

CONNECTION

Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe
North Texas Conference

How disabled are you? Many of us who have sight, hearing, and use of all our limbs usually do not think of our-



Bishop Bledsoe

selves as disabled. However, I learned at the disabilities seminar held Oct. 5 at our Ministry Center that we all are disabled in some way. I discovered I cannot give or understand sign language or Braille.

Most recently, I discovered I cannot climb stairs or run as fast as I used to, and I have to have surgery on my knee.

In a way we all are disabled in one way or another, depending on how you view the situation. Our Conference was pleased to host Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Philadelphia Area and the United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities. We were joined by Perkins School of Theology and Lovers Lane UMC.

My personal thanks to Rev. Liz Moen, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries on the NTC staff, and Rev. Tom Hudspeth, associate pastor of Lovers Lane UMC, for bringing this important subject to the forefront of the Conference. I learned that what we all want and need from the church is access, the opportunity to participate fully in the service of worship and the ministries of the church. I also learned that we all want and need respect in life, and respect for our gifts and talents to be fully appreciated and utilized by the church.

There is much to be learned and shared in the church. I would encourage all churches to look for opportunities to make sure we meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

If you want to know what other congregations are doing, check with Rev. Liz Moen, 972-526-5000, or e-mail: moen@ntcumc.org. We have some great ministries meeting these needs.

Christmas Eve/Watch Night 2009 resources available

“Incarnation to Transformation” will be theme for the 2009 NTC Home for Christmas/Watch Night campaign.

Updated inviting and welcoming resources are now on the www.ntcumc.org website, so congregations will have time to make plans to invite and welcome guests during the season when statistics show people are most likely to visit a church.

As has been the custom for the past several years, churches will have the opportunity to receive a quantity of oversize postcards, one and one half times their average worship attendance as recorded in the 2009 Journal. Or, a new option is an electronic postcard design with a distribution to three times the average worship attendance. A variety of designs are available and posted for viewing on the www.thecrouchgroup.com website. (Recommended minimum e-mail distribution is 4,000. Churches may have their allocated amount credited toward the total cost.)

Deadline for ordering customized cards (at the church's expense) and cards to be delivered to District Offices is Nov. 16. Deadline for ordering cards with no customization to be sent to the church address is Dec. 4. Churches opting for the e-card distribution must contact The Crouch

Group by Nov. 20 to start process of customization and to define the distribution plan.

In addition to the print and electronic postcards, the NTC will purchase newspaper advertising outside the Metroplex area that will include the names of churches, addresses and service times. An emphasis on radio advertising, coupled with internet newspaper marketing, is the new Metroplex strategy. Other print media will include the *Star* suburban newspaper chain and the *Dallas Observer*, the outreach to Dallas' urban community.

Once again, Dr. Terry Parsons and Rev. Sheron Patterson are writing helpful pieces for seekers who respond to the “Wondering about Christmas” advertising to persons for whom Christmas may be a difficult or confusing time of year. The conference launched the www.wonderingaboutchristmas.com website last year and will continue to develop ways for interested individuals to ask their questions and make observations.

Churches wishing special consultation on their Christmas Eve or Watch Night plans are invited to contact Tim Crouch or Ron Ray at The Crouch Group, the NTC advertising agency. Custom banners and non-customized yard signs and other promotional products are also available from the agency.

For more information, please call Dr. Joan LaBarr, 972-526-5036 or e-mail: labarr@ntcumc.org. To contact The Crouch Group, call toll-free: 888-211-0273 or e-mail: tim@thecrouchgroup.com or ron@thecrouchgroup.com.



INFORMAtion:

◆ **Oak Grove UMC, Decatur** dedicated the *Barbara Rhine Memorial Basketball Court* on Aug. 30 in a ceremony led by **Rev. Jim Dean** and former pastor **Rev. Fredric L. Utz**. More than 100 persons participated and celebrated the late Mrs. Rhine's service to the youth of Wise County.

◆ **Bishop Peggy Johnson, Eastern Pennsylvania**, addressed the Oct. 3 *"Silent Night Dinner,"* a fund-raiser and celebration for **Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas, Deaf Ministry**. She shared how God had used her disability to give her a special interest in ministry to persons with disabilities. The dinner and silent auction raised more than \$4,000 for interpreters, mission trips and Lovers Lane Academy for the Deaf.

◆ **NTC Disaster Relief Ministry** announces the *"2009 Celebration Conference of the Victim Chaplain and Counselor Association,"* Nov. 6-7 at Doubletree Hotel, Richardson. *"Living Ready...to Journey, to Respond, To Impact"* is theme for the event. To register, please visit the www.victimschaplain.org website, or call Rev. Marji Bishir, 972-526-5000 for more information, or e-mail bishir@ntcumc.org.

◆ **Camp Wisdom UMC, Dallas** held its *"Annual Woman's Day Celebration,"* Oct. 18, with guest preacher, **Rev. Vonciel Jones Hill**.

◆ **FaithBridge Fellowship** launched as a new **UM** community in Rockwall on Oct. 11. This new church start was nurtured by **First UMC, Rockwall**, in an approach to church planting known as the "Mother/Daughter" model. **Rev. Frank Rahm** is the pastor of the new congregation that meets at Celia Hays Elementary School, located at the corner of FM 1141 and FM 552.

◆ **NTC Lay Speakers** will offer a seminar on *"Theology, the Basics,"* Nov. 14 and 21 at **NTC Ministry Center**, facilitated by **Rev. Fred L. Durham, Jr.** For more information, e-mail John Barham, jbconsults@suddenlink.com.

◆ **Refugee Services of Texas** has an urgent need for food or donations for *refugees arriving in the Dallas area*. For more information, e-mail Olivia Bender, oliciabender@yahoo.com.

◆ **NTC Confirmation** classes are planning a *"Civil Rights Bus Tour,"* Jan. 15-18 through Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma, Alabama, and Memphis, Tennessee, retracing the steps of **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** and other civil rights heroes. For more information, e-mail Rev. Andy Stoker, stoker@ntcumc.org.

◆ **Rev. Tom Waitschies, Wesley UMC, McKinney** consecrated quilts, toys, books and gifts for *"Project Night Night,"* Sept. 20, for delivery to the children of **Samaritan Inn**, a Collin County homeless shelter.

Sojourners Justice Revival Nov. 10-12

North Texas United Methodists have the opportunity to participate in a defining moment for the greater Dallas area as Sojourners Justice Revival draws thousands of people from different denominations to Dallas Market Center Nov. 10-12.

Rev. Zan Holmes, pastor emeritus of St. Luke "Community" UMC, Dallas, will be main speaker for the 7:00 p.m. opening session on Nov. 10. Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert will be special guest. The evening is billed as a "Call to Conversion."

The next night is a "Call to Community" featuring lead musician Fred Hammond and Rev. Sam Rodriguez as main speaker. Sojourners Ministry Founder Rev. Jim Wallis will be lead speaker on the closing night, with Israel Houghton & the New Breed band as lead musicians.

Over the three days of prayer, preaching and worship, the hope is that the Body of Christ in the Dallas area will awake to new life, uniting to answer Jesus' call to biblical justice.

Plano Forum honors Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe



Henry Bryant, left, presents Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe with the Plano Community Forum Special Recognition award at the organization's Oct. 3 "Men Making a Difference" Awards Banquet.

Rev. Edlen Cowley, St. Andrew UMC, Plano, served as Master of Ceremonies for the 28th annual awards banquet of the Plano Community Forum (PCF).

Members of the Extended Cabinet and clergy and laity from other Plano UM congregations attended the event, which is also a fund-raiser for PCF, an organization that provides scholarship opportunities for minority students graduating from Plano schools and promotes cultural enrichment and community involvement.

Wesley-Rankin Community Center 'An Evening Under the Stars' benefit

Wesley-Rankin Community Center will present its annual benefit, "An Evening Under the Stars," at 6:00 p.m. Nov. 14 at Dallas' Frontiers of Flight Museum, located at 9611 Lemon Avenue near Love Field.

Philip and Pam Bush, and Dan and Kathleen Chaney are 2009 Benefit Chairs. Honorary chairs are Tom Grieve, Texas Rangers television announcer, and Jim Sundberg, Texas Rangers senior executive vice president. Talmage Boston, baseball historian and media member of the Texas Baseball Hall of Fame will be master of ceremonies. Music will be provided by the Think

Band from the Aldersgate Class of First UMC, Dallas.



The evening will include dinner, live and silent auctions, and other festivities celebrating the work and mission of Wesley-Rankin, a UM-related outreach to West Dallas for more than 100 years.

Tickets are \$75 for individuals. Tables of ten are available for purchase. For reservations or ticket information contact Jackson and Dana Harkey at 214-739-3494 or e-mail: danaharkey@gmail.com. For more information, or to purchase tickets online, log on to www.wesleyrankin.org.