

2007 SWTX UMC Annual Conference, Corpus Christi

- **Uplifting spirit**

Bishop Joel Martinez set the tone for the 2007 Southwest Texas UMC Annual Conference with his congenial style. He helped move the proceedings along with a gentle, but focused, approach that affirmed everyone and still got the job done.

- **Sharing our faith stories**

This was the conference theme. It represents an approach to evangelism that almost anyone actually can do. Two stories stood out to Bill Cain, Northwest Hills lay leader.

The first was by Roberto Gomez, who leads the Rio Grande (Hispanic) Conference. His father was a Methodist preacher and decidedly anti-Catholic. Early in his career, Roberto Gomez was called upon to baptize a baby who was thought to be dying. The parents were simple Mexican Roman Catholics. He went to the hospital floor reluctantly. He gave several explanations why he should not do the baptism. The young mother looked him in the eye and said, "You are a man of God! Baptize my son." A lot of rigid theory went out the window as the young preacher comprehended his calling in a new way. He baptized the baby.

Kathryn Edwards, a retiring preacher, told about her mother changing her older brother Jim's diapers. She used safety pins then, and one was missing. Convinced the baby had swallowed it, the mother drove 9 miles to a clinic. She prayed to God, promising that if the baby lived, she would see that he became a minister. No pin was found, and the baby did live. When Kathryn was 20, her older brother died suddenly without having become a minister. He left a wife and son. Years later, after Kathryn—and her nephew—were ordained, she and her mother laughed as they remembered that God's time is different from ours, and that God collects 2-for-1 on promises made.

- **Election of delegates to 2008 General and Jurisdictional Conferences**

After numerous ballots lasting until 11:30 Friday night, we elected 24 clergy and lay delegates to the General (National) and Jurisdictional (Regional) Conferences. Walt Lengel, 18, from Northwest Hills, will be one of the Jurisdictional delegates who will help select our next bishop. For other delegates, see the following link:

www.umcswtx.org/news/witness/witHtm0608/swt/delegates4.html.

- **New church start efforts**

Bill Henderson awarded plaques to five churches that have helped sponsor new churches in the past year. A \$5,000,000 capital campaign will run through May 2008, to raise money for more new churches.

- **Statistical report – Attendance not down in past year**

David Seilheimer, Conference Treasurer, announced that average worship attendance in the Conference was up slightly in 2006 after many years of decline.

- **Vote to close 99-year-old black church in Kingsville**

This was painful, but the Trustees recommended closing Scott's Chapel Church in Kingsville. It has dwindled to a few members. A motion was made to give one more year to study possible remedies, but the delegates voted it down.

- **Apportionments increased by vote on floor to do more advertising**

The Council on Finance and Administration recommended a budget. A motion from the floor added \$150,000 to it for advertising. This will qualify for \$150,000 in matching money from the General Conference. Although it requires an increase in apportionments, the delegates passed the motion.

- **Visiting old friends like Ray Kiser, Chuck Crane, Veda White, Jim Mayfield**

It is always a pleasure to see them, and all are doing well.