

Sally Vonner

Conference Coordinator
North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church
PO Box 866128
Plano TX 75075-6128
972-526-5000/800-969-8201; vonner@ntcumc.org

2009 Site Recap

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Ferris Area Shalom Celebrates Juneteenth

By Vickie Washington-Nance

Members of Ferris Area Shalom joined with community groups and Ferris residents for the annual Juneteenth Celebration on Saturday, June 20th at the Ferris Intermediate School. Churches, community groups and individuals rode in a parade from the site of the old Dunbar School to the celebration. Over 200 people came together to celebrate and commemorate June 19th, popularly known as



Juneteenth, the date in 1865 when enslaved African Americans were informed of the Emancipation Proclamation that had been signed two years earlier in January, 1863.

Comprised primarily of members of First United Methodist Church- Ferris and God's Kingdom UMC, the Ferris Area Shalom meets monthly and comes



Some of the Ferris Area Shalom leaders (l-r front) Edward Jones, Wayne Jones, Gearlie Carter, Loyce Gardner, (back) Matt Craig, Rev. James Sneed, Steve McIver, Site Coordinator.

together throughout the year for activities and programming to benefit the entire Ferris community.

At the Juneteenth Celebration, the first annual Shalom Scholarship was awarded to Connie Gray and Alexis Gonzales 2009 graduates of Ferris High School. The scholarships are just one of many ways in which the Ferris Area Shalom reaches out to the community. In addition to its participation in the Juneteenth celebration, the Ferris Area Shalom sponsors and participates



in activities throughout the year including the annual MLK Day celebration, booths at Brickfest and Pioneer Day, community Thanksgiving Meal, gleaning sweet potatoes and distributing them at God's Kingdom, an annual meal for senior citizens held at FUMC-Ferris with meals delivered to those who are homebound, and on the 4th of July, United States Flags are placed throughout the community. For the last year Ferris Area Shalom has financially assisted cancer patients with funds to travel to Houston's M.D. Anderson Hospital for treatment.

A very committed group, Ferris Area Shalom is made up of members from God's Kingdom, First Ferris, and Ferris Baptist Church. Mrs. Gearlie Carter, long time member speaks for many in the group with her observation, "I like the point that we are helping someone. It is better to give, the reason I love Shalom is the giving." Meetings are held the 2nd Saturday of the month at God's Kingdom, and all are invited.

Breaking Bread and Barriers

On a cold, rainy Tuesday night the doors of the church were open. Open to church members, guests and strangers. If peering from the outside in one would catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. A rainbow of people with a rainbow of languages, experiences, and physical and spiritual journeys gathered together to pray and worship the God of all.

Over 50 people weathered the storm to share in singing, praying and Holy Communion as witnesses to the commandments of God to love God above all else and love your neighbor as yourself at the second Breaking Bread and Barriers event on December 1 at the Pleasant Mound-Urban Park UMC in southeast Dallas. Pleasant Mound-Urban Park along with Umphress Road UMC comprise the Southeast Dallas Cooperative Parish, a Shalom site. The Parish oversees the Justice For Our Neighbors ministry which provides legal consultation to immigrants.

The evening began with singing, scripture reading in six languages, a testimony by Rev. Kalaba Chali (Lovers Lane UMC) followed by Holy Communion, prayers and a candlelight closing. The evening concluded with a fellowship meal in which participants brought food representative of their cultures. It was a festive evening of worship, fellowship, laughter, chattering and making new friends. Rev. Chali said, "as Christians, we should understand hospitality, welcoming the other.....after all, Jesus was an illegal (undocumented) immigrant." Chali said his journey as an immigrant "has been a blessing by offering insight into the vastness of God through encounters with different people with different experiences."



(l-r, Rev. Kalaba Chali and Rev. Edwin Zarate)

Breaking Bread and Barriers was sponsored by the Dallas Justice for Our Neighbors, the North Texas Conference United Methodist Women and the Welcoming the Immigrant Network (WIN). The plan is for these gatherings of food and fellowship to continue on a quarterly basis in other locations throughout North Texas. The goal is to break down walls and barriers that prevent the church from offering hospitality to all people, particularly immigrants. If your church is interested in hosting a Breaking Bread and Barriers event, contact Sally Vonner at 972-526-5000/800-969-8201 or email vonner@ntcumc.org or Amy Spaur at 214-381-0901 or email amyspaur@hotmail.com. You may view a video from the first Breaking Bread and Barriers event, August 11, at www.ourchurchvideos.com/75075/ntcumc.

2009 Site Recap Continued . . .

North Town Community of Shalom (Denison)

North Town Shalom (Haven Chapel UMC) is continuing focus on children and youth in their community. In February their **Seniors With A Purpose** program took more than 80 high school students from Sherman and Denison by buses to Prairie View A&M in Prairie View, Texas for the University's annual Pantherland Day. In March, Bishop Earl Bledsoe visited the newly renovated Shalom House. A Celebration of Health event was held in May in partnership with the local Community Center. Screenings, demonstrations, wellness information and door prizes along with a healthy salad lunch was shared by over 50 participants.

North Town became the first NTC Shalom Site to host a Drew University intern for the summer. Michelle Bodle was a great asset helping to make stronger connections between the community and the Shalom site. Her efforts proved fruitful for the Annual Back to School Festival. Approximately 170 students registered for school supplies, school physicals, dental exams, participated in various recreational activities and ate lots of good food. Thanks to Michelle's help the community partners for this event increased over previous years.

Lastly, North Town hosted their annual Community Wide Vacation Bible School at Hopewell Baptist Church. The week-long event averaged 70 children each evening. We welcome Rev. Cheryl Jones as the new pastor of Haven



Denison Seniors at Prairie View A&M

Shalom Sites Retaoled

Over 40 leaders from the eight NTC Shalom sites participated in Shalom training over three weekends in September, November and December. After review of the principles and strategies of Shalom, sites were retooled and equipped to enhance their Shalom ministries accordingly. Training concluded with sites having drafts of written Shalom Plans. The Plans identify the priorities of sites over the next year. Training was facilitated by Sally Vonner, NTC Conference Shalom Coordinator and Rev. Sylvesta Shed, pastor of Glen Oaks UMC and longtime Shalom advocate.

Participants engaged in a meet your neighbor exercise.



Peniel Community of Shalom (Greenville)

The Peniel Community of Shalom, a ministry of Salem-Kinser UMC, was engaged in several activities throughout 2009. These include creating safe spaces in the community for youth by providing facilities for Boy and Girl Scouts' leader training, scouting events, donating basketballs to youth and helping clean-up a local park which is now declared a drug-free zone and offers a soccer field. Peniel also donated coats and heaters during the winter to over 100 families and fans in the summer. They hosted a Neighborhood Night Out providing food and entertainment for over 50 community residents. Participants included the Mayor of Greenville and representatives from the Police, Fire and Sheriff's Departments.

Lastly, the Peniel Shalom continued their efforts in coordinating home repairs for persons in need, supporting families (women and children) in shelters, 12-step groups and meeting needs as they arise. One such need is providing memorial services for indigent families. Services provided for five families in 2009.

Eastside Community of Shalom (Wichita Falls)

The Eastside Community of Shalom struggled to get grounding in 2009. They hosted two events: a youth leadership training for over 25 youth and a summer work camp, hosting a youth group to renovate homes of senior citizens in their community. Effective December 1, the Eastside Shalom became an inactive site until reorganization.

Community UMC Shalom

Community UMC Shalom (formerly Lambuth UMC site) went through transition as part of a church merger. They managed to continue their crime watch efforts in the new community. Community also initiated a community-based food bank working in partnership with Crossroads Community Services. The food bank serves residents in the 75216 zip code. They also worked very hard on starting an after-school program but logistics with the elementary school could not be resolved.

Camp Wisdom UMC Shalom

Camp Wisdom UMC Shalom hosted a summer program for children with over 30 participants each week.

Highland Hills UMC Shalom

Highland Hills UMC Shalom continued their focus on health and wellness by providing screenings in conjunction with Methodist Hospital throughout the year. Additionally they continue their outreach to Dallas homeless and community senior citizens.

Shalom End of Year Celebration

The annual Shalom End of Year Celebration was held December 5 at the NTC Ministry Center in Plano. The celebration kicked off with the last Shalom training session on Public Relations which provided tools for sites to "tell their stories." The training was a great lead for the rest of the Celebration time as sites shared their vision, mission and goals from their draft Shalom Plans. The Celebration concluded with a Commissioning Service followed by lunch.



Sally Vonner, Shalom Conference Coordinator discussing Asset-Based Community Development