



CONNECTION

Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe
North Texas Conference



Bishop Bledsoe

Do modern day miracles still happen in the world? In this bishop's mind, they really do. Such a miracle happened

regarding the Africa University campaign and its completion with the dedication of the Health Centre and the Health Science scholarships. For me, it was a miracle to see so many of the

North Texas congregations join in to support the effort during a time when economic conditions have worsened to the lowest since the Great Depression. Just to witness and see the outpouring of "goodwill," care and support was nothing short of a miracle.

When we arrived in Africa, we found the people to be a culture of radical hospitality. Despite the devastating effect of a Zimbabwean dollar being worth nothing, they still were hospitable and hopeful. I learned the meaning of the name Zimbabwe as "house of stone." The country is noted for its many large stones that jettison in and out of the surrounding landscape. We arrived during their winter season, thus contrary to my thinking about Africa being hot and arid, it was somewhat of a shock to experience 30 degree weather in the middle of July. Daytime highs reached 70's but the nights were cold.

The landscape in Zimbabwe is breathtaking. Flat and high top acacia trees populate the terrain. I understand that the elephants enjoy eating the beans from the acacia tree. We saw lots of acacia trees and lots of elephants. The university itself would make every United Methodist proud to have invested in the future of Africa by giving to Africa University. Driving up the long winding road up to the university you cross the Bishop Woodie White Bridge, known as the "Bridge to Dreams."

See "Getting your Priorities..." on Back

Upgrades enhance Resource Center

What if there was a place you could go, or even better a website you could visit, and find a plethora of video based materials for your Sunday school, small group, youth or children's programs? And what if those materials were available to use for free?

Guess what? There is such a place and a website! The North Texas Conference Resource Center houses over 2,000 DVD and VHS resources that can be borrowed by clergy and lay persons without charge. In the past year, we have added almost 100 new DVD items. Our rich treasure of material found on VHS is still accessible through VHS players that are available for checkout at the Resource Center.

If you are searching for a long or short term Bible Study, studies on Christian living in today's world, prayer, forgiveness, marriage, parenting, United Methodist beliefs, social justice issues, reaching beyond your church doors, or a wide range of other topics, we probably have something for you. A few of our newest titles include: *Enough: Discovering*

Joy through Simplicity and Generosity by Adam Hamilton; *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference* by Philip Yancey; *Modern Parables, The Miracles of Jesus, The Parables of Jesus, The Prayers of Jesus, and They Like Jesus, but Not the Church.*

Youth leaders looking for current video based materials with Biblical undergirding may want to look at the NOOMA, Velocity, and [UP] series.

Children's resources offer many choices for video illustration of various Bible stories and life lessons. Our latest titles include Project Choice, a six week curriculum about making Godly choices for 7-10 year olds, and Read and Share DVD Bible offering short 3 minute vignettes for preschoolers.

Come by the Ministry Center at 500 Maplelawn Drive in Plano to browse the shelves, or search the on-line catalog at <http://ntcumc.org/resourcecenter>. Live too far away to pick up your items? No problem, we can mail them. You may request items through the on-line catalog or give us a call 972-526-5000, 800-969-8201.

Fairfield Children's Home - a haven of hope

When Rev. Owen Ross, Christ's Foundry UMC, Dallas, joined the NTC group for the trip to Africa University, he was on familiar turf. Ten years ago he spent a semester as an international student doing graduate studies in theology and evangelism.

His special love for AU and the nearby Fairfield Children's Home, another UM institution on the Old Mutare Mission grounds, was inspiring and "catching." Once known as an orphanage, Fairfield was originally an institutional setting where children were dispersed to other places after reaching the age of seven.

Now, the mission has changed to that of a lifetime care facility where children grow up in family settings. It has transformed the lives of more than

80 children who have come through the homes, and in three short years, the first child from when Fairfield was a primary orphanage will be ready to enter Africa University. Sponsors are needed to keep this program going.

For information on sponsoring a child, log on to www.FOSAkids.org.



Children at Fairfield Home can aspire to attend Africa University located across the highway.

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When you arrive you are greeted with these words: "Welcome to the school of dreams and the valley of hope." Dreams and hopes are certainly lived out on a daily basis hearing the many miracle stories and experiences. One that caught the delegation's attention was the story of Solomon Cooper, an Africa University student who walked from the Democratic Republic of Congo down to Zimbabwe without a passport, only an admission letter from the school. It took him three months to get there, and he was a month late on arriving. His desire, faith and ancestral legacy would not let him give up. Solomon spoke only French when he left his country. By the time he graduated, he spoke nine languages, including Shona, the indigenous language spoken by most of the Zimbabwe population.

As promised, the new Health Center was dedicated by members of the North Texas Conference in honor of Bishop Alfred L. Norris and the much needed Health Science scholarships were also given by the North Texas Conference in memory of the late Bishop Rhymes Moncure. Both families of the Norris' and the Moncures were on hand to witness the occasion, as well as family members of the late Bishop Ben Oliphint, who served as the president of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry when Africa University was first conceived. As your bishop, I am honored and deeply grateful for the opportunity to have witnessed this modern day miracle in the making. I cannot wait to see what God will do next.



TEAM LEADER TRAINING

Sept. 26 • 9:00 am to 2:30 pm
First UMC, Denton

Call Rev. Marji Bishir 800-969-8201
bishir@ntcumc.org
www.ntcumc.org

◆ Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe's sermon at "50th Anniversary service" of Chapel Hill UMC, Dallas, on July 12 reflected for the mission of the church to "sow seeds" everywhere.

◆ Grace Avenue UMC, Frisco, celebrated its 10th anniversary during the ten weeks of summer, under Revs. Billy and Laura Echols-Richter, hosting a celebration for founding members of former Saint Andrew UMC, Dallas.

◆ NTC Lay Speaking Ministry conducted a short course "Prepare to Teach," Aug. 15 at the NTC Ministry Center for those interested in improving their skills as facilitators of adult learning.

◆ A video of the "Breaking Bread and Barriers," Aug. 11 potluck dinner and testimonials at Pleasant Mound-Urban Park UMC is available at www.ntcumc.org website under "NTC Video Center."

◆ UMCOR VIM is sponsoring "Early Response Team Training," Sept. 5 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at First UMC, Coppell. Call Mike Ridgley, 214-498-8371 for registration.

◆ The First Annual Woman's Day of Community UMC was held June 12-14. Rev. Jackye Waiters-Lee, senior pastor, opened the event with the theme of an invitation to the table. Rev. Lydia Waters Hamilton, St. Luke "Community" UMC, Dallas, was the guest preacher.

◆ Katherine Long, daughter of Anya and Rev. Mark Long, First UMC Trenton, worked tirelessly for 21 days at a "Lemonade Stand" to raise \$1,003 for the church's new playground and children's books for the Church Library. For more information, visit www.firstumctrenton.org.

◆ Couples are welcomed to the First Annual "Dessert for the Couples' Soul" Retreat, Oct. 2-4 at Lookout Point, Hot Springs, AR, led by Rev. Georjean Blanton, NTC extension ministry, Path-Ways Ministries. The cost is \$1,365. For more information, please call 866-525-6155, or e-mail: innkeeper@lookoutpointinn.com.

Maua Hospital welcomes volunteers

VIM teams wishing to focus on Global Health are welcome at Maua Methodist Hospital in Maua, Kenya, to work on teams for light and heavy construction, sewing projects, and painting on new staff apartments. Call Rev. Marji Bishir, 972-526-5000, or e-mail: bishir@ntcumc.org.

OVERCOMING RACISM IN THE 21st CENTURY

Sept. 24-26 • QUAYLE UMC, Oklahoma City



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See Vacation Bible School Aug. 21 issue of NTC Reporter

Go to website www.ntcumc.org
and select "NT UM Reporter" then
"View the Archives" and choose "8/21/2009"
See VBS highlights around the Conference



From left, Associate Vice Chancellor Prof. Fanuel Tagwire, clinic head nurse Sister T. Murapa, Bishop Alfred L. Norris and Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe stand at the entrance of the new health clinic following the ribbon cutting.