CONNECTION

## Getting your priorities straight

**By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe**
*North Texas Conference*

Are you a risk-taker? Risk-taking can be dangerous. In fact, risk-taking is defined as "that which endangers or threatens life." There are many situations in life where we see individuals and groups taking great risks.

**Bishop Bledsoe**

Are you a risk-taker for Christ? Our tendency in life as we grow older is to play it safe and not risk ourselves for fear of losing something. However, I believe the gift of the gospel is wrapped up in those willing to take risks, to become risk-takers for Jesus Christ.

I believe Jesus was a risk-taker. He could have played it safe, stayed with just the religious folks of the day – the people who looked like Him and acted like Him, but that is not what He did. He risked reputation, misunderstanding, popularity and even his own life, to bring forth the message of love and reconciliation with God. I'm convinced that in order for the gospel to move beyond the walls of the church, we must become risk-takers for Christ. I believe risk-takers for the kingdom of God are those who:

Pray . . . Something great happens when churches begin to take prayer seriously. In his book, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire,* Jim Cymbala says that the true spiritual strength of a church is found not in how many show up for worship on Sunday morning, but how many show up for a called prayer meeting. There is power and transformation when people began to pray. I dare you to become a risk-taker and pray.

Participate . . . Years ago, our oldest son wanted to go rappelling with a youth group in England. The thought of going was all he talked about. The day finally came, and they loaded on the bus to go up the mountain to rappel down. However, he fell asleep on the bus and never got a chance to participate. If you want to be a risk-taker for Christ, you must stay awake, show up when things happen, and participate.

Anticipate . . . Sometimes we want to keep everything just the way it's always been, because we fear change. Risk involves change; it involves not glorifying in what God has done in the past and now, but anticipating what God will do in the future, if we would open our lives up to God's spiritual power. I've witnessed lots of churches wanting to "freeze a moment" in time when God did some miraculous deed in the life of the congregation. They could not anticipate or refused to look ahead at what God would do next.

If you want to be a risk-taker for Christ, the good news is that there will be lots of opportunities in the future for each of us. I look forward to taking the risk with you.

## Clergy anticipate 'radical' retreat

Excitement is building as plans are announced for the 2008 NTC Clergy Retreat Oct. 13-15 (Monday to noon Wednesday) at Tanglewood Resort Hotel and Conference Center on Lake Texoma.

The annual retreat will offer a rich and diverse array of opportunities to grow in ministry skills and community as clergy enjoy fellowship with one another. A highlight will be the opportunity to meet and hear from Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, who will be in dialogue with participants on Monday evening and preach for Wednesday's closing worship service.

"Radical Hospitality" is theme for the retreat, which will include presentations by two experts from the business world, Fiona Macleoud Butts, Director of Talent Development for Southwest Airlines, and Jorge Luna, Director of Human Resources, Four Seasons Resort and Club in Las Colinas.

Dr. John C. Holbert, Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics at Perkins School of Theology, SMU, will lead a Bible study on Radical Hospitality in the Scriptures and Rev. Jim Ozier, NTC New Church Development Officer, will preach for the opening service.

Another retreat highlight will be music by the Connections Band, the now well-known group of NTC clergy which takes their inspiration from the likes of The Eagles, Dan Fogelberg, the Doobie Brothers and Elton John.

The retreat will begin with registration from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Monday., Oct 13. For more information on registration and scholarships, log on to **www.ntcumc.org.**

**Butts**

**Luna**

**Dr. Holbert**

**Rev. Ozier**

- ***Fiona Butts***, spouse of Rev. Wally Butts, Cornerstone UMC, Garland. A native of Glasgow, U.K, she moved to the US in 1997. She is a graduate of the University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde Business School.
- ***Jorge Luna*** has 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He worked for The Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa and Hyatt Hotels Corporation.
- ***Rev. Jim Ozier*** is a former pastor of the 4,000-member Trietsch Memorial UMC in Flower Mound and led in the founding of Faith UMC in Corinth.
- ***Dr. John Holbert*** is a longtime professor at Perkins School of Theology, SMU. His teaching specialties include Preaching, Hebrew Bible, and literature, and he is an author of several books.

# INFORMation:

Thirty seven **UM** musicians in ***Côte d'Ivoire*** received two week training session in Abidjan, Africa, from a team of six Americans which included ***Rev. John Thornburg*** and ***Dr. Michael Hawn,*** teaching keyboard, choral conducting, music theory and worship leadership skills.

***Vision Africa Celebration Banquet*** featuring ***Bishop Sunday Onuoha*** and ***Thomas M. Woods*** will be held Oct. 16 in **Wesley Hall, Highland Park UMC, Dallas,** from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, please call Susan Raybourn, 214-828-9232, e-mail: **admin@visionafrica.org.**

**Perkins School of Theology, SMU**, presents ***"Sweet Honey in the Rock,"*** at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 3 at the ***Majestic Theater,*** 1925 Elm Street, Dallas. Founded by ***Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon*** at the D.C. ***Black Repertory Theater,*** the group has been a vital and innovative presence in the music culture. For more information, call 214-768-3515.

Missouri ***Bishop Robert Schnase,*** author of *"Five Best Practices of Fruitful Congregations,"* conducted a workshop for laity and clergy, and preached at the **Paris-Sulphur Springs** annual ***Laity Celebration*** on Sept. 7. He challenged the congregation to search for the "lost sheep." "God didn't create us to go it alone. Rather, God intends for our lives to be interwoven in community with others. It's the reason we have been placed here." **P-SS District Lay Leader** ***Ben Bennett*** introduced three Associate Lay Leaders: ***Arlen Bryant, Wendell Preas and Melba Harris.***

***The Urban Engagement Book Club,*** a program of **Central Dallas Ministries** meets on the first Thursday of the month at **Highland Park UMC, Dallas,** from 12:00 to 1:15 p.m. Lunch and a synopsis of a book is presented, followed by a group discussion. Reservations are requested by calling Lisa Goolsby, 214-823-8710, ext. 138. See **www.UrbanEngagement.org.**

**First UMC, Aubrey**, will celebrate its ***150th Anniversary*** Oct. 11 with a music festival and barbecue dinner, from 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the church, located at 113 West Plum Street in Aubrey. For more information, please call Rev. Joe Gist, 469-867-1173 or e-mail: **jksgist@sbcglobal.net.**

***The Senior Adult Council*** from **First UMC, Richardson,** donated a 15-passenger van to **Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center** in Fayetteville, AR. Handing the keys to ***John and Sheri Altland, Executive Directors, were Roger Fortney, Marie Madden, Joan Huddleston, Betty Nickell, Jim Nickell, Laverne Trevino and Rev. Fred Trevino.***

**Walnut Hill UMC, Dallas**, junior high students collected items and funds for the **UMCOR**, for ***Health Kits, Bedding Packs, Sewing Kits and Layette Kits,*** raising over $700, to purchase items for 40 Health Kits, 12 Bedding Packs, 12 Sewing Kits and 14 Layette Kits.

Laity and clergy have a unique opportunity to participate in ***"Five Alive! Encountering the Bible with all Five Senses: a workshop for those who teach and preach"*** taught by ***Rev. Dr. Alyce M. McKenzie,*** associate professor of homiletics at **Perkins School of Theology, SMU**. The Nov. 7-8 event at **Hamilton Park UMC, Dallas,** is sponsored by **NTC** ***Lay Speaking Ministries*** and offered as an advanced course for Lay Speakers and for **SMU** Continuing Education Units (CEU) credit for clergy. The workshop on Nov. 7 is from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. and Nov. 8 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Fee is $50, for materials and lunch. The fee for CEU credit is $20. Registration forms are available at **www.ntcumc.org**, in "What's New" section. For more information, contact John Barham, 972-564-2157, e-mail: **jbconsults@suddenlink.net.**

## 'Wheels for Cameroon' Benefit Dinner

***Featuring Bishop Larry Goodpaster,***
***President-Elect of the Council of Bishops***

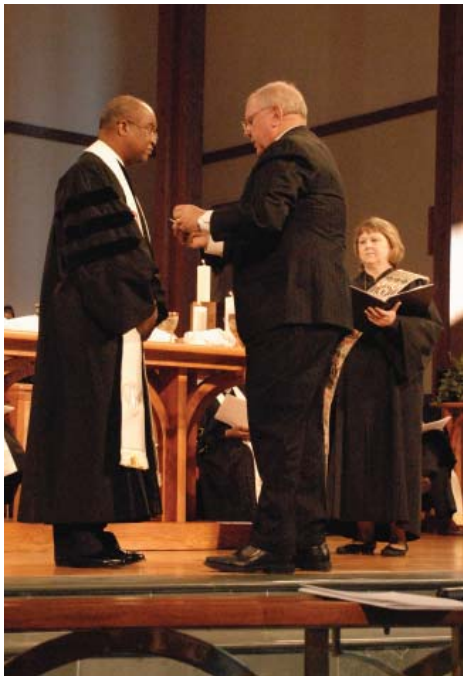
**Oct. 10 • 7 pm to 9 pm**

**Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas**

- Funding two passenger vans
- Honoring the Magruder family

For more information call Jana Carmichael, 214-544-8050, ext. 106
e-mail: **jcarmichael@creekwoodumc.org**

## Installation Service for Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe



The Service of Installation for Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, was held Sept. 28 at First UMC, Richardson, with Bishop Bledsoe preaching. A reception for the Bishop and Leslie Bledsoe followed the service. In the photo above, NTC Lay Leader Richard Hearne, right, presents an episcopal stole to Bishop Bledsoe. (Photo by Mat Mathews.)

## Spanish Immersion Course For Beginners

**Nov. 3-6 and 10-13**
Monday-Thursday
(4 days, 3 nights) for two weeks
C2K facilities in Bennett Hall
Tyler Street UMC, Dallas

Focus: Conversation-based immersion into Spanish Language and local culture for pastors and church workers

For more information, please call Rev. Diane Presley 214-943-4328 or e-mail: presley@ntcumc.org,

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