



UMNS photos by John Gordon

Tom Hutson's garage in Plano, Texas, is full of mattresses that will be delivered to 3- and 4-year-olds whose families are living in poverty.

Bed Start ministry helps kids get much-needed sleep

PLANO, Texas – If getting a good night's sleep helps children learn better, Tom Hutson is helping hundreds of students take home better report cards.

Hutson is a volunteer for Custer Road United Methodist Church's Head Start Bed Start ministry. The program gives new and gently used beds to families of children in the local Head Start program. "There's a big need," Hutson explains. "A lot of these families, the kids are sleeping with the parents or they don't have beds."

Hutson spends about 15 hours a week picking up and delivering beds donated by church members or purchased at cost from a furniture store. On a typical day, his garage is filled with mattresses, box springs and headboards. The program started five years ago. Since then, about 500 beds have been given to area families.

Mission volunteer numbers show 'incredible' growth

NEW YORK (UMNS) — The number of participants in United Methodist Volunteers in Mission climbed

from just under 20,000 in 1992 to almost 111,000 in 2006, with several peaks and valleys across the 15-year period. "This is an incredible growth of voluntary mission service," said the Rev. Clinton Rabb, an executive with the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. "The growth and the appeal come from the grassroots nature of the volunteer movement." The figures specifically chart the expansion of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, a ministry involving mostly congregation-based teams engaged in short-term construction, medical and educational service around the world. The total number of mission volunteers registered by Global Ministries in 2006 was 112,486, including several programs in addition to Volunteers in Mission.

Leadership group fosters churchwide 'culture of call'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – One year after a startling report showed significantly fewer young people seeking to become clergy in The United Methodist Church, a new advisory team has mapped out a strategy to create a churchwide "culture of call." The National Leadership Development Advisory Team is expediting information about the ordination process to district superintendents, boards of ordained ministry, candidacy mentors, pastor/staff parish relations committees and district committees. A Web site at www.explorecalling.org is being updated with materials for both young people exploring a call to ordained ministry and those who work with them. The team and its work are being organized by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Saying the church as a whole has begun to recognize its leadership crisis, several team members cited a 2006 report revealing that only 4.69 percent of elders in The United Methodist Church are under age 35. The report was developed by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington and its director, the Rev. Lovett Weems. The center is working on a follow-up study.

Church provides 'lids for kids' to cancer ward

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – Bald heads are the norm around the cancer ward at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, where chemotherapy typically robs young patients of both their hair and their youthful energy. But brightly colored hats in all styles are a welcome special delivery that brings smiles to children fighting the ravages of the disease. Through the "Lids for Kids" ministry of Good Shepherd United Methodist Church in nearby Hendersonville, a group of United Methodist Men collected nearly 1,000 hats this year as part of its annual service project. "This is faith in action. ... It's putting feet on prayers," says the Rev. Allen Weller, senior pastor of the congregation.

Bishops focus on poverty in Africa and its causes

SPRINGMAID BEACH, S.C. (UMNS) — What is poverty, and why is the word used to describe Africa? The questions were posed during an April 29-May 4 meeting of the Holistic Strategy on Africa committee, which is made up of African and U.S. church leaders seeking to strengthen ministries of The United Methodist Church in Africa. Africa is rich in diversity and resources, but a common thread throughout the continent is degrees of poverty that adversely affect its people and their national governments. "The resources are not controlled by Africa," said Bishop Joseph Humper of Sierra Leone. "Poverty itself needs to be redefined because Africa is not poor," said Bishop David Yemba of the Central Congo Annual Conference. "Africans have their fields, sheep, food." ■



UMNS photo by Vicki Brown

The Rev. Carol Bruse (left) discusses new resources to encourage young people to enter the ministry. The church's new leadership development advisory team includes (from left) Laura Sisson, the Rev. Karen Koons, the Rev. Sara Baron and the Rev. Herb Coleman.