



Texas Annual Conference
May 29-June 1, 2011
www.txcumc.org
George R. Brown
Convention Center

Host Hotel
Hilton Americas
1600 Lamar
Houston, TX 77010
713-739-8000



West District Office
526 University
Drive East, Bldg. C
College Station, TX 77840
979-696-8962 (Office)
979-764-1428 (Fax)
www.west-district.org

Rev. Joe W. Fort, Jr.
District Superintendent
jfort@txcumc.org

Debbie Keim
Administrative Assistant
dkeim@txcumc.org

Linda Tatum
Office Assistant
ltatum@txcumc.org

NEW YEAR'S NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL

Over the years, I have found myself going back to certain books over and over to find renewal for my soul and to grow spiritually. It has been said that "we are what we eat." That may be true! It is also true, however, that we become what we read. Obviously, the prime example of this is God's Word. Because the Living God is present in the Word, the Spirit shapes and transforms us the more we make ourselves available to it. Therefore, one of the first necessities of every Christian is to become steeped in Holy Scripture.

It has also been my experience that certain works – mostly from a previous era by great spiritual writers – have over the years considerably influenced by Christian walk. I can truthfully say that my faith is much deeper because of my repeated exposure to these so-called "devotional classics." Here I would like to recommend a short list of these to you. You may have read some of them already. If not, I encourage you to pick up several this year and read them. They will not be read or digested quickly. You will need to take your time and ponder the meaning of each page. But in doing so I venture to suggest that your spiritual life will be richly rewarded. So, without further introduction, here is my short list of recommended spiritual works.

At the Christmas brunch you were given a copy of Thomas A Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Read it. It is a truly great book. You will gain greatly from going through it every few years. Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God* is brief, but contains some very meaningful material. I believe it also belongs on anyone's short list of recommended Christian reading. I have come increasingly to appreciate Madame Guyon's *A Short Method of Prayer*. She lived in the era immediately preceding Wesley. Her writing, along with A Kempis', cast an instrumental influence upon his maturity in the faith.

Over the past several years I have come very much to admire the writings of Andrew Murray, a nineteenth century South African pastor. I love many of his numerous books, but three that perhaps stand above the rest are *Humility*, *The School of Prayer*, and *Abide in Christ*. We gave *Humility* to the district pastors two years ago. Several of you commented on how much it meant to you. *The School of Prayer* is my **overall favorite book on prayer. I commend all of these to you, as well as his other works.**

NEW YEAR'S NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL Continued

For those who want to peruse some twentieth century literature, a good book is Evelyn Underhill's **The Spiritual Life**. I began reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer in seminary, and would say that for some years **The Cost of Discipleship** influenced me as deeply as any book outside the Bible itself. It is still meaningful to me today. Bonhoeffer's **Life Together** is also a work that I would recommend to you. In roughly the same time period the American writer Thomas Kelly wrote **A Testament of Devotion**. I re-read it recently and really think it is an outstanding spiritual work.

Thomas Merton wrote his numerous books in the middle of the twentieth century. Many of these are very rich and deep. I could list several things he authored here, but will recommend **The New Seeds of Contemplation** above the others. It is probably the one work I enjoy most by Merton. Towards the end of the last century the Dutch pastor Henri Nouwen was busy writing. I have gained from several of his books, but will just throw out a few titles here. They are **The Way of the Heart**, **The Return of the Prodigal Son**, and **In the Name of Jesus**. All of these have proven to be very meaningful to my Christian journey.

So there you have it – my short reading list for 2011. Maybe you can pick up a few of these titles and benefit from their substance over the months ahead. Happy reading and Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,

Joe W. Fort, Jr.

District Superintendent

P.S. Many of you by now have the word that I "pulled up lame" after a fourteen mile run a couple of weeks ago. Up to that point, I had encountered few physical problems with my marathon training. However, in one fell swoop suddenly I had two pulled muscles and tendinitis in the same leg. (If I was a racehorse, I would have been headed for the glue factory!). After laying out a week, I tested the leg on two shorter runs. Unfortunately, my leg grew worse and it seems there is no way that I can recover in time to run in Houston at the end of January. I want to thank everyone for supporting me in this venture, but this year it is not meant to be. Ah, middle age is so much fun!

DISTRICT CLERGY MEETING

Date: Tues—Feb 8
Time: 2 PM
Place: Grace UMC
408 S. Magnolia
(just west of Hwy 6)
Hearne

Retired Ministers' Monthly Luncheon Social Hosts

◆ 2011 schedule will be out Dec 20 after this edition of the newsletter.

Report

Tuesday, January 11, 2011

8:30 AM—11:30 AM (ONLY)

Day



Dear Clergy and Finance Chairs,

It is time to start preparing for Report Day 2010. The reports are available on **Dove**. This year Report Day is **Tuesday, January 11, 2011**. The District Office and Hub locations will be open **from 8:30 am to 11:30 am only**. Churches will be required to have their money (check only please), signed page 6 of the report to the District Office, and Transformation Survey completed in DOVE by this date. Please remember, `Auditors cannot leave the District Office till you get your reports finished and payments in. _ So please start early. After **December 13th**, your apportionment funds should be brought to Report Day with your signed report. Need help?

District Auditors and Hub locations:

District Office - Auditors: Mac Vaughn 936-825-3342 or Cathy Richardson 979-690-4673
BCS Hub and Normangee Hub churches

Cameron FUMC - Auditor: Chuck Bratz 254-697-4933
Marlin Hub and Rockdale Hub churches

Huntsville FUMC - Auditor: Gene Bixler 254-275-9006
Centerville Hub and Huntsville Hub churches

Brenham FUMC - Auditor: Robert Stutes 979-865-5976
Brenham Hub and Navasota Hub churches

SENIORS



OPEN ARMS RESPITE GROUP

“Alzheimer’s & Dementia Patients”

A Safe Harbor-Day Out Program for Caregivers Group

Meets 2nd and 4th Thursdays—10 AM—1 PM

Peace Lutheran Church—979-693-4403—Amie Brauer, Director

www.openarmsrespites@gmail.com

A new ministry where it is safe to leave your “Alzheimer’s & Dementia Patients”



AROUND THE DISTRICT



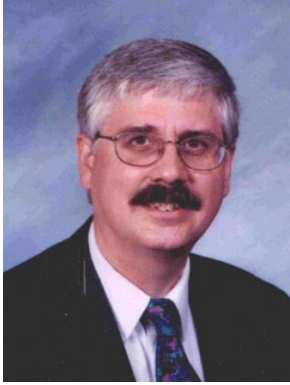
☞ **West District Offices:** They tell us they are now sharpening the shovels and the real dirt should start flying shortly! Paperwork concluded, final colors selected and on with the show!

☞ **Millican’s UMC:** Historic Sanctuary and new facilities continue to materialize. Keep them in your prayers during this exciting time for this community. Re-dedication planned for early March.

Prison Ministry



Inmates are released with only light weight windbreakers and these are not warm enough for those being sent to the North regions. Rev. Mark Pickett of First UMC Huntsville (936) 295-5441 is sponsoring a coat drive for churches to collect warm coats. Coat collections may be dropped off at District Office or you may contact Mark Pickett directly to pick up your donations/collections from your congregations. Thank you for participating in this much needed ministry effort.



Join the West District

at

L.E.A.D. Institute

on

Sunday, January 30, 2011 at 3 p.m.

Christ UMC, College Station

Keynote Speaker, Rev. Bill Kemp

Author of

"Jonah's Whale: Reconnecting the Congregation with Mission"

Workshops for the afternoon will include the five core functions of ministry lifted up under our District's "Blueprint for Ministry".

Select a workshop and send your form to ONE of the following:

*West District Office
526 University Dr. East
Bldg C
College Station, TX 77840*

*Rev. Ellen Willett
1016 Sam Houston Avenue
Huntsville, TX 77320*

- Focus on Prayer*
- Engagement with Scripture*
- Meaningful Worship*
- Personal Evangelism*
- Heart for Mission*



Name_____

Phone Number _____

___Home ___ Cell ___ Church

Home Church_____

BILL KEMP PASTORS' WORKSHOP JAN. 31

The Rev. Bill Kemp, author of *Ezekiel's Bones*, *Saul's Armor*, *Jonah's Whale*, and other books, will be our keynote speaker for the Lead Institute on Sunday, January 30th (Previous page has registration form and watch your mail for additional information. Bill will focus on the theme of missions for the Lead Institute, not only offering the main address, but also a second hour of follow-up on this topic.

For our district clergy, Rev. Kemp will also be available for dialogue on the morning of Monday, January 31st. This workshop will take place at the district office (space permitting) between 9 a.m. and noon. This experience will be especially geared to discussing with him the five 'Blueprint for Ministry' spiritual values (prayer, scripture, missions, worship, and personal evangelism). As an alternative to formal teaching, this time with Bill will be designed as more 'give and take.'

Please contact the office no later than January 27th if you would like to share in this experience. There will be no charge to our pastors. Those who take part in both hours of Bill Kemp's Lead Institute offering, and also the Monday morning experience, will qualify for **½ (5 hours) continuing education credit.**



Lay
Speaking
School
2011

BASIC COURSE FOR LAY SPEAKERS

Leader: Rev. Mac Vaughn of FUMC Navasota & Anderson

Text: Basic Course for Lay Speakers ~ participant book.

ADVANCED COURSES:

LAY SPEAKERS LEAD IN PRAYER

Leader: Rev. Jeff Gage of FUMC Bryan

Text: Let the Whole Church Say Amen! Workbook

LAY SPEAKERS INTERPRET FOR OTHERS OUR METHODIST HERITAGE

Leader: Dr. Dick White of FUMC Quitman

Text: The United Methodist Primer

LAY SPEAKERS' BIBLE STUDY

Leader: Rev. Paula J. Behrens of Chappell Hill UMC

Text: Ephesians: Finding Your Identity in Christ

DATE/TIME: TWO (2) SATURDAYS IN FEBRUARY - FEBRUARY 12 AND FEBRUARY 19
8:30 AM TO 4:00 PM - PLAN TO ATTEND BOTH...

PLACE: CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, COLLEGE STATION
REGISTRATION FEE: \$35-INCLUDES LUNCH AND TEXTBOOKS

Brochures will be emailed/snail mailed to your pastors. If you don't receive one, please ask your pastor to print one for you. Questions? Mary Reed maryrreed@att.net or Scott Atnip scottatnip@yahoo.com



Thanks to the West District Churches that have paid 100% of their District Apportionments as December 15, 2010

★ Anderson	★ College Station A&M	★ Major's Chapel
★ Anderson Circuit:	★ College Station Aldersgate	★ Marlin Circuit:
★ Yarborough	★ College Station Christ	★ Chilton St. Paul
★ McKenzie	★ College Station First	★ Marlin First
★ Bellville	★ Cooks Point	★ Marquez
★ Blue	★ Elwood	★ Milano Circuit:
★ Bremond Grace	★ Evans Chapel	★ Chriesman
★ Brenham Circuit:	★ Flynn Franklin	★ Millican
★ Pleasant Grove	★ Gause	★ Navasota Circuit:
★ Mt. Zion	★ Giddings First	★ Lee Tabernacle
★ Brenham First	★ Hearne Grace	★ Pleasant Grove
★ Bryan Alexander	★ Hempstead Bethlehem	★ Stonehamville
★ Bryan First	★ Hempstead First	★ Navasota First
★ Bryan Lee Chapel	★ Huntsville First	★ Normangee First
★ Bryan Wesley	★ Huntsville St. Paul	★ Paige
★ Calvert Circuit:	★ Iola-Zion	★ Reagan
★ St. James	★ Kosse	★ Richards Circuit:
★ St. Paul	★ Leona Circuit:	★ Bay's Chapel
★ Chapel Hill	★ Hillary	★ Richards
★ Calvert Sneed Memorial	★ Tanyard	★ Shiro
★ Cameron	★ Two Mile	★ Somerville First
★ Cedar Springs	★ Leona	★ Stoneham
★ Centerville Circuit:	★ Lexington	★ Thorndale Pleasant Retreat
★ St. Matthew	★ Blue	★ Wheelock
★ Centerville First	★ Lott	
★ Chappell Hill	★ Lynn Grove	

Thank You

**Christmas Brunch
Enjoyed by all!**

Tradition of the gift of the Poinsettias to retired Clergy and spouses continued.



Many, many thanks to First United Methodist of Madisonville for your hospitality, preparation, fellowship, food, festive atmosphere and spectacular entertainment!



And a Trio sang carols



Over 100 in attendance....

"When God speaks to you, ACT NOW! Don't put it off until later!"





2011

WEST DISTRICT CALENDAR

January
February
March

January

- Sat-Jan 1 HAPPY 2011! Greetings and Wishes for Blessings and Prosperity to All in our New Year!
Tues-Jan 11* ANNUAL REPORT DAY!
Sat & Sun-Jan 15-16 How to Get More Members_ Seminar in Houston, TX at Westbury UMC
Mon-Jan 17 Martin Luther King Jr. 's Birthday
Mon-Jan 24 District Leadership Team Meeting ~ 4:00 PM ~ District Office
Sat & Sun-Jan 22-23 How to Get More Members_ Seminar in Longview, TX at Wesley McCabe
Thurs-Jan 27 DEADLINE: Advise District Office you will attend Bill Kemp Dialogue on Mon-Jan 31
Sun-Jan 30 L.E.A.D. Institute_ by Rev. Bill Kemp
Christ UMC ~ College Station ~ 3:00 PM ~ 5:15 PM
Mon-Jan 31 Bill Kemp PASTORS Workshop at District Office - 9 AM - Noon



February



- Mon-Feb 7 MEETINGS at District Office - 6:45 PM - Trustees, Building & Location, and Finance
7:30 PM - Support & Resources Team
Tues-Feb 8 Clergy Meeting ~ 2:00 PM Grace UMC, Hearne
Sat -Feb 12 Session #1 - LAY SPEAKING SCHOOL_
Christ UMC of College Station 8:30 AM ~ 4:00 PM (Session #2 is Sat -Feb 19)
Mon-Feb 14 Happy Valentine's Day!
Tues-Thurs Feb 15-17 Cabinet Meeting
Sat -Feb 19 Session #2 - LAY SPEAKING SCHOOL_
Christ UMC of College Station 8:30 AM ~ 4:00 PM
Mon-Feb 21 President's Day
*Fri-Sun-Feb 25-27 Mid-Winter Youth Retreat: Forest Glen Christian Camp in Huntsville
Lakeview Methodist Conference Center-Palestine

March

- *Fri-Sun-Mar 4-6' Mid-Winter Youth Retreat - Forest Glen Christian Camp' Huntsville
Tues-Thurs Mar 8-10 Cabinet Meeting
Wed-Mar 9 ASH WEDNESDAY
Thurs-Mar 17 St. Patrick's Day
Tues-Thurs ~ Mar 29-31 Cabinet Meeting



Dates mark with * have been added since the newsletter. Calendar also at: www.west-district.org. Meetings are at the West District Office in College Station, unless noted otherwise.



The West District Office
Of the United Methodist Church
526 University Drive East
Building C
College Station, TX 77840

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Return Service Requested



- ◆ Family members of Rev. Glynn Ferguson who passed away on November 15
- ◆ Rev. Jeff Stull (Marlin First & Cedar Springs) Debbie's dad on hospice care
- ◆ Rev. Kip Gilts (College Station: A&M) Dad, Art Gilts, had surgery and requests your prayers as he enters next phases of treatment
- ◆ Rev. Sandra Hall's (Navasota Circuit): mother
- ◆ Rev. John Woody's (Thorndale: Pleasant Retreat & Friendship) grandson
- ◆ Rev. Tim Edwards (Giddings:First & Paige) mother-in-law
- ◆ Rev. Judy Draper's mother, home from the hospital, and now in treatment
- ◆ Rev. Ferrel Little's wife, Nita had surgery and is in recuperating stage

**And we say "FAREWELL" and "BEST WISHES" to Rev. Danny Barrett
And we say "HELLO" and "WELCOME" to Rev. Richard A. Prather,
for Normangee: First & Flynn**

Happy New Year!