

Best Practices for Developing New Leaders: Successful Programs and Resources for Annual Conferences to Use in Inviting, Training, and Retaining Young Adult Leaders

Introduction

In October 2007, representatives from 13 annual conferences met to discuss the importance of encouraging and developing youth and young adult leaders in The United Methodist Church. Representatives provided a list of the effective programs and ministries in their annual conferences that help to invite, support and encourage youth and young adult leadership development. Many of the programs that are highlighted here are for laypersons while some are to encourage young adult clergy. Following is a compilation of the programs that were described by those representatives.

The programs highlighted are sorted in two different ways. Part I provides an index of programs sorted by age group or educational status: youth, college age, seminarians, and young adult clergy. In Part II, the information is sorted by annual conference. The programs listed in the index in Part I are linked to the detailed descriptions provided by the annual conferences in Part II.

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Meeting Attendees

Please note: Information included from each annual conference is based on reports provided to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry from the contact persons listed below. For more details about a specific program, contact the person associated with a particular annual conference.

Annual Conference	Person attending and e-mail address
Baltimore-Washington	Malcolm Frazier (frazier10@comcast.net)
Central Pennsylvania	Jay Jones (wsumc1@atlanticbbn.net)
Florida	Cory Britt (cory.britt@gmail.com)
Holston	Grady Winegar (gradywinegar@holston.org)
Mississippi	Ginger Holland (gingerjholland@hotmail.com)
North Alabama	Amelia Sims (asims@northalabamaumc.org)
North Carolina	Regina Henderson (rhenderson@nccumc.org)
North Georgia	Glenn Ethridge (gethridge@ogumc.org)
Oklahoma	Jack Terrell-Wilkes (jtw@nicholshillsumc.org)
Texas	Carol Bruse (cbruse@txcumc.org)
Western North Carolina	Tim Moore (tim@wcuwesley.com)

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Part I – Age Related Programs

This section includes reports from 11 of the annual conferences represented at the Best Practices meeting. Annual conferences were asked to provide a description of the effective programs and ministries in their annual conference that help to invite, support and encourage youth and young adults in leadership development. Many of these programs are for laypersons while some are to encourage young adult clergy.

Details for the ministries and programs that contribute to leadership development are highlighted and sorted by age related programs or appropriate stages of ministry and leadership development (youth, college age, seminarians, young adult clergy). In order to find details about the programs listed in Part I, please refer to Part II where reports are sorted by annual conferences.

Part II – Annual Conference Reports

This section includes reports from 11 of the annual conferences represented at the October Best Practices meeting. Annual conferences were asked to provide a description of the effective programs and ministries in their annual conference that help to invite, support and encourage youth and young adults in leadership development. Many of these programs are for laypersons while some are to encourage young adult clergy.

Details for the ministries and programs that contribute to leadership development are highlighted and sorted by annual conference. Within each annual conference programs are sorted as they relate to youth, college age, seminarians and young adult clergy.

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Part I – Age Related Programs

Youth Programs and Ministries

Details for each of these ministries and programs can be found in the section of this report that highlights each annual conference.

Annual Conference Youth Retreats or Events

Annual conferences that host regular youth retreats to work with youth in discerning their calls to ordained or lay ministry include:

- *Baltimore-Washington* - Discernment Retreat
- *Holston* – Resurrection Retreat, Discovery Weekend
- *Mississippi* – Call to Ministry event
- *North Carolina* – Kaleidoscope, Global Vision, Appalachian Trail Hike, Youth Annual Conference Session, Rally Day, Summer Breakaway, and Pilgrimage
- *North Georgia* – Annual Call to Ministry retreat, Camping Ministries, Annual Spiritual Life Retreats
- *Western North Carolina* – Choose to Share Christ annual event

Summer Programs and Internships

- *Central Pennsylvania* – God’s Call Counselor – works at summer camps
- *North Alabama* – Dedicated staff person to work with the Summer Camps Director in order to emphasize conversations and programming about vocational ministry
- *Oklahoma* - Conference Camps Curriculum is used to encourage each of the conference camps to support a call to ministry movement in the life of each camp.

Confirmation and Call to Ministry Sundays

- *Central Pennsylvania* – Offers a workshop on ministry at the annual Bishop’s Confirmation Rally.
- *Holston* – Encourages local churches to offer Youth Sundays whenever possible.
- *North Carolina* – Annual Confirmation Celebration is a half-day event welcoming confirmation youth and their adult leaders from churches across the Conference.
- *Oklahoma* – Encourages churches to celebrate a Call to Ministry Sunday.
- *Texas* – The annual conference will provide a DVD resource for local churches to use for call to ministry Sundays.

Other Resources and Programming

- *Florida* – Youth leaders are sent intentional invitations to attend annual conference.
- *Holston* – Clergy, District Superintendents and conference leaders are encouraged to mentor youth, talk with them about ministry and encourage youth to consider ordained ministry whenever possible. Conference provides publications that support a call to ordained ministry.
- *North Carolina* – Offers Lay Speaker Training for high school youth.
- *Oklahoma* – Supports a Ministerial Recruitment position to coordinate and encourage programs that focus on vocational discernment and hearing a call to ordained ministry.

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Southeast Jurisdiction Youth Events

Harambee – event for African-American youth for spiritual formation and nurture. The event is traditionally held on a historically-black United Methodist-related campus for five (5) days in late June/early July. Harambee, a Swahili word that means “let’s all pull together,” brings together over 400 youth across the jurisdiction to share their gifts and offer praise to God through singing, mission activities, and small groups. In addition, workshops are offered to youth and youth workers on real-life topics facing the African-American community and the Black church today. Since its inception, many youth have attributed Harambee to their acceptance into vocational ministry.

United Methodist Theological School Youth Events

Several United Methodist Theological Schools host annual summer events to encourage youth as they discern how God is calling them to live. These events vary in time and focus on issues such as leadership development, vocational discernment, and following God’s call in your life. A complete description of each program, with information on application and registration is provided at the links listed below.

School	Program and Link
Candler School of Theology	Youth Theological Initiative Summer Academy http://yti.emory.edu
Duke Divinity School	Duke Youth Academy for Christian Formation http://www.divinity.duke.edu/programs/youth/
Perkins School of Theology	Perkins Youth School of Theology http://www.smu.edu/Theology/PYST/default.html
Saint Paul School of Theology	Youtheology http://www.youtheology.com/index.php

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College Age

Details for each of these ministries and programs can be found in the section of this report that highlights each annual conference.

Campus Ministry

- *Baltimore-Washington* – Many different campuses and Wesley Foundations are engaged with leadership development and vocational discernment.
- *Florida* – Campus ministries help students understand God’s call in their lives.
- *Holston* – Has three United Methodist-related colleges with campus ministers and five Wesley Foundations. Several ordinands were students in these ministries.
- *Mississippi* – Encourages college students to participate in Wesley Foundations or campus ministry. Intentionality is given to appointing campus ministers who are truly called to this ministry and to help train them to become effective ministers.
- *North Alabama* – Works with area colleges to create a culture of call. Remains in contact with religion majors/minors or students who have expressed a call to ministry
- *North Carolina* – Has a strong commitment to campus ministry.
- *Oklahoma* – Annual conference representatives visit students at various Wesley Foundations to talk with students about ministry, the candidacy process, vocational discernment, etc.
- *Western North Carolina* – There are five United Methodist-related colleges and universities and nine United Methodist-related campus ministries within the annual conference. Each of these ministries has traditionally nurtured students for ministry and seminary.

Annual Conference College Student Retreats or Events

Annual conferences that host regular retreats to work with college students in discerning their calls to ordained or lay ministry include:

- *Central Pennsylvania* – God’s Call Event
- *Florida* – Leadership Training Event
- *Holston* – Jubilation
- *Mississippi* – Call to Ministry Retreat
- *North Carolina* – State-wide Exploration Event (with Western North Carolina)
- *North Georgia* – Annual Call to Ministry Retreat
- *Oklahoma* – Host local and regional Exploration Events
- *Texas* – Prospective Candidate Gatherings, Candidacy Summit
- *Western North Carolina* – State-wide Exploration Event (with North Carolina)

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Exploration Events – sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry

The following annual conferences provide financial support, as well as assistance in other ways, to assist students in attending the national Exploration events.

Exploration is a three day event for high school seniors – young adults age 24 who are considering a call to ordained ministry as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church. The next national Exploration event is scheduled for Nov. 13-15, 2009 in Dallas, Texas.

- *Baltimore-Washington*
- *Central Pennsylvania*
- *Mississippi*
- *North Carolina*
- *North Georgia*
- *Oklahoma*
- *Texas*
- *Western North Carolina*

Internships or Short-Term Projects

- *Central Pennsylvania* – Ministry Interns who work in local churches
- *Holston* – College age camp counselors for summer camps
- *Oklahoma* – Project Transformation (summer intern program)
- *Texas* – College Pastoral Intern Project (summer intern program)

Financial Assistance for Students Considering Ordained Ministry

- *Central Pennsylvania* – Student Aid fund
- *Oklahoma* – Ministerial formation Local Church Matching Grant

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Seminarians

Details for each of these ministries and programs can be found in the section of this report that highlights each annual conference.

Financial Assistance

- *Central Pennsylvania* – Student Aid Fund; Developing an additional scholarship for young adult candidates
- *Mississippi* – Hannah Project (financial assistance combined with other support)
- *North Carolina* – Ministerial Education Fund scholarships (\$3,000/student); encourages local churches to offer financial support for their students who are attending seminary
- *Oklahoma* – “Adopt a Seminary Student” program (financial assistance combined with other support); Conference Scholarship Endowment
- *Texas* – Seminary Cost Reimbursement Grants

Annual Conferences that have an intentional program for visiting seminary students at their campuses during the school year

Note: Many annual conferences have programs where annual conference representatives visit seminarians during the school year. These annual conferences have found that visiting students annually on their campuses is an effective way for keeping in touch with students and reaching out to support students during their years in school. The list here represents annual conferences who submitted information for this report. Read the detailed reports under each annual conference to see how each annual conference structures their visits or seminary relationships.

- *Florida*
- *North Alabama*
- *Oklahoma*
- *Texas*
- *Western North Carolina*

Other types of support

- *Oklahoma* – Seminary Student Lunch at Annual Conference
- *Texas* – Junior Ambassador Program

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Young Adult Clergy

Details for each of these ministries and programs can be found in the section of this report that highlights each annual conference.

Support during Probationary Period

Annual Conferences are becoming more and more intentional about supporting probationary members during the probationary period. Many more annual conferences than those represented here have a formal and intentional Probationary Program. However, for purposes of this report, the following annual conferences have highlighted a formal program for supporting probationary members:

- *North Alabama* – Residency in Ministry Program
- *North Carolina* – Residence in Ordained Ministry (RIOM) Program; Clergy Covenant Groups; Clergy Counseling Center
- *North Georgia* – Probationary Covenant Group

Other Support for Young Adult Clergy

- *Baltimore-Washington* – Development of annual conference leadership through conference committees and planning for special events
- *Florida* – Young Adult Clergy Summit
- *Oklahoma* – xFactor – Facilitate relationships, discussion and recruitment of young people. Events are geared toward clergy younger than age 45.
- *Texas* – Young Clergy Gatherings and Annual Retreat

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Part II – Annual Conference Reports

Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference (www.bwcumc.org)

Contact: Malcolm Frazier (frazier10@comcast.net)

Bishop: John R. Schol

Youth

Hosts regular youth retreats to assist youth in discerning a call to ministry.

College Age

Campus Ministry – University of Maryland, College Park

The Wesley Foundation has a peer ministry program to encourage students to name their “God-given gifts” and others’ gifts. Naming of gifts and call of all kinds is included in Bible studies, worship, on mission projects, and in prayer. A culture of naming gifts in the community has been established. Retreats focused on discerning God’s call and vocational discernment group sessions based on Parker Palmer’s book *Let Your Life Speak* are also offered.

Campus Ministry – Frostburg University, Frostburg, MD

This campus ministry encourages the development of young clergy by:

- Encouraging students to use their gifts, by preaching, speaking, leading small groups, retreats, or Bible studies, or serving as a peer minister.
- Showing deep personal interest in students.
- Maintaining enthusiasm about the gift of call.
- Emphasizing service.
- Highlighting the uniqueness of the United Methodist system.
- Stressing the importance of Scripture
- Encouraging students to engage in spiritual disciplines.

Campus Ministry - Howard University, Wesley Foundation, Washington, D.C.

This Wesley Foundation has a peer ministry program that includes leadership development in peer counseling, evangelism, outreach and recruitment, administration, and theological reflection. Students serve as chapel assistants. Orientation and reflection for student mission trips includes vocational discernment.

At the campus’ pre-ministry club, and students participate in Ministry Sundays. The guest preacher emphasizes calling and vocation in the sermon. Afterwards there is an informal gathering for students and the preacher where questions of call and vocation are explored. A Bible study on Alex Joyner’s *Restless Hearts* will be taught. Training occurs regularly on how to lead a Bible study and engage in personal devotions.

Campus Ministry – American University, Washington, D.C.

Regular Bible studies on vocational discernment are taught.

Young Adult Clergy

Young clergy are instrumental in developing activities within the life of the annual conference. Young adult teams developed the last bishop’s day apart, and worship for an African American clergy meeting. Young adult teams will develop the worship for annual conference. This fall there will be a Young Adult Summit at the Conference Center. Benefits of using young adult teams include: developing support among young adults, creative action and learning by young adults, and the development of leadership skills.

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Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference (www.cpcumc.org)

Contact: Jay Jones (wsumc1@atlanticbbn.net)

Bishop: Jane Stewart Allen Middleton

Youth

God's Call Counselor

A ministerial candidate works for the summer with youth-age camps in four of the conference summer camps. The intent is to share the message of God's call in the lives of all of God's people within the context of the camping program. Many current clergy have had their call affirmed or received through experiences at summer camp.

Workshops Offered

We offer a workshop on a call to ministry at each year's *Confirmation Rally* sponsored by the bishop's office, at *The Great Escape*, an annual conference-wide youth rally, and at *IMPACT*, a summer camping event reaching for youth from the annual conference

College Age

God's Call Event

Five years ago we hosted the first *God's Call Event*. This event is for older youth and young adults who are sensing a call to ministry. This event is hosted each year during the Christmas/New Year's semester break. This event focuses on God's call in many different ways: through speakers, worship, small group discussions, and multiple workshops. Seminary representatives attend to answer any questions the participants may have. A highlight of the event is the Saturday worship service led by the bishop. The fruits of this event continue to be realized within the annual conference.

National Exploration Event

We sponsor several youth/young adults to attend. Some of the adults from our annual conference also attend as chaperones and sponsors.

Ministry Interns

Each academic year, we hire two ministry interns (college-age students who are considering a call to ordained ministry). They are matched with a "teaching church" and a pastoral mentor who will utilize their skills at the congregation. The intern's pay is an educational voucher, payable to their college/university.

Student Aid Fund

This fund is for certified candidates for ordained ministry from our annual conference. This assistance is a grant that is payable with years of service within our annual conference upon completion of seminary. In addition, we are working on *another scholarship* named in memory/honor of a clergy member for whom the issue of recruiting and retaining young adult clergy was important.

Young Adult Clergy

Student Aid Fund – see above

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Florida Annual Conference (www.flumc.org)

Contact: Cory Britt (cory.britt@gmail.com)

Bishop: Timothy W. Whitaker

Youth

Intentional invitations are sent to youth who show potential for leadership in the annual conference.

College Age

Campus ministries are important throughout Florida. Intentional invitations are sent to college students to attend annual conference.

Leadership Training Event

1. We are planning an event where we will invite 18 – 25 year olds to meet with different significant leaders in ministry in our conference. This event will emphasize:
 - The character of a leader
 - Possibilities for ministry
 - Building a culture and understanding of calling
2. Our desire is also to express value in those who come and value in the ministries we lead. We hope to do this through good speakers, great environment/venue, fun (we are near Disney after all), accommodations, and in how we extend invitations.
3. We have also addressed the fact that just changing the façade of what we do is pointless and that there are deep systemic issues at work and that for real transformation to happen this cannot simply be a program we add but a way in which we practice ministry as a whole, which has no boundaries on age.

Seminarians

The Florida Annual Conference regularly visits seminarians in school.

Young Adult Clergy

We held a young clergy summit last spring hosted by the conference, attended by the Bishop and open to young clergy and those working in areas of recruitment and discipleship of young adults. The intent was to talk openly about the decrease of new disciples and people feeling called to serve in ministry in the UMC.

The result of the above was to put together a task force to address how we can

1. Recruit those called ministry
2. Nurture those coming into the ministry
3. Retain those who already serve, again through nurture and support

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Holston Annual Conference (www.holston.org)
Contact: Grady Winegar (gradywinegar@holston.org)
Bishop: James E. Swanson, Sr.

Youth

Resurrection Youth Event

We have an outstanding youth ministry with several decades of Annual Youth Assemblies that include a vocational component. *Resurrection*, a youth weekend in Gatlinburg, TN has been held for more than 20 years. This event attracts 10 – 12,000 youth. There is an opportunity here for youth to indicate an interest in ministry as a vocation. Their names are shared with district superintendents, youth directors, and pastors. They are later invited to *Discovery*, a weekend to explore their call, an introduction to seminaries, etc.

Annual Conference Culture of Call

Several candidates develop an interest in ordained ministry from their participation in local church short-term mission projects. We encourage pastors and district superintendents to speak personally to youth about considering the possibility that God might be seeking them to use their gifts and graces in ordained ministry. We emphasize in conference publications a culture of call in which opportunities for service are presented to youth at every level of the connection. We have a very active Conference Youth Council and a paid Conference Youth Director. These youth and two others from each district attend Annual Conference every year. Several of these conference youth officers have emerged as candidates. We encourage Youth Sundays in local churches that give youth a chance to lead in worship.

College Age

Campus Ministry

We have three United Methodist-related colleges that have campus ministers who focus on helping students explore their calls. We have five Wesley Foundation Directors on secular campuses who likewise focus on helping students discern their vocational callings. Several candidates and ordinands have emerged from campus ministry.

Jubilation

We have a growing group of 300+ young adults who attend *Jubilation*, a weekend for graduates of *Resurrection* and other young adults who are invited to a workshop on understanding the call and the procedures for entering candidacy.

Camping Ministries

There are four conference sponsored camps that have a history of employing college age young adults as trained counselors. Many of these counselors (and some campers) have emerged as candidates for ordination.

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Mississippi Annual Conference (www.mississippi-umc.org)

Contact: Ginger Holland (gingerjholland@hotmail.com)

Bishop: Hope Morgan Ward

Youth and College Age

Our former Bishop Robert C. Morgan had a deep concern for inviting youth to consider ordained ministry and a deep love for young people. It was originally his idea to sponsor a "call to ministry" event in our conference.

The first event was an overnight retreat in the mid part of the state. The focus of the event was to invite participants to consider their call, and how they were called to vocational ministry. They were able to explore many different areas of ministry. They were informed about the steps to enter candidacy or further education and met various seminary representatives. The board of ordained ministry budget financed the expenses.

We brought in a well known worship leader in order to make worship the central focus of the event. The keynote speaker focused on Scriptures pertaining to the call of various people in the Bible and encouraged participants to consider their call. The bishop participated and spoke at the event. A panel of different types of ministers briefly spoke about their ministry. Workshops were held to promote more in depth discussion. Free time was scheduled for fellowship, prayer, etc. Youth and college students were also encouraged to participate in a Wesley Foundation or campus ministry.

This first event in 1987 was so successful that we have basically followed a similar format over the years - usually every other year. When the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry began sponsoring national Exploration events, our board of ministry included money in its budget to make sure all young people were able to attend. The Conference Staff Person coordinates transportation. Several student participants are now very effective pastors in our conference.

College Age

Campus Ministry

Our conference supports campus ministry because we understand how important it is not to lose youth as they transition into college. Intentionality is given to appoint competent and "called" people at Wesley Foundations as directors. That has made the most difference. Nearly all our seminary students were coming out of Wesley Foundations. Wesley Foundation Directors invite seminary recruiters to visit their campus ministries for annual visits. It is that personal attention that makes the difference.

Seminarians

Hannah Project

The Hannah Project began several years ago to encourage local churches to sponsor a seminary student through financial giving, prayer, and inviting them to visit and speak at their church. There are several other criteria and once they are met, the church is recognized at the annual conference session. This project is named after Hannah in the Old Testament who so desired a child that she cried out to God and vowed that she would offer him for service in the temple. Hannah was heard and blessed and offered Samuel who became a great prophet.

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North Alabama Annual Conference (www.northalabamaumc.org)

Contact: Amelia Sims (asims@northalabamaumc.org)

Bishop: William H. Willimon

Youth

Our Residency in Ministry Director and Director of Summer Camp work together to provide help and contacts for youth who express a call during senior high camp.

College Age

Campus Ministry

We are developing ideas with representatives from our two United Methodist-related institutions in Alabama to create a culture of call in churches as well as working with the students who are religion majors/minors and other students called to ministry.

Ordination Service Altar Call

The bishop offers an altar call at the ordination and commissioning service for those who feel called to ministry. Many of those who come forward are youth and young adults. We have pastoral volunteers who are available at this time to meet with each person. Volunteers are trained to pray with the person, get their contact information, introduce them to their district superintendent and be there for general guidance.

Seminarians

We have established a team that is working on a “best practices” for recruitment at five nearby seminaries. Young adult clergy serve on this planning team.

Young Adult Clergy

The creation of the Residency in Ministry program supports effective leadership among young adult clergy. Having a fulltime clergyperson as director is evidence that our board of ordained ministry is serious about supporting young adult clergy by providing a more effective method of guidance and mentoring during the probationary period. In addition, part of the job responsibility for the director is recruitment. Although the focus of this right now is with seminary students, the vision of this program and our conference priorities are challenging us to reach out to high school and college students.

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North Carolina Annual Conference (www.nccumc.org)

Contact: Regina Henderson (rhenderson@nccumc.org)

Bishop: Alfred Wesley Gwinn, Jr.

Youth

Kaleidoscope - For Youth in Grades 6-8

This weekend retreat provides youth encouragement in faith and growth in spiritual life. The retreat includes worship, fun and small groups to explore prayer, Scripture and other aspects to spiritual life.

Global Vision – Washington, DC/New York City – For Youth in Grades 10-12

Global Vision is a trip to New York City and Washington, D.C. with study seminars at the Church Center and the General Board of Church and Society. The purpose is to further knowledge of world affairs in a Christian context so as to allow youth to respond as they feel called by God.

Appalachian Trail Hike – For Youth Completing Grades 9-12

The Hike is an experience of spiritual journey. This backpacking hike along a section of the Appalachian Trail engages physical, mental, emotional and spiritual life factors. Reflection, worship and sharing are a significant part of the journey.

ACS (Annual Conf. Session for Youth) – For Youth Completing Grades 9-12

ACS is an experience for youth to meet God through themselves and others. In this week-long event dedicated to the formal establishment of opinions on relevant issues, youth also attend to the business of the North Carolina Conference UMYF. Each day features legislative affairs sessions, spiritual growth groups, interest groups, free time with options for choir and recreation, worship services and an evening program. The week concludes with a communion service. Elections of officers are held along with district meetings to select district representatives to Conference youth committees.

Rally Day

Conference Youth Rally Day is an afternoon gathering of youth groups from local churches across the Conference. The Rally is a time for fellowship in faith, worship in praise of God, and a celebration of the place and role of youth in the life of the church.

Summer Breakaway – For Youth Completing Grades 6-12

This is a week for youth to devote themselves to Christ through Christian community and establish a strong relationship with God. Each day features a morning assembly, spiritual growth groups for spiritual growth, movie groups to create and produce movies for a film festival at the end of the week, free time and recreation, worship services and an evening program. The week concludes with a communion service.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a weekend event for UMYF and youth groups in which youth and adult advisors are challenged to a new or deeper faith in Jesus Christ. The event focuses on evangelism, faith sharing and discipleship for youth and adult advisors to youth ministry.

Confirmation Celebration

This half-day event welcomes confirmation youth and adult leaders from the conference. Conference representatives, several area confirmation classes and youth lead the event. The bishop brings greetings. Participants consider and experience

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the covenant vows of prayers, presence, gifts and service. A service project is offered on-site and the event concludes with Holy Communion.

Youth Lay Speaker Training

This is for high school students and is led by a lay pastor in the conference. There is no cost to the participants for the training. About 20 youth participate each year.

College Age

Conference Exploration Event

The North Carolina and Western North Carolina annual conferences offer a joint conference-wide Exploration for high school seniors and college students. This weekend event includes worship, workshops and small groups that focus on the biblical understanding of calling and vocational ministry. The North Carolina Conference has a strong commitment to campus ministry and works closely with college students in their vocational exploration.

Seminarians

Financial Assistance

The conference offers an average support of \$3,000/seminary student through the Ministerial Education Fund. Many seminarians attend Duke Divinity School that specifically offers scholarships to young adults. Duke has the youngest student seminarian population and many graduates serve in North Carolina. Additionally, Duke Divinity School encourages local congregations to offer financial support for seminarians and some churches offer financial scholarships to congregants attending seminary.

Young Adult Clergy

All probationary members participate in a Residency in Ordained Ministry (RIOM) group regardless of age or service years. The bishop and her/his cabinet are intentional, prayerful, and strategic in appointing young adult clergy to places where they are challenged and mentored by senior pastors or neighboring pastors. Many young adult clergy mention isolation and disconnect in a rural, southern community steeped in family ties. The challenges of being single and serving in a rural setting or being the youngest among an older-member congregation can be spiritually and emotionally overwhelming.

Young adult elders and deacons are encouraged, as are all clergy, to find or establish a clergy covenant group that supports each other with prayers, presence, wisdom, and a shoulder on which to lean. In addition, the conference has established a full-time clergy counseling center which aids all clergy with individual, family and pastoral counseling. The counseling center is supported financially by the annual conference and is strictly confidential. Clergy have utilized these services regularly.

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North Georgia Annual Conference (www.ngumc.org)

Contact: Glenn Ethridge (gethridge@ogumc.org)

Bishop: Lindsey Davis

Youth

Annual Conference Exploration Event

The annual conference hosts two retreats – one for college students and youth and another for adults age 21 and older who believe they may be called to ordained ministry. The two retreats are different in feel including music and discussion topics. We would to create a third retreat for persons aged 21-25, but have not made that decision as of this time. Publicity includes announcements at annual conference sessions, direct mailings to people in conference youth ministries and participants in summer camp, Wesley Foundations, youth directors, and clergy.

Camping Ministries

Summer youth camp participants and leaders, and youth delegates to annual conference are among the best prospects for candidacy. The Conference Youth Ministries coordinator, a paid staff person of the annual conference, is an invaluable resource in identifying persons who are experiencing some sense of calling.

Spiritual Life Retreats

The Conference Connectional Ministries Youth department provides leadership training through multiple annual spiritual life retreats. Funding is through the Conference Connectional Ministries budget, providing another access point to funds in the conference budget. The Recruitment Committee is funded through the board of ordained ministry and Ministerial Education Funds.

North Georgia has hosted these retreats for about 6 years. If the program has been successful, results should soon be evident as high school students transition to college and seminary. North Georgia does not allow candidates to apply for probationary status until completion of seminary. Were the conference to allow candidates to apply earlier, support systems would be in place sooner.

College Age

Annual Conference Exploration Event – see above description

National Exploration Event

In addition to annual conference events, the conference encourages participation in the National Exploration Events. The conference chartered a bus to Exploration 2006 and offered scholarships for all who wanted to participate. The conference asked each local church to contribute \$50 toward the cost of the youth participating. The intent was to notify the local church and to encourage the local church to be involved in the young person's life. With the request for funds came an invitation for pastors to engage in conversations about call with the Exploration participants.

Young Adult Clergy

The conference support system for retention of young adults in ministry is primarily the Probationary Covenant Group. The format is consistent with other conferences. Probationers meet monthly with two mentors chosen by the board of ordained ministry. Requirements include participation, reading, ministry experience reports, and practice questions from the exam for Full Connection interviews. There are 9 sessions/year - three plenary sessions and six small group experiences. The content involves spiritual formation, mission service, and pastoral skill building.

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Oklahoma Annual Conference (www.okumc.org)

Contact: Jack Terrell-Wilkes (jt看@nicholshillsumc.org)

Bishop: Robert E. Hayes, Jr.

Youth

Conference Camps Curriculum

We encourage each conference camp to support a call to ministry movement in the life and development of each camp.

Call to Ministry Sunday

Churches are encouraged to build a worship service around the call to the ordained ministry of deacons and elders. Invite youth and other members to consider the ordained ministry as a career.

Ministerial Recruiter

Select or designate a Ministerial Recruiter who shares information about opportunities in Christian ministry with students. Materials are available through the conference office. The Chairperson of Vocational Recruitment makes resources available to youth in Confirmation class and others considering a call to ministry.

College Age

Wesley Foundation Visits

We provide lunch, a presentation and answers to questions students might have about ordained ministry. This also gives campus ministries the chance to invite students to a free lunch.

Local, Regional and National Exploration Events

Send or sponsor a student to the Oklahoma Exploration of Ministry event or the National Exploration event. Sponsorship includes the registration fee and transportation cost to the conference. We have supported local Exploration events since 1999 and in 2005 hosted a jurisdictional Exploration event. In 2008 we will try something new with the development of a mission trip/exploration type event.

Project Transformation

This ministry connects young energy and leadership to the Oklahoma Conference churches, institutions and urban congregations. Students serve summer internships in a literacy program at urban churches. This program provides the opportunity for college students to explore the diversity of lay and ordained ministry.

Ministerial Formation Local Church Matching Grant

Our newest effort provides financial support for activities designed to help communities nurture the principles and practices that support vocational discernment in general and the call to ordained ministry in particular. This grant enables potential ministry candidates to experience full time Christian service. Since Christian formation is relationship focused, a one-on-one mentor relationship between a clergy person and the intern is the central facet of this program.

Seminarians

Adopt a seminary student

This effort supports seminary students financially, through scholarship aid, and emotionally, through relationships with people and local congregations.

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Conference Scholarship Endowment

Churches receive an offering for the Conference Scholarship Endowment and submit it to the conference office. The goal is to collect an amount equal to the reported average worship attendance. The Conference Seminary Scholarship Endowment supports seminary students. Giving to this endowment is one way of showing that we honor clergy and care about the future of the Oklahoma United Methodist Church.

Seminary Visits

Each year a cabinet member and young adult clergy person visit students at their own school. This allows for one on one contact and for cabinet members to recruit potential students. This is the primary way of maintaining our database and keeping track of students' progress.

Seminary Student Lunch at Annual Conference

Seminary students are invited and encouraged to be connected to the annual conference. It is a time for one on one interaction and to answer students' questions about ministry or the candidacy process.

Young Adult Clergy

xFactor

This effort focuses on younger clergy, age 45ish and under. The primary goal is to facilitate relationship building and discussion, as well as encouragement for clergy to talk with young people in their churches about ministry. One element arising out of this effort is to connect probationary members with retired clergy.

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Texas Annual Conference (www.txcumc.org)

Contact: Carol Bruse (cbruse@txcumc.org)

Bishop: Janice Riggle Huie

Note: The Texas Annual Conference has developed the Center for Clergy Excellence. Among other responsibilities, the Center oversees the recruitment and development of young adult clergy leaders. The use of the word “Center” refers to this department in the annual conference structure.

Youth

Emphasizing Christian Vocation in Congregations

The Center is creating a resource CD to help local congregations emphasize Christian vocation. The CD includes resources to help congregations celebrate “Calling Sundays”, Christian vocation curriculum for all ages, suggestions for helping young people consider Christian vocation, and resources to help clergy and lay members identify and encourage gifted youth to consider pastoral ministry.

College Age

Prospective Candidate Gatherings

The Center facilitates gatherings for current and prospective clergy, including the national *Exploration 2009 event*. Young candidates will attend *Exploration 2009*, and then decide if it might be appropriate to plan similar gatherings for the Texas area. Gatherings will be age appropriate and include worship, small groups, and information about candidacy and seminaries.

Candidacy Summit

Once or twice each year, all entering candidates for licensed and ordained ministry will begin the six month process towards certification together at an overnight conference summit. At this summit candidates receive information about the district and conference candidacy process, take psychological exams and interest and personality inventories, are placed in mentoring groups, and are matched with a group candidacy mentor. It is hoped that this summit will create a collaborative community where understanding is achieved, relationships are built, callings are shared, and honest discernment is fostered.

College Pastoral Intern Project

The Center offers a summer intern project for students interested in pastoral ministry. In 2007 ten interns served at six local churches for ten weeks. In 2008 12 interns will serve in pairs in at least six local churches for ten weeks. Interns receive a \$3,000 stipend and meet with one another at orientation, midway, and reflection retreat gatherings. Host churches provide housing (if needed), mentoring, a lay encouragement committee, and a full range of exposure to all facets of ordained ministry. Interns who participate in the College Pastoral Intern Project attend seminary or college with local church experience, and with relationships which will sustain them throughout their careers in ministry.

Seminarians

Seminary Cost Reimbursement Grants

Most of today’s young seminary graduates are commissioned for ministry and begin the three year probationary period with \$20,000 - \$60,000 in debt while the average starting salary is about \$38,000. In order to encourage young, gifted, diverse students to pursue seminary in preparation for pastoral ministry, and to encourage them to consider serving in the Texas Annual Conference, we are seeking outside funds for these grants.

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Young clergy entering the Texas Annual Conference are invited to apply for grants to reimburse seminary costs. Funds are awarded to the most promising applicants. Awards will be equal to the amount paid by each recipient for seminary tuition and fees. One fifth of the total funds awarded each recipient are paid following the completion of each year of service in the Texas Annual Conference for five years, such that each recipient's seminary costs could be reimbursed by their sixth year of conference service.

Seminary Campus Visits

The Center's Directors and Cabinet members visit candidates in seminaries across the country, accompanied by "Ambassadors", young pastors who have recently completed seminary at the schools where they return to visit. Ambassadors are trained to understand the candidacy process and the advantages the Texas Annual Conference offers young candidates. During campus visits, Ambassadors make presentations, offer resources, answer questions, and build relationships with candidates and other interested students. In between visits, Ambassadors stay in contact with candidates and potential candidates to build relationships, to advise, and to continue to be available to answer questions.

Junior Ambassadors

At each seminary where young candidates study, Junior Ambassadors encourage students and keep them connected to the Texas Annual Conference during seminary.

Junior Ambassadors are candidates for ordained ministry who are invited to become liaisons between seminary students interested in the Texas Annual Conference and the Center for one year. They are encouraged to contact students at their seminaries, host lunch gatherings with seminary students to build relationships and share common concerns, share students' concerns with the Center, and suggest new ways the Conference can connect with students.

Young Adult Clergy

Young Clergy Gatherings and Annual Retreat

In order to form a welcoming community for incoming young clergy, and in order to support, connect, and nurture our current young clergy, the Center for Clergy Excellence hosts events for clergy age forty and under. In 2006, the Center hosted young clergy and guest Rev. Craig Gilliam at an organizational breakfast during the annual clergy Gathering at Lakeview. In 2007, the Center hosted a fellowship lunch and event to share common concerns with Cabinet members, a spring retreat, and a group health listening post. In 2008, the Center will host a forum with the bishop after the Elders' Retreat. There will also be an annual young clergy retreat. Center Directors advocate for young clergy at the conference level and encourage young clergy representation and participation in conference decisions and ministries.

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Western North Carolina (www.wnccumc.org)

Contact: Tim Moore (tim@wcuwesley.com)

Bishop: J. Lawrence McCleskey

Youth

Choose to Share Christ Event

Since 1991, the conference has sponsored an event called Choose to Share Christ that teaches youth how to lead in the church and share their faith with others. This event is an opportunity to direct young persons toward vocational opportunities within the church.

College Age

The Western North Carolina Conference has five United Methodist colleges and universities and nine United Methodist-related campus ministries within the conference. Each of the campus ministries and college ministries has traditionally nurtured students for ministry and seminary. Several have pre-seminary groups, many of the campus ministers act as candidacy mentors, and several employ recently graduates as interns between college and seminary. In addition, several of the colleges either currently are or intend to institute programs specifically to recruit and prepare students for church vocation. Finally, many of the campus ministries send students to national Exploration events and jurisdictional Exploration events.

The North Carolina and Western North Carolina annual conferences offer a joint conference-wide Exploration for high school seniors and college students. This weekend event includes worship, workshops and small groups that focus on the biblical understanding of calling and vocational ministry.

Seminarians

There are several United Methodist approved seminaries within the annual conference. These seminaries help to bring students to our area and we have found that many stay while those who are from the area are encouraged to remain for their pastoral careers. Also, two United Methodist seminaries are in close proximity to the conference, which encourages seminary students to stay and serve in the conference. Additionally, one of those seminaries, Duke University, supplies students every summer to serve in local congregations within the conference. Many of the students choose to affiliate with the conference as a result of these summer experiences. Finally, several conference and jurisdictional camps in the area employ college students in the summer. Many of these students continue to serve in the conference.

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