agencies serving the hungry. Gleaning's biblical mandate is found in Deuteronomy 24:19.

More than 12 million hungry people in the US will receive produce from the Society of St. Andrew at some point in 2017. The Society of St. Andrew distributed over 49 million pounds of produce in Texas in 2015.

On Sunday, July 30th, Cedar Park First UMC children will circulate among the congregation collecting donations in potato jars. Be sure to bring your spare change or small bills to support this important charity helping combat hunger in America.

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE CLASSES TO BE HELD IN JULY AND AUGUST



Peter Castles

Last summer several members of Cedar Park Church and their friends participated in a book group to read and discuss *Memories of Muhammad* by Omid Safi. Many of us were amazed to find out we knew practically nothing about Islamic religion. So, the book was a real eye opener for us. We even took a trip over to the Islamic Center of Brushy Creek to have some conversations with several of our Muslim neighbors there.

This year the Red Bench conversations in Cedar Park/Leander have provided us with additional opportunities to interact with members of the Islamic Center and their Imam, Sheikh Yassir Fazaga. As a result, we have decided to hold a series of classes this July and August to engage in dialogue with our neighbors at the Islamic Center of Brushy Creek. The classes will consist of reading the Bible and the Qur'an side-by-side to consider the parallels between the two books. Two separate class times will be offered: one class will meet on **Thursday mornings from 10-11:30am**, beginning July 20, and the other class will meet on **Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30pm**, beginning July 18.

Please consider joining us for this wonderful series of opportunities to be a real neighbor to these wonderful people in our community.

VBS 2017



The Cheer squad shows off their routine.

The Basketball campers are poised and ready.



Martial Arts students showed off their skills and were awarded color belts.





VBS depends on the energy of awesome volunteers.

IT IS HOT AND GETTING HOTTER

We know a delicious way to cool off. Plan on attending CPFUMC's ICE CREAM SOCIAL, Wednesday, July 26 beginning at 6:30pm.

We invite you to make your favorite homemade ice cream. You can come early to make your ice cream at the church or bring it already frozen. If you do not have time to make a homemade ice cream please bring your favorite ice cream from the store.

The homemade ice creams will be judged similar to our past cook offs. All ice creams will be shared by all.

Please find the complete list of rules and entry form on the CPFUMC's website at www.cpfumc.org.

All your friends and new friends will be there. Please plan to attend.

See you there, carolynsmith2215@gmail.com or (512)970-9087.



To the Congregation,

The Bible verse for the UM Army Basic trip is Philippians 2:1-4.

2 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (New Living Translation)



UM Army Youth Mission Team, June 25, 2017

I want to thank everyone for allowing me to be a Youth Leader. I have been blessed to be part of the church lives of our youth. I also want to thank all of you who donated to our youth for supplies for the UM Army trips. I'm blessed and happy with all that you have done for our youth. Thank you once again. May God bless you and keep you all in His love and grace.

Shawn Dubler.

Karen Packard, cont. from p. 1

savings for fruitful projects. I was particularly encouraged to learn that renovation of Mt. Wesley has begun. The facility will be more user-friendly than it has been in recent years.

Our **Laity Session** included some reports about lay ministries. The Coastal Bend lay leader encouraged us all to tell people outside the church what we are doing. Sharing our fruitfulness arouses curiosity about our churches that often results in visitors and new members. A West District lay leader told us about their outreach to Hispanic youth who have grown up speaking English and have become disinterested in worship offered in Spanish. They now have a team of lay leaders who translate Spanish into English and are blessed by a positive response from the young people they serve. Several United Methodist men have been involved in the Mt. Wesley renovation.

The United Methodist Women honored Lillie Williams, the first United Methodist Women president of the Rio Texas Conference who gave many years of lay service through UMW. She was instrumental in helping UMW integrate its ministries. She passed away suddenly on May 27.

Bishop Schnase closed the Laity Session with a talk about church structure. He believes we need to turn the traditional conference pyramid upside down so that he, as Bishop, is on the bottom supporting district leaders who in turn support pastors who support the laity to do God's work and be fruitful. We were all encouraged to get involved in Lay Leadership training.



Our Cedar Park FUMC team attended the **Peace and Justice Luncheon** where we learned about the Music Peace Project that was started by Willie Everett a member of the Wesley United Methodist Church in Austin and Esteban Alvarez from San Jose, Costa Rica who currently resides in Austin. They shared a deep concern for the 13.5 million Syrian refugees who need humanitarian assistance. What started as a local project rapidly grew to a multi-national, multi-religious, multi-cultural endeavor to create an album to promote the International Rescue Committee's humanitarian assistance to the Syrian refugees. To learn more and/or to buy the album go to www.musicpeaceproject.org.

The keynote speaker for the luncheon was John Hill, Assistant General Secretary for Advocacy and Grassroots Organizing General Board of Church and Society for the United Methodist Church. He doesn't create UMC policy, but his job is to inform us and members of Congress about what is stated in our UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 2017-2020. This document has guided United Methodists since it's first adoption by the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

John Hill reminded us that these principles are rooted in Scripture and the teachings of Jesus who called us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus demonstrated this by telling us about the Good Samaritan who not only bound the wounds of the stranger, but took him to an inn and paid for his health care. Jesus wants us to care just as much about all of our neighbors today. The website at www.umcjustice.org website makes it easy for you to learn more and to contact your Senators and Representatives to tell them what you believe as a Methodist who follows Jesus and loves your neighbors as yourself.

As a relatively new Methodist I invite you to join me next fall in two separate Sunday School studies. The first will be based on THE WESLEY CHALLENGE: 21 DAYS TO A MORE AUTHENTIC FAITH, an interesting little book that I got in the Conference bookstore and the second will be based on SOCIAL PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 2017-2020, the basis of John Hill's work. Each book is a short study that will help us focus on why we are Methodists and think about how we can be more fruitful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bishop Schnase brought renewal and positive energy to the Rio Texas Conference this year by using his theme **Focus on Fruitfulness** to introduce Methodist groups whose ministries have been especially fruitful.

Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) is a national UMC group that organized in 1967 when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged to form the United Methodist Church with plans to end formal segregation. They have advocated for level playing fields within the church and in the world outside the church.

Dr. Collett Pierce Burnette, the President of Huston-Tillotson University spoke briefly. The University is the only United Methodist related college in our Conference. It is the oldest institution of higher education in Austin, even older than the University of Texas. They usually have about 199 graduates each year. The faculty and students are proud that they do not run from their faith-based roots. Rev. Zan Holmes spoke at the 2017 graduation and emphasized the importance of being on the right assignment, the one God wants you on.

Project Transformation Rio Texas was recently organized to "stop the summer reading slide" in low income neighborhoods in San Antonio, TX. It brings children and their families together with college interns and United Methodist volunteers from local churches to meet the academic, physical, social-emotional needs of the children. They partner with Methodist Health Care Ministries and the San Antonio Food Bank to serve the whole child. There are plans to extend the program to the Capitol District in 2019 so hopefully we may participate.

The Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) began in 1913 through the work of Lydia Patterson, a Methodist laywoman, and the Methodist Missionary Society of her church in El Paso. Young Hispanic boys in el barrio had little access to education so she began to set up schools in the homes of Mexican Methodists. Her project grew as they built a school for both boys and girls. LPI is “committed to providing an environment in which Christian faith, values and knowledge converge to give students a cross-cultural, academic and state-of-the-art education, by creating opportunities to develop skills to succeed and transform in a changing world” (www.lpi-elp.com).

The Rio Texas Conference has benefited greatly over the years as more than 150 of our pastors, as well as eleven district superintendents, four military chaplains, a United Methodist seminary president and a United Methodist bishop received their preparation there. Our Conference has decided to participate in the LPI Capital Fund Campaign to improve the facilities as the Institute enters its second 100 years of fruitfulness. The Conference has committed \$500,000 over the next three years relying principally on voluntary contributions and offerings from our churches rather than increasing our apportionments.

A special feature of the 2017 Rio Texas Conference was a series of **teaching sessions** presented by Adam Hamilton, the head pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City. He inspired us with multiple ways to increase the fruitfulness of our congregations. He emphasized the need to “unleash the power of the laity” by moving toward a New Testament model of ministry: “Preparing God’s people to do the work of ministry.” People yearn for experiential worship that includes everyday ways to say “yes” to Jesus.

As Methodists we don’t believe that everything that happens is God’s will. From the beginning He gave man a choice. He doesn’t will evil. It’s not His choice that men engage in evil rather than good. We all want to learn how to serve God by living our faith in the world. Hamilton stated that people need Jesus Christ because He answers the deepest needs of the human soul. People need the church so they can be disciples of Christ together in their community and in the world. He said that evangelism and social justice are two halves of one gospel. We are called to be God’s justice in the world. It doesn’t matter if we’re liberal conservatives, conservative liberals, conservatives or liberals. We are all called to be God’s justice in the world. That’s essential to being a fruitful church.

Bishop Schnase presented our final teaching session. His goal is to increase the number of fruitful churches in the Rio Texas District. The health of our congregations is critical. Since 2005, the Rio Texas Conference has lost an average of 1,137 members per year and an average of 895 attendees per year. Many churches have moved from full time to part time pastors.

Learning congregations, learning clergy, learning laity are all essential to determine the obstacles when we experience a lack of fruitfulness. These learners must then dig deep to learn how they can develop solutions to overcome those obstacles. He wants to help churches grow by assuring that there are frequent learning events within the conference each year. He hopes we can become the kind of conference that God wants us to be: one that makes disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Last, but not least was the Fixing of the Appointments. Peter Van Castles was appointed as our First Pastor and Bonnie Lee How was appointed as our Associate Pastor.

Karen Packard, Lay Representative

Bob Packard, cont. from p. 1

Wednesday evening began with a worship service. Rev Lupina Villapando Stewart delivered the sermon. It was fascinating but I found her rapid speech and dramatic humor a bit difficult to follow.

Serving Communion in a large auditorium to such a large group required ingenuity. Every two rows were paired. All stood and circulated counter clockwise, receiving the bread and the cup at the aisle. When the last person had been served, each of us found ourselves back in our seat. Pastor Peter was our gracious chauffeur, picking us up promptly at 7:30 am and driving us to the convention. Peter also knows where the best seafood is served. We ate very well. I think my favorite was Blackbeard's.

This year's conference featured a teaching section by Rev Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection. It has over 20,000 members with a weekly attendance of 11,000. Rev Hamilton's lessons were titled "Leading Beyond the Walls". The presentation was interesting but I will leave it for another time.

Attending annual conference is a chance to renew that feeling of being connected all over the world. Sometimes our view is filled with our beautiful local church. One of the projects of the Rio Texas Conference is a goal of providing half a million dollars toward the Lydia Patterson Institute.

The Lydia Patterson Institute, (LPI), began in 1913 through the work of Mrs. Lydia Patterson, a Methodist laywoman acting through the Missionary Society of her church. She noticed that young Hispanic boys had little access to education and she began to set up schools in the homes of Mexican Methodists. Over 150 clergy candidates received their preparation at LPI. District superintendents, chaplains, and bishops have been educated at LPI. Every graduate this year has been accepted at college. Every student at LPI is required to work at cleaning, cooking, painting, doing minor repairs or other things as a part of the scholarship.

One young lady spoke about the importance of Lydia Patterson Institute in her life. In Mexico, education stops at the end of 8th grade. She was awarded a scholarship to LPI. She would wake to 4:00 AM, walk to the bus at 6:00 AM, walk across the bridge in order to be at work at the institute by 7:00 AM. She studied sometimes on the bus and sometimes during her lunchtime, often arriving back home at 8:00 or 9:00 PM. When she graduated from LPI she was awarded a scholarship to a Nebraska University. She has just finished her BS degree and is now a full-fledged nurse. Her English and Spanish are impeccable with no hint of an accent. She was so grateful for the opportunity to work hard. I am sure we will hear more about helping to fund Lydia Patterson Institute in the future.

The very last thing on the agenda was to receive the appointments for the year. Many ministers were saying goodbye to their old congregations and moving to their new congregations. Since Peter and Bonnie were reappointed to CPFUMC, we offered our congratulations to Pastor Peter.

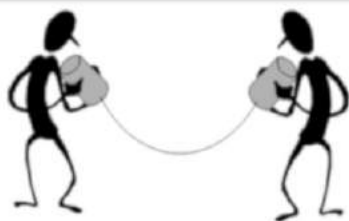


News and Announcements



United Methodist Women Mission U: Learning Together for Transformation of the World is coming up July 7-9. For more information go online to <http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/mission-u>

Thanks to all who donated supplies for VBS! Our Vacation Bible Schoolers were well-hydrated, well-fed, and well-cared for. Your donations made this possible.



Want to get in touch with a Church Leader or are you thinking of submitting something for a future Newsletter?

Here are some contacts:

Pastor Peter Castles peter@cpfumc.org

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Newsletter Editor Jill Lundstrom
lund121@me.com

You can also find us online at cpfumc.org
or call the church Tues-Thurs between 9 and 2 at this phone number:
(512) 335-9540

In case you missed it:
Pastor Bonnie How graduated on June 8th from Iliff School of Theology in Denver, CO!
Congrats to Pastor Bonnie!

“The Person Who Says It Cannot Be Done Should Not Interrupt The Person Who Is Doing It.” – Chinese Proverb

