

## Theme and Logo

The 2007 session of the North Texas Annual Conference will merge two prominent emphases into its theme and logo. This year marks the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley, the architect of Methodism's musical moorings; further, our overarching mission to "make disciples for Jesus Christ" continues to call and challenge us to faithful response in loving witness in the world. The marriage of these two themes is captured, or "caught," we might say, in a phrase from one of Wesley's hymns, "See How Great a Flame Aspires," in which appears the phrase, "that all might catch the flame." The hymn as a whole, and the phrase in particular, express a vision and prayer for the world to know, to taste and see, the goodness of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

As a means of expressing the essence of these converging ideas, Bonnie Vincent, lay member of the Annual Conference from Walnut Hill UMC, Dallas, was commissioned to create a visual. Bonnie's artwork has appeared at the conference level in the past, most notably in the visual representation of "Down to the River," the theme of the 2005 Annual Conference. Her work will also appear at the jurisdictional level, as she has been commissioned to provide the logo for the 2008 Jurisdictional Conference, scheduled for July of that year in Dallas.

Bonnie's artwork achieves a blend of form and color to express the dynamic movement inherent in Wesley's words, "that all might catch the flame." The message is first conveyed through the subterranean ribbon which moves from left to right across the bottom of the visual. Immediately the viewer notices what appear to be random musical notations embossed on the ribbon; these are, in fact, notes from the first music line of the hymn from which the theme phrase is taken. The ribbon crosses an open Bible before sweeping dramatically upward, then back across the image of the globe, finally igniting into flame atop the world's surface.

The flame's colors were carefully chosen to convey warmth, light, healing, and grace. In such a way, this eruption is set as a stark counterpoint to the conflagrations of war, conflict, violence, and climatological threat which characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The flame offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ brings not death, but life; not violence, but peace; not apocalypse, but *shalom*. The theme phrase has been calligraphed by Bonnie's own hand, setting off the piece in signature fashion. The viewer will notice its elegant scripting along the right-hand frame of the painting as a reflection of the dynamic merging of form and color which characterize the body of the work.

Paul Escamilla, chair of the Annual Conference Worship Design Team, which commissioned the piece, reflects on Bonnie's artwork in this way, "What Bonnie has achieved with the paintbrush and pen is a representation of the power of music to rise up off the page and move into both heart and world, an effect which is achieved magnificently in Wesley's monumental musical legacy. Any who love music, as well as those grounded in the Wesleyan tradition, know the transporting power of sacred music to win the mind and warm the heart. The flame is in the gospel, and its telling; but it is also in that ribbon of music which takes heart and mind by storm, and transforms the worshiper/disciple of Jesus Christ from singer to sentinel. In the example of this hymn, and universally, when it comes to the power of sacred singing, the music does what it sings about: bring the flame from the page of Scripture (and songbook) into the full-bodied dimensions of life and witness."

The logo will appear in every venue of worship, as well as on bulletin covers and other materials.

