

CONNECTION

Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe
North Texas Conference

Well, after four months and a few days, we have finished our itineration of the six districts in the North Texas Conference.



Bishop Bledsoe

A special thanks to the district superintendents, the district lay leaders, and the many pastors, congregations, and institutions that enabled us to get a broader view of the great ministries taking place throughout the Conference. Leslie and I are eternally grateful for the wonderful hospitality we experienced during our visits.

What did I learn? North Texas is a good conference with many ministries that are meeting the needs, not only of its congregations, but also those persons in communities beyond the local church. I observed great partnerships between clergy and laity; witnessed ministries reaching new communities of faith; visited ministries meeting the needs of the poor; and saw ministries working to improve the overall health of the community.

We are now getting ready for what will be my first annual conference. I can hardly wait! God is doing great work among us, and I look forward to our time of holy conferencing.

Peace With Justice Sunday, June 7

'Peace With Justice Luncheon'

Tuesday, June 9, 12:00 pm

**Luncheon Speaker,
Bee Moorehead**

Executive Director, Texas Impact

**"Faith, Justice and the
81st Texas Legislature"**

Luncheon Tickets \$15

Plano Centre • Northbrook Room I and II

NTC Annual Conference offers new opportunities

Expect some new and exciting scheduling changes and opportunities for dialogue as the North Texas Conference gathers for its 143rd session June 7-9. The Sunday through Tuesday conference will be one day shorter than in the past. Adjustments have been made to put the spotlight on emerging ministries and conference business, and less on routine reports.

Conference agencies have prepared written reports for the Annual Conference Workbook.

The 2009 Annual Conference theme is: "Let Every Soul be Jesus' Guest." Artist Donna Aldridge of Greenland Hills UMC, Dallas, designed the logo as an iconic presentation of the theme, featuring symbols of the Christian faith.

The first conference events will be the Clergy Session, scheduled for 3:30 p.m. Sunday at First UMC, Plano, and the Laity Session, scheduled for 3:30 p.m. at St. Andrew UMC, Plano. The Laity Session will be followed by the Laity Dinner.

Opening worship will be at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, hosted by First UMC, Richardson. Texas Conference Bishop Janice Riggle Huie will be preacher for the evening. The service will include the service of Holy Communion and commissioning of Project Transformation and Connect to the Kingdom (C2K) Interns. The choir from St. Luke "Community" UMC, Dallas, and soloists will offer a variety of musical styles. Following the service, the Episcopal Committee will host a reception honoring Bishop and Mrs. W. Earl Bledsoe. Offering for the worship will go to support NTC camping scholarships.

Holy Communion will be offered in the Northbrook I and II Rooms at 8:00 a.m. on Monday and Tuesday.

Business sessions will get underway on Monday morning, with opening prayer and song set at 8:30 a.m. Following the organization of the Conference, Bishop Bledsoe will present the Episcopal Address.



Another highlight of the morning will be the report on the Africa University Initiative by co-chairpersons Lisa Tichenor, Highland Park UMC, and Rev. Tyrone Gordon, St. Luke "Community" UMC. Africa University vice president and development director Dr. James Salley will be present to receive the final payment of the \$1 million gift, half to fund the new AU health center now under construction, and half to fund scholarships for students in the health sciences.

Lay Leader Richard Hearne will present the Laity Address following the morning break, and the Young Persons' Address will kick off the afternoon session. A very important order of the day will be introduction of the Strategic Planning Team, followed by small group discussions in which lay and clergy members will have the opportunity to share hopes, dreams and ideas, which team members will take seriously as they consider their work. On Tuesday afternoon, the annual conference will vote on whether to commit to the strategic planning process, and if the vote is affirmative, the 2010 annual conference will make a final decision on the plan developed by the team.

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Religion journalist **John Lovelace** received the **Norvell Slater Communications Award** conferred by the **Dallas Ft. Worth Chapter, Religion Communicators Council**, in April.

Northaven UMC, Dallas is offering an interfaith theological series "**The Contemplative Life: Many Faiths- Shared Wisdom**" from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on June 8 **Greek Orthodox - Basil Peter Xeros, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, July 13 Islamic - Yusuf Kavakci, Imam, Islamic Association of North Texas, Aug. 10 Jewish - Geoffrey Dennis, Rabbi, Congregation Kol Ami, Sept. 14 Lutheran - Ginger Georgulas, Oct. 1, Catholic - Father Don Fischer, St. Joseph Catholic Church**, For more information visit www.northaven.org, or call 214-363-2479.

Dallas Bethlehem Center (DBC), the **United Methodist**-related agency serving the children of South Dallas, moved closer to the dream of a new professionally equipped kitchen following the highly successful March 30 "**Remembrance Event and Easter Luncheon**" at **University Park UMC, Dallas**. Through generous donations and sales, the event raised some \$12,000 toward the total goal of \$35,000

First UMC, Richardson, worship and music director **Mike Lightfoot**, participated in a rigorous marathon in South Africa on May 24. Before he left for Africa, the church staff joined him in running/walking 5,600 miles. All funds collected provide water for people who have never had fresh water.

The **NTC** launched the Denominational "**Rethink Church**" emphasis on May 6 with an event at **Oak Cliff UMC** that drew some 250 participants from the primarily Hispanic neighborhood and visitors from other **NTC** churches. The event also launched the **Life Stages Ministries Sustainability Initiative**, symbolized by two giveaway rain barrels. For information on "**Rethink Church**," contact the **NTC Communications Office**, e-mail: labarr@ntcumc.org, and for information on the **Sustainability Initiative**, e-mail: **Rev. Andy Stoker**, stoker@ntcumc.org.

On April 5, senior pastor, **Rev. Kory Knott** of **Argyle UMC** opened the doors of the church's new 18,012 sq. ft. building to begin a new day for the 115-year old church located in the rapidly growing area southwest of Denton County. **Rev. John Thornburg, The Ministry of Congregational Singing**, was commissioned to write a hymn for the opening service. Title of the hymn is "**Seek, grow and serve**," based on images from **Jesus' Sermon on the Mount** in **Matthew's Gospel** and the fact that the former church building was located on one of the highest points in Denton County..

Perkins School of Theology, SMU, will host a symposium May 15 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., in Perkins Chapel in honor of **Dean Harold W. Attridge** of **Yale Divinity School** on the occasion of his receiving the degree of **Doctor of Divinity honoris causa** from **SMU** in May Commencement ceremonies.

"**In the Serenity Garden**," an original hymn written by **Chapel Hill UMC** member **Barbara McConnell**, was performed for the first time on April 19 by **Katy Seiley**, describing a walk in the church's new prayer labyrinth, "**Serenity Garden**," completed for **50th anniversary Jubilee celebration**, July 12.

Merry Mobile Methodist (MMM), the **NTC Older Adult Ministries**, held its semi-annual christian fellowship "**Spring Rally**," April 13 to 16 at **Whispering Pines Resort** near Tyler with 55 campers. First place Bean Bag Baseball winners for most home runs were **Charles Brinkley, Second Baptist Church, Kingwood**, and **Nancy Woolbright, First UMC, Forney**. The "**Fall Rally**" is scheduled for Oct. 12-15. For more information, please call **Roy Hallmark, 214-331-6779**.

Community UMC, the new congregation formed by the merger of **Lambuth** and **Crest-Moore-King UMCs** is making its presence known in the Dallas South District and **NTC**. with a host of activities that witness to the new life of the church, which has its focus on a "brand new future," to quote **Rev. Zan Holmes**, pastor emeritus of **St. Luke "Community" UMC**.

The Service or Ordination and Commissioning will begin at 7:00 p.m. Monday at Custer Road UMC. Bishop Bledsoe will be preacher for the evening. Pre-service music will be by the Highland Park UMC, Dallas, youth choir. Service music will be provided by the First UMC, Richardson, chancel choir. The offering will be divided between a global mission: Africa University, and a conference mission, Christ's Foundry Fellowship.

Tuesday sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m. and include the report of the Board of Ordained Ministry. The morning will include sharing by the newly ordained clergy and the afternoon sharing by retiring clergy.

The 11:00 a.m. Memorial Service will be the Order of the Day, with Dallas-Denton District Superintendent **Rev. Larry George** preaching. The lives of clergy and spouses who died since the last annual conference will be celebrated during the service. Candlelight, bells, flowers and images of the departed will highlight this special service of remembrance.

Another important order of business on Tuesday will be the consideration of proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United Methodist Church. There are 32 amendments approved by the 2008 General Conference that must be approved by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the annual conferences voting. The vote will be by written ballot. The options are a "yes" or "no" vote. The final vote count will be reported to the Council of Bishops, which has the responsibility for canvassing the totals and moving toward implementation of the amendments that pass.

Once again, the Sunday opening service and Monday service of ordination and commissioning will be live streamed. Viewers will be able to access the services by logging on to www.ntcumc.org and following the prompts on the home page.

DVDs of worship services, the presentations of the newly ordained and retirees, and other special events will be available for purchase. Check at the **NTC Communications** booth, or order online at www.ntcumc.org. **NTC Communications** is working with Christian Copyright Solutions to secure proper copyright permission for all webstream and DVD distribution.

For more information and background on the 2009 Annual Conference sessions, log on to www.ntcumc.org