

CONNECTION

Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe
North Texas Conference

Well, I made it back from the Congo! I'm returning somewhat different than when I first traveled there. I came back with a new sense of purpose and mission to help alleviate the suffering in our world.



Bishop Bledsoe

Many of the experiences that I encountered confirmed that God appoints us to the right place at the right time to make a difference in the lives of others. That is what I experienced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The people there had precious little, but were very gracious. Their hearts and minds were filled with joy over their relationship with Jesus Christ and the church. There was energy and excitement in the hospitality shown to us and in their worship of God. They, like many of us, have to make tough choices each and every day.

The difference is that their choices often involve life and death issues. And, I believe their future is somehow wrapped up in our future.

I'm so thankful for a church that is clear about its mission and is beginning to wrap its mind around the four areas of focus:

Developing Christian principled leaders,

Creating new places for new people,

Ministry with the poor,

Eradicating the killer diseases around the globe.

On this trip, the issues which came to light for me were the ones involved in eradicating the killer diseases around the world, i.e. global health.

We are just beginning this work, and

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Wesley-Rankin honors former leader

It was a joyous—and occasionally, tearful—homecoming for Wilke, who now serves as publisher of Upper Room Ministries and an associate general secretary of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship.

When Wilke began her career in church ministry at Wesley-Rankin in 1986, she was 22 years old. During her 14-year tenure in that position, Wilke spearheaded a \$650,000 capital campaign that led to the transformation of an aging building into a two-story, 8,000 square foot structure.

She left Wesley-Rankin to serve the North Texas Conference as urban strategist for four years. In 1997 Wilke and the late Rev. Leighton Farrell, who was serving as superintendent of the Dallas South District, conceived and launched a ministry called Project Transformation (PT), an initiative that has grown over the years to serve thousands of children through inner city ministry.



From left, Wesley-Rankin Community Center Executive Director Kathy Stutesman and Director of Outreach Maria Pintor present the 2010 Hattie Rankin Moore Leadership Award to former executive director Sarah Wilke.

After receiving the Master of Business Administration degree from Southern Methodist University, Wilke was named Chief Executive Officer of UMR Communications, a national communications ministry that includes the United Methodist Reporter. In that position she led the efforts to upgrade and add new products and restore financial stability to the historic Dallas-based ministry.

In July 2009, Wilke was named to the Nashville-based Upper Room position. She oversees an operation known around the world for its publication of the Upper Room, a daily devotional guide with a 2.2 million global circulation. She supervises a staff of 81 and is bringing her unique talents and energy to the task of helping the once print-based ministry be relevant in an increasingly digital future.

Perkins, SMU, offers summer Certification

Perkins School of Theology, SMU, will offer the following courses June 14–24:

- Christian Education and Music Certification (UM studies with Perkins faculty) and advanced track church music summer school, June 14–24.

- Music Certification and Advanced Track scores study and conducting with Pam Elrod and Spiritual Formation with Paula D'Arcy, June 14–19.

Registration closes May 17. For details and online registration, visit the Perkins public programs website at www.smu.edu/perkins/publicprograms or call 214-768-2251.

Certification is available to laypersons, ordained deacons and elders, and diaconal ministers who meet the standards set by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church. Complete standards and requirements are available from the Board's Section of Deacons and Diaconal Ministries.

INFORMAtion:

DISTRICT CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

*Dallas Northeast District

May 16, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
First UMC, Frisco

Sherman-McKinney District

May 16, 3:00 p.m.
Lakeway UMC, Pottsboro

Wichita Falls District

May 16, 3:00 p.m.
First UMC, Bowie

Paris-Sulphur Springs District

May 23, 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
First UMC, Sulphur Springs

Dallas-Denton District

May 23, 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Argyle UMC, Argyle

Dallas South District

May 23, 3:00 p.m.
Kessler Park UMC, Dallas

* There will be a reception honoring DNE District Superintendent Rev. Pat Beghtel-Mahle beginning at 3:30 p.m.

◆ Falls Chapel Fellowship, Wichita Falls, celebrated **Native American Sunday** by hosting Jacob Tsotigh, Jr. of Kiowa Tribe and his family for worship and a time of fellowship on April 18.

◆ The **April 30 "Skeeter Shoot"** sponsored by First UMC, Bridgeport, easily wins the prize as the most unique NTC zap malaria event as conference churches gear up to be leaders in the denomination-wide Imagine No Malaria (IMN) Campaign. The event raised \$4000.

◆ The NTC Volunteers in Mission Team will conduct the first **Deaf training session for VIM** on May 22 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas. The session will be open to persons who are Deaf, hard of hearing and those with sign language skills. Cost is \$25 for lunch and materials. To register, contact Dee Mathes at hands@pinncom.com, or call 479-430-6568 or 866-970-1953. For more information, contact Rev. Marji Bishir at 972-526-5000 or e-mail: bishir@ntcumc.org.

◆ **Methodist Children's Home, Waco**, is accepting applications for **president**, an executive position requiring extensive experience in child care environments and at-risk populations. Job descriptions are available by sending an e-mail to resume@mchwaco.org. Resumes will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. May 25.

◆ It is not too late to apply for the **2010 Robertson Awards for Excellence in Communications**, awarded every year at Annual Conference. Categories include newsletter/newspaper (print and digital), web site, photography and videography. Note there are divisions for different size churches, with detailed information on the www.ntcumc.org website. **Deadline is extended to May 20.** Select the link for 2010 Annual Conference on the home page to access information and entry forms for download. For more information or questions, e-mail Joan LaBarr, labarr@ntcumc.org or call 972-526-5036.

◆ The annual **NTC Communications Luncheon**, featuring announcement of the winners of the **2010 Robert L. (Bob) Robertson Awards for Excellence in Communications, will be noon June 7 in the Wichita Falls Multi-Purpose Events Center (MPEC)**. Dr. Joan La Barr, Communications Director from 2002-2010, will be luncheon speaker. She will be retiring late in the summer. Cost of the luncheon is \$17. Send checks to Jo Ann Hayes, NTC Ministry Center, P.O. Box 866128, Plano, TX 75086.

◆ **Christian Educator's Fellowship Luncheon** will be at **noon of June 7, Room 9 at Wichita Falls Multi-Purpose Events Center (MPEC)**. Cost of the luncheon is \$13. Contact Rev. Dick Wilson at dwilson@upumc.org or call 214-368-1435.

◆ **Perkins School of Theology Alumni/ae and Friends Luncheon** will be at **noon on June 8, Room 5 of Wichita Falls Multi-Purpose Events Center (MPEC)**. Cost of the luncheon is \$10. Contact Rev. Kevin Strempe at kevinstrempe@earthlink.net or call 972-977-1583.

◆ For only \$99 annually, **NTC churches can have a video presence on their websites** Drop by the Communications Booth for a **special opportunity to receive one of OCV's premier video services** and to learn about other special conference promotions, or contact Communications Director Dr. Joan G. LaBarr, 972-526-5036, e-mail: labarr@ntcumc.org.

◆ **Christ's Foundry Fellowship** will host a **"Methodist Fest" of music and fellowship** from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. May 15 on the grounds of Cochran Chapel UMC, Dallas.

First UMC, Mt. Vernon, sets stellar example

First UMC, Mt. Vernon, continues to set a high standard for meeting its connectational responsibilities in presenting a check to NTC Director of Administrator/Treasurer Dr. Marvin Guier paying the church's 2010 apportionments in full. Handing the check to Dr. Guier during the April 25 worship services were Lay Leader Cindy McDonald and Finance Vice Chair Mike Fisk.

Getting your...

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I believe those who get involved will find that it is a gift from God.

Within the next few weeks many of the delegates to District Conferences will be gathering together to go over the proposed legislation for the June 6-8 North Texas Annual Conference in Wichita Falls.

Will it be business as usual? Will we go back to our local ministry settings committed to serve Christ in whatever ways we are called to serve? Will we somehow sense that things are not the same and that the spirit of God is moving among us in a way that causes us to not only do things differently but to respond to one another differently in our connectational relationships?

My hope and prayer is that we not only recognize the winds of change, but that we will embrace them and allow the spirit of God to lead us to the places and the many people who have yet to experience God's grace and love. Perhaps, we might rediscover, as I did in the Congo, that we truly are one in Christ.



WillieBuild 2010
4th Annual WillieBuild
in memory of Willie Tichenor
May 8-22
Weekends • Wednesdays • Thursdays
Willie
Carpenters for Christ
Habitat for Humanity
www.WillieBuild.com