

# CONNECTION

## Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe  
North Texas Conference

I hope by now both clergy and laity in the church will have made it a priority to attend one of the several “listening conferences” planned throughout the districts for the purpose of providing feedback and input on the proposed Strategic Plan for the North Texas Conference.



**Bishop Bledsoe**

I do believe this is the time for the North Texas Conference to lead in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We are not making changes to address financial scarcities. We are not making changes because of incompetence or inadequate leadership capabilities. North Texas is a good Conference and has continued to grow over the years and to do some creative and exciting ministries that make a difference in the world.

The plan is not an indictment of the past or the present. I believe we are at a critical time in the life of the church in which we can position ourselves to respond to the upcoming growth projected within the bounds of the annual conference. It is truly a mission field ready and ripe for the harvest.

While I know some of the changes will be a challenge for some, they are changes that need to be made if we are to be faithful to the cause of Christ in our various communities. I know that God will truly bless, guide, and keep us as we move toward a new way of relating and doing ministry. I covet your prayers and your support.

### Confirmation Celebration 2010

Sunday, Feb. 7 • 2 pm to 5 pm

First UMC, Denton

Registration form online

[www.ntcumc.org](http://www.ntcumc.org) • [stoker@ntcumc.org](mailto:stoker@ntcumc.org)

## NTC apportionment payout

What a difference a year makes! The North Texas Conference Treasurer's office proudly announces that the 2009 apportionment payout is 97.3 percent, up from 93 percent in 2009. Total apportionments paid were \$12,011,682, and the total for all benevolent causes was \$13,317,402.

NTC Director of Administration/Treasurer Dr. Marvin Guier indicated that out of 306 churches with apportionments, 279 paid 100 percent, and 46 churches made second mile contributions to help others.

“What a magnificent indication of the faithfulness of North Texas United Methodists! In a year of continuing struggle for many, our 2009 total apportionment payout of 97.3 percent is simply outstanding. Our sincere congratulations and heartfelt thanks to all who made it happen,” Dr. Guier declared.

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe echoed Dr. Guier's excitement as he praised

churches and district superintendents for this outstanding effort. “To pay out at this high level during a time when economic uncertainty still creates uncertainty and concern in our churches reflects the kind of commitment to our responsibilities and the United Methodist Connection that stands out as an example to all,” he said.



Each year Rev. David Yunker, left, Kemp Charge, puts \$100 in his wallet for emergencies and considers it a blessing if he doesn't need it, so he gives it to mission. When the call came from Dallas South District Superintendent Rev. Milton Gutierrez for pastors and churches to contribute to second mile giving, Rev. Yunker knew what he needed to do, hand it to his delighted superintendent.

## Choosing VBS material in creative ways

By Katie Shockley  
Manager, Cokesbury, Dallas

As we start a new year, many pastors and children's ministers are thinking of Vacation Bible School. I want to offer some suggestions for choosing a VBS curriculum and for using that curriculum in new and creative ways.

When choosing a VBS curriculum, consider some of these questions. Does the curriculum appeal to and accommodate various learning styles? For instance, does the curriculum offer media, music, or hands-on crafts? Does the curriculum offer online support for the VBS director or organizer? Is there a take-home

component that helps children continue learning after VBS? Does the take-home component engage the entire family?

Another way to choose VBS curriculum is to involve a few children in the process. For instance, some churches purchase multiple kits, lay out the curriculum pieces on a table, and let a small group of children peruse the pieces. The church may then choose the curriculum that the children naturally gravitate toward. Also, pay attention to the flexibility of the curriculum. Some pieces adapt to either rotational or multiple day models.

I have heard many stories around NTC of creative ways churches use their

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## Choosing VBS...

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VBS resources. Last year, one church, which has mostly Caucasian members, utilized an African American-focused curriculum because most of the church's children are African American. This curriculum also appealed to neighbors in their community.

For several years, another church in our conference has offered VBS to underprivileged children in the community. Church members provide transportation and area restaurants provide breakfast and lunch. Both of these examples highlight the evangelistic nature of VBS.

Many churches in our conference assist each other through the sharing of materials. Some churches do not have the budget to purchase a complete VBS kit. Those churches borrow used classroom decorations from other churches to complete their staging. Cokesbury, Dallas is happy to connect these churches together through our VBS Sharing Program – simply let us know if your church is in need of assistance from another church or if your church can offer assistance to another. This is one way that VBS contributes to the connectional nature of the church.

VBS can also be an intergenerational ministry. Several kits include guides and resources for engaging the entire family.

All are invited to attend two special previews at the Dallas store. On Feb. 6, Joyce Brown, the Cokesbury Curriculum Representative for Texas, will be in the store from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to answer questions and help customers gather their VBS resources. At 1:00, Joyce will lead a short hands-on preview of Cokesbury's 2009 VBS materials – “Galactic Blast: A Cosmic Adventure Praising God!” and “Praise Party: Worshiping God with Head, Heart, Hands, Feet, and SOUL!”

On Feb. 13, Sharon Tierney, a Group Publishing representative, will be in the store from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. At 1:00 p.m., Sharon will offer a preview of “High Seas Expedition: Exploring the Mighty Love of God.” At 2:00 p.m., Sharon will offer a preview of “EGYPT: Joseph's Journey from Prison to Palace.”

Cokesbury's annual VBS Showcase is underway now. Visit [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com) or come by the Dallas store to view the VBS 2010 catalog, which includes a side-by-side comparison of eight different VBS offerings.

For more information, please call 972-964-5777 or e-mail: [kshockley@cokesbury.com](mailto:kshockley@cokesbury.com).

### ADVANCE 277 Haiti Emergency Response Fund

Please send UMCOR  
contributions to:

Treasurer  
North Texas Conference  
P.O. Box 866128  
Plano, TX 75086

Memo: “Fund #277 Haiti”

Rev. Adam Hamilton, UM Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS, has been named recipient of the 2010 Perkins Distinguished Alumnus Award by the Alumni/ae Council of Perkins School of Theology, SMU. The Award will be presented to Rev. Hamilton during Ministers Week at Perkins, at the 6:30 p.m. Feb. 2 dinner in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center.

The 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement will feature Rev. James M. Lawson, chair of the National Advisory Council of the American Civil Liberties Union, at St. Luke “Community” UMC, Dallas, Sunday sermons on Jan. 31, and a keynote address at The Black Academy of Arts and Letters on Feb. 1 at 7:30 p.m. For tickets, please call 214-823-7793.

“Theology, the Basics,” study for all NTC laity and clergy is scheduled March 5-6 at Wesley UMC, Wichita Falls, facilitated by Rev. Fred L. Durham, Jr. The registration deadline is Feb. 22. Class fee is \$35. For more information, please call John Barham, 972-564-2157, e-mail: [jbconsults@suddenlink.net](mailto:jbconsults@suddenlink.net).

Congratulations to New Beginnings Christian Fellowship which was launched as an NTC congregation on Jan. 10. The weekly services are 10 a.m. Sunday at Homestead Funeral Home, 2951 S. Beltline Rd., Grand Prairie.

2010 Amigos Days home repair work will take place April 16, 17, 23 and 24. The organizational meeting and home selection is Feb. 11 at Walnut Hill UMC, Dallas. The goal is to do repairs on 25 homes. Amigos leaders will help match up the job with the size and skills of the crew. Please contact coordinator Ann Meyer, 214-683-5409 or e-mail [amigoscoordinator@ntcumc.org](mailto:amigoscoordinator@ntcumc.org) for more information.

Suncreek UMC, Allen, announces Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe will be the featured speaker for the ninth annual Palmer Studies in the Faith Lecture Series on Feb. 21-22. The lectures are open to all and clergy are invited to be guests at the Clergy Luncheon and Lecture Feb. 22 at 11:30 a.m. in Palmer Hall at no charge. To register for the luncheon and lecture, e-mail: [office@suncreekumc.org](mailto:office@suncreekumc.org) or call the church office, 972-390-1695.

Perkins School of Theology, SMU, will host Dr. Ronald C. White, Jr., author of “A. Lincoln: A Biography,” for the inaugural Public Life/Private Faith Lecture and luncheon Feb. 12. Dr. White's book is a bestseller and was the main selection of The History Book Club. For more information, or to request symposium parking, call Amanda Barbour, 214-768-3688 or e-mail: [abarbour@smu.edu](mailto:abarbour@smu.edu).

The Cornerstone Congregation of Highland Park UMC, Dallas, is establishing a new worshiping community and church campus at the former Munger Place UMC in East Dallas. Highland Park, which has helped start some 30 new churches in the NTC, is launching a satellite congregation for the next generation of Christian believers.

The Senior Adult Ministries group of First UMC, Richardson, is sponsoring a Senior Festival on Feb. 6, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Visit website: [www.fumcr.com/pages/Senior\\_Adults\\_Winterfest](http://www.fumcr.com/pages/Senior_Adults_Winterfest), or call Rev. Fred Treviño, 972-235-8385 for details.

United  
Methodist  
Women

### FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

School of Christian Mission • July 27 - 28 • First UMC, Plano  
Weekend Cooperative Mission Event • July 23 • Austin College

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe and his wife, Leslie, will be team teaching the Mission Study, “Joy to the World.”