

CONNECTION

Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe
North Texas Conference



Bishop Bledsoe

Is there any unfinished business in your church or life? I'm one who does not like unfinished business. I have to

see a task completed. It probably started with the teachings of my parents, who said, "Always eat all your food on your plate, and never start something which you do not intend to finish."

Their teachings helped me to make the sacrifices to finish college. Those parent tapes play an important part of our development in life. When we mature, we take with us those habits, such as never wanting to see something left undone or only half-done.

The Easter season is a great reminder of Jesus completing the task for which He came to earth. All through the Scriptures, from His temptation

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Finishing the Africa University Campaign

The Bishop's Initiative for Africa University continues to offer a beacon of blessing during a very difficult time for the nation of Zimbabwe, where the United Methodist university is located. With Zimbabwe's health care system con-

tinuing to decline, the student health center funded through NTC gifts, now under construction, and the NTC funds dedicated to scholarships for students in health science disciplines are making an even more crucial difference than they might have under happier circumstances.

In the March 13 issue of the *North Texas Conference Reporter*, Rev. Tyrone Gordon, senior pastor of St. Luke "Community" UMC, Dallas, who serves as co-chair of the Bishop's Initiative along with Lisa Tichenor, Highland Park UMC, challenged congregations to follow the lead of his

church in doing a special offering during the Lent/Easter season to help the conference reach the \$1 million goal by 2009 Annual Conference.

At this point \$822,951.06 has been received in the NTC Treasurer's Office.

Should the goal be exceeded, additional money would go to fund health science scholarships.

The \$500,000 for the health center has already been raised and is being

allocated through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry throughout the building process. The structure is expected to be complete and ready to be dedicated the week of July 13. A delegation from the NTC will be present for the dedication.

For more information on the AU campaign, contact Dr. Tyrone Gordon, pastor@slcumc.org or Lisa Tichenor, lwtichenor@gmail.com.

Keep the dream alive!

Give to the Africa University Fund



NTC District Conferences

Dallas-Denton District

Northaven UMC, Dallas
11211 Preston Rd, Dallas TX 75230
May 31, 2009 • 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Dallas Northeast District

White Rock UMC, Dallas
1450 Old Gate Lane, Dallas TX 75218
May 17, 2009 • 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Dallas South District

St. Luke "Community" UMC, Dallas
5710 E. RL Thornton Frwy., Dallas TX 75223
May 17, 2009 • 3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Paris-Sulphur Springs District

First UMC, Sulphur Springs
301 Church St., Sulphur Springs TX 75482
May 17, 2009 • 3:00 p.m.

Sherman-McKinney District

Prosper UMC
205 S. Church St., Prosper TX 75078
May 17, 2009 • 3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Wichita Falls District

First UMC, Bowie
1515 N Jefferson St., Bowie TX 75078
May 17, 2009 • 3:00 p.m.

INFORMAtion:

Grace Avenue UMC, Frisco, has assumed a venerable tradition from Kirkwood UMC, Irving, after Kirkwood's drama group performed a Holy Week drama entitled, "Master, Is It I?" at their church last year. Bill Roberts, associate music minister at Grace Avenue, performed with the original cast many times when he was music and youth director at Kirkwood in the late 1970's and 80's.

More than 100 NTC laity and clergy gathered at St. Andrew UMC, Plano, March 29 for a South Central Jurisdiction (SCJ) Bishops listening session led by Bishop Max Whitfield, New Mexico/Northwest Texas Area regarding the reduction of the number of Episcopal Areas in SCJ from 11 to 10 mandated by the 2008 General Conference.

"New Beginnings Christian Fellowship," is scheduled to launch on May 31 with *Rev. Perry Crenshaw*, as founding pastor. Plans are being finalized for the fledgling congregation to worship at Homestead Funeral Home, located at 295 South Beltline Road.

The fifth annual *Robert L. (Bob) Robertson Awards for Excellence in Communication* will feature a new category honoring creative use of new media. The new media category will include, but not be limited to, social networking sites (such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*), blogs, podcasts, *YouTube* or other videos produced by local congregations, and any other emerging media sources. Entry forms and details are available on the www.ntcumc.org website.

The third annual *WillieBuild Habitat for Humanity/Highland Park UMC, Dallas, Carpenters for Christ* "blitz build" is scheduled May 9-23 to build *TWO* houses in this time of great need. For more information on the *2009 WillieBuild* project and how to become involved, please contact volunteer coordinator *Lisa Tichenor*, e-mail: lwichtenor@gmail.com.

The Board of Directors at Wesley-Rankin Community Center of West Dallas, announced Kathy Stutesman of Plano, as its new Executive Director. She assumes the Executive Director position after 20 years of dedicated work for Wesley-Rankin.

Wesley UMC, McKinney, celebrated its *100th anniversary* March 8, at an overflow crowd of 300-plus members, former members and guests who witnessed everything from the baptism of a six-month-old infant, a vigorous offertory led by a 20-member Praise Team (adult choir), a 13-youth-member Puppet Team, and a challenging sermon by *Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe*.

On March 27, ten husbands held their wives' hands, looked into their eyes, and repeated these words read by pastor Rev. John Kay from **The United Methodist Book of Worship**. Then the wives repeated the words said by the pastor's wife Nicole. As a conclusion to the pastor's sermon series based on the program "Making Love Last a Lifetime" by *Rev. Adam Hamilton*, from the **Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS**, ten married couples walked down the aisle and reaffirmed their marriage covenant in the sanctuary of the **First UMC, Iowa Park**.

Dallas Shared Ministries (NDSM) seventh annual gala fundraiser, planned May 7 at **Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church** will begin with dinner at 6:00 p.m. followed by a 7:00 p.m. program featuring comedian *Dr. Dennis Swanberg*, "America's minister of encouragement," and "*The Fabulous CatDaddies, Darlings of Café Society*." Cost of the concert and dinner is \$30 and the concert only is \$20. For more information e-mail: admin@ndsm.org or call 972-620-8696.

The **Commission on Religion and Race** is accepting nominations for the *Inclusiveness Awards*. Nominations are less than 150 words on how the candidate meets at least two of the criteria, and must be submitted before May 18 to *Dee Weaver, Commission on Religion and Race*, 9619 Moss Haven Drive, Dallas, TX 75231, e-mail: dweavertx@sbcglobal.net

North Texas Annual Conference
June 7-9
Plano Centre
Laity - St. Andrew UMC, Plano
Clergy - First UMC, Plano
Opening - First UMC, Richardson
Ordination - Custer Road UMC, Plano

Re-thinking Church

Rev. Andy Stoker, Assoc. Dir./Life Stages Ministry

On May 6 at 3:30 p.m., in partnership with the **Rethink Church Movement** and **Epoch Solutions**, we will gather together at Oak Cliff Park (across the street from Oak Cliff UMC) to share in a vision of sustainability for our churches. This gathering will be the launch of a movement for the present and future church. The metaphor will be extended to a literal one.

As we consider "rethinking church" for the 21st century, we will introduce a physical reminder of sustainability: rain water collection barrels. The barrels can be used for community and home garden projects to feed hungry families and/or be used for the sustenance of beautification projects; nonetheless, the idea of sustainability will be present on site. These barrels will be on sale for sustainable ministries in our Conference. Epoch Solutions will partner with the NTC to aid in this new venture of strengthening and envisioning children and youth ministries.

Bishop...

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in the wilderness, to His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, to His betrayal, death, and resurrection: Jesus completed the task of reconciling humanity back to God. I believe Easter is a vivid reminder of what can be accomplished when you stay focused and not get distracted from the mission or the goal. This Easter we celebrated the victory of life beyond and over death as we sang the hallelujahs and shout the resounding praise: He is risen! He is risen indeed!

In celebration of the Easter season, I encourage all of our churches and members in the North Texas Conference to join together and help finish the work that began last year with the new Health Clinic at Africa University in Zimbabwe, Africa. This Conference alone raised the funds for the building to be completed by May of this year. We've almost completed the balance of the commitment for scholarships to support students enrolled in the Health and Sciences program at AU. Many of our churches once again donated their Easter offerings to help us in the effort. My prayer is that each of you will help us complete our pledge by Annual Conference. May God continue to bless the work to its completion.