



Bishop's Installation Service set Sept. 28 at First UMC, Richardson

by Dr. Joan Gray LaBarr, Director, NTC Communications

North Texas Conference Episcopacy Committee Chair Fred Adams, Hamilton Park UMC, Dallas, has announced that Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe's Service of Installation will be at 3:00 p.m. Sept. 28 at First UMC, Richardson. All conference laity, clergy, guests and friends are cordially invited and encouraged to attend the worship. Following the service, the Episcopacy Committee will host a reception honoring Bishop and Leslie Bledsoe.

Bishop Bledsoe officially assumes his duties as episcopal leader of the NTC on Sept. 1. He follows Bishop Alfred L. Norris, who has returned to his home in Atlanta, GA, after serving the conference as bishop for two years, filling the unexpired term of the late Bishop Rhymes H. Moncure, Jr., who died in August of 2006.

The Bledsoe family brings many gifts and talents to their new leadership positions. Mrs. Bledsoe is a licensed social worker and has been a preacher, teacher and inspiration in the church. She became totally blind following a severe illness several years ago, which has inspired her to new endeavors in ministry and outreach.

Bishop Bledsoe has deep roots in the United Methodist denomination. He is the son of a UM pastor and grew up in various parsonages in Northwest Texas. "My father, Rev. Wilbart Bledsoe, received his call into ministry in 1950, the year I was born. I was raised in a Christian home with my mom and dad, two sisters and two brothers," he writes.

Following a successful career as a director and executive director of YMCAs in the Amarillo and Houston areas, Bishop Bledsoe responded to his own call to full-time ministry after serving bi-vocationally as a local pastor while still in his secular profession.

He entered Perkins School of Theology, SMU, in 1982 and graduated in 1985 with a Master of Divinity Degree, where he was the Benjamin E. Mays Scholar and Hebrew and Greek Scholar. Bishop Bledsoe earned the Doctor of Ministry Degree from Drew University, Patterson, NJ, in 1991, where his research centered on "Equipping Christian Educators to Respond to the Needs of At-Risk Inner City Teenagers." In addition to his ministry degrees, Bishop Bledsoe holds the Bachelor of Arts Degree from West Texas State University in Canyon, TX, where he majored in English and minored in Spanish.



Bishop Bledsoe

During his service in the Texas Conference, Bishop Bledsoe served as District Superintendent of the Bryan/

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'Radical Hospitality'

2008 NTC Clergy Retreat

Oct. 13 - 15

Tanglewood Resort Hotel and Conference Center, Pottsboro

- Meet Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe and be blessed by his participation.
- Hear Fiona McCleoud Butts of Southwest Airlines and focus on
"Creating a culture of Radical Hospitality."
- Hear Jorge Luna of the 4 Seasons Resort discuss
"Anticipating the Needs of Others."
- Hear Dr. John Holbert, Professor of Homiletics at
Perkins School of Theology, SMU as the *Bible Study Leader*

For registration details and scholarship information, log on to www.ntcumc.org.

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West District from 2002 to 2008; pastor of Spring Woods UMC, Houston, 2000-2002; Cypress UMC, Cypress, 1993-2000; Director of Teaching Ministries for the Texas Conference, 1990-1993; and senior associate pastor in charge of program and program staff at Bear Creek UMC, Houston, 1986-1990. He also served part-time as assistant pastor at St. Andrews UMC, Fort Worth, 1981-1985; and part-time local pastor at Wyatt Memorial UMC, Amarillo District, and Anahuac Circuit, Anahuac, Texas Conference, while still serving as a YMCA executive.

Bishop Bledsoe's General Church leadership includes:

- Jurisdictional Member of the Connectional Table, serving on the planning and advisory team and as Team Leader for CT Joint budgeting process with the General Commission on Finance and Administration and as a member of the search committee to fill the position of Executive Secretary, now held by the NTC's own Mary Brooke Casad.

- Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, representing the Texas Conference during the 2004 bishop assignment process.

- General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, 2004, 2000, 1996 and 1992. In 2004 Bishop Bledsoe served on the General Administration Legislative Com-

mittee and was elected chair of the Reference Committee for a second time. In 2000 he served on the Judicial Administration legislative committee and helped develop the process to provide recourse to the church in matters of pastoral misconduct. He was elected to chair the Reference Committee, which restructured the petition referral process at General Conference.

In his other leadership roles in church and community, Bishop Bledsoe served as:

- Chair of the Texas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry;
- President of the Texas Conference Council of Finance and Administration;
- Chair of the Houston Board of Missions Revitalization Committee;
- Chair of the Texas Methodist Foundation Board;
- Chair of the Gulfside Long Range Planning Team, which built the new Norris Hall at the historic retreat center in Waveland, MS.
- Dean of the Texas Conference Cabinet.
- As a member of the Board of Trustees, Methodist Hospital System, Houston; Board of Trustees, Lon Morris College, Jacksonville; Board of Trustees, Methodist Retirement Services, The Woodlands; Executive Board, Perkins School of Theology, SMU; United Negro College Fund Campaign Committee; Access to Equal Justice Board (Supreme Court appointee; and the YMCA.

‘Wheels for Cameroon’

Rev. Wes Magruder, recently returned from mission service in Cameroon, Africa. In his article below, he shares reasons why the “Wheels for Cameroon” Project, and its benefit being held at Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas on October 10 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. is so important.

by Rev. Wes Magruder, First UMC, Rowlett

I nervously paced the driveway at the Kamthe Hotel in Yaounde, Cameroon, alternately glancing at my cellphone and scanning the horizon. A group of sleep-deprived American Volunteers in Mission were milling around in the hotel courtyard, trying to digest their hastily-eaten breakfast and coffee.

I had ordered them to be up and ready to go early only a few hours after their plane had finally landed – and they were not bright and shiny yet! We still had a two-hour ride to Eseka ahead of us, and once we arrived, we would have to organize and open an eye clinic by early afternoon.

After a quick head-count, I found that everyone was ready to go. Everyone, that is, except one of our van drivers.

Collins Etchi Ako, our in-country VIM Team Coordinator, was clearly frustrated, too. He kept calling the driver and asking his whereabouts. First, the driver said he was just a bit late. Five minutes later, he said he was filling up with gas. Then, he announced that the van was having mechanical difficulties.

About that time, Collins looked at me and said, “This is why we need our own vehicles.”

During my stay in Cameroon, transportation proved to be one of the biggest challenges to the work of the United Methodist mission. Roads to certain parts of the country are difficult to traverse in dry season, impassible when wet. Public transportation is inconsistent, unsafe, and miserably uncomfortable. Trains run, but are prone to bandit attacks. Owning your own vehicle is expensive and requires constant maintenance.

I also found that renting vans to haul VIM teams around the country was a risky proposition. First, they are simply expensive – adding a van to the cost of a team involves not just the rental, but the personal costs of the driver. Second, the condition of a rented van is a gamble. Several times in my experience, a driver had to make stops for repairs, which slowed down the team’s progress and, I fear, indicated a lack of proper safety procedures. And third, the drivers who came with the

vans didn’t always have the same concern for time and promptness that Collins and I had.

Collins and I both took seriously the Mission’s commitment to give VIM teams the best experience they could possibly have while in Cameroon. That meant keeping costs down while also maintaining high standards of safety.

Last year, we began looking seriously into the matter of buying at least two vans for the Mission, for the primary purpose of transporting VIM teams around the country. The vans could also be used for transporting other groups, including the burgeoning Health Team, UMW officers, and youth campers.

I began sharing this vision last summer during our itineration, and am thrilled that Rev. Milton Guttierrez, in particular, has become excited about this project, and galvanized support throughout our conference to raise money to purchase vans for Cameroon.

But then again, I guess I shouldn’t be too surprised – Milton is one of those bleary-eyed Americans who had to wait on the broken-down van that morning in Yaounde.



The condition of rental vans in Cameroon makes it even more important that the UM Cameroon Mission have its own vehicles.

Windows

September - October 2008

Windows of Opportunity announce North Texas Conference-related leadership events designed to equip church leaders to share in God's continuing process of making disciples of Jesus Christ.



The Resource Center is back!!!

Visit the NTC Resource Center at
The NTC Ministry Center, 500 Maplelawn Drive, Plano or
online at www.ntcumc.org

Call 972-526-5000 or 800-969-8201

E-mail: resource@ntcumc.org

Save the Date!

TOWN AND COUNTRY MINISTERS' RETREAT

February 1-3, 2009

The Prothro Center
at Lake Texoma

*A North Texas Conference
Connectional Ministries Event*

Presenter:

Rev. Jim Hollifield
First UMC, Newkirk, OK

The Transformation Power of Missions

Oct. 5 - University UMC, Wichita Falls

Oct. 19 - First UMC, Sulphur Springs

Nov. 2 - Anna UMC

Nov. 9 - Tyler Street UMC, Dallas

Nov. 16 - NTC Ministry Center

**Five Practices
of Fruitful
Congregations
Seminar Series**

2 to 5 pm

To register, please call Liz Moen 973-526-5216
moen@ntcumc.org

Leaves of Gold Senior Adult Retreat



October 20 - 23, 2008

For more information, please contact

Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center, 800-760-8126

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your congregation
Request a presentation
at the church

For more information, please call Janalee Shadburn,
214-946-3600 • shadburn@projecttransformation.org



PROMOTIONAL TOUR

How to do a mission
in the Bahamas

September 25

North Texas Conference Ministry Center

For more information, please call Jeff McCormick
469-916-9624 • jmccormick@upumc.org



Learn to use the New Testament
Low ropes course, volleyball, crafts,
and games too

Bible Retreat

SEPTEMBER 26-27

Bridgeport Camp & Conference Center

Sponsored by North Texas Conference Children's Ministries



Gleaning Network of Texas

• October 25 •
8:30 am to 12:00 pm

Golden, Texas (Northwest of Mineola)

For registration, please call 978-814-0928
e-mail: susie@gleantexas.org.

alzheimer's
association

Legal & Financial Planning for Future Care

October 16 • 9 am to 2 pm

C.C. Young - The Point
4847 W. Lawther Drive, Dallas

To register, call 800-272-3900

For information on informal gatherings and sharing of ideas, information and resources, please contact: Rev. Duane VanGiesen, vangiesen@ntcumc.org; Sally Vonner, vonner@ntcumc.org; Rev. Mike Wright-Chapman, wright-chapman@ntcumc.org; Rev. Marji Bishir, bishir@ntcumc.org, or Rev. Liz Moen, moen@ntcumc.org, at 972-526-5000 or 800-969-8201.