

VIII. DAILY PROCEEDINGS

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING

June 3, 2012

Laity Session

Custer Road United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas, 3:30 p.m.

The laity session of The North Texas Conference was held at Custer Road United Methodist Church of Plano. Conference Lay Leader, Richard Hearne, welcomed the lay members of annual conference, and Youth Representative Ricky Harrison opened the session with prayer.

Hearne was recognized as the outgoing lay leader and Linda Parks was recognized as the Conference Lay Leader elect. The Memorial Service recognized those lay members who had died within the past year. Parks led a discussion on living, leading and developing laity fruitfulness. Lay delegates to General Conference reported and answered questions.

The closing prayer was offered by Ricky Harrison.

Clergy Session

First United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas, 3:30 p.m.

The North Texas Conference clergy gathered at First United Methodist Church, Plano, and Bishop Bledsoe called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Bishop Bledsoe opened with words of appreciation. He recommended Bishop Schnase's book *Remember the Future* and Bishop Job's *Three Simple Questions*. Bishop Bledsoe asked that the focus of Annual Conference not be on him, that he had repeatedly experienced the pastor's heart in the Annual Conference. He invited the clergy to Holy Conferencing. He received a standing ovation. Bishop Bledsoe introduced host pastor Gary Mueller. Mueller welcomed all and introduced David Gonzalez to offer the opening prayer. Debbie Chapman, Director of Music and Worship, and Mark Lucke, Organist, led the clergy in the opening hymn, *And Are We Yet Alive*.

Bishop Bledsoe then called on Gary Mueller, chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, for the Board's report. (Note: The details of the complete report can be found in Section X. BUSINESS OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.) Mueller expressed his gratitude for all four years as Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. He reported on General Conference legislation regarding guaranteed appointments (Par. 337 in the BOD where the word "shall" was changed to "may.") Mueller explained that there would be three options—less than full-time appointment, placement on administrative process, or transitional leave granted or requested by the cabinet. The key amendments were that there would be a hearing before the committee on conference relations, there must be approval by the BOM, and it must be voted on by clergy session. Bill Lawrence reported that the Judicial Council will review the constitutionality of these changes in October. They will take effect January 1 if voted constitutional. Jerry Putnam asked if criteria would be set for transitioning to half-time and if there is funding for this. Keith Payne Boone said that in 2013, there is very little—\$5,000.

Mueller presented the BOM Chair nominees for two clergy from the BOM to serve as members of the Advisory Team on Missional appointments. Jan Davis and Stan Copeland were elected.

Mueller and the committee heads of the Board of Ordained Ministry, walked the session through the reporting structure having to do with all matters of the clergy, as prescribed by the General Conference.

Jill Jackson-Sears, candidacy registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry, noted that the names of those who were certified candidates for ministry, question 19, were printed in the handout document and asked that any corrections to the list be submitted in writing. She explained that the BOM has created mentor training and referred clergy to a brochure on the BOM website.

James Minor, chair of the Committee on Certification, presented those in specialized ministry.

Pete Adrian, Local Pastors Chair, asked local pastors to come forward as their names were read. Adrian called attention to the names of the local pastors in answer to questions 20–23 and read the new names. The names, part-time and full-time, were approved unanimously.

Larry George, Assistant to the Bishop, presented the names of those appointed from other conferences and other Christian denominations as well as associate members and elders serving less than $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The names were approved unanimously.

Dennis Wilkinson, Committee on Conference Relations Chair, reported on all changes in clergy persons' relationships to the conference. The names of the clergy members who had died since the last conference session were read.

Bishop Bledsoe asked John Rosenburg to lead a memorial prayer. (See also Memorial Service in Section VIII. DAILY PROCEEDINGS for Tuesday, June 5, and Section XIV. MEMORIALS.)

Wilkinson read the names of the elders retiring this year, and each came forward. They were honored with applause and Bishop Bledsoe shook the hand of each retiree.

Pete Adrian read the names of all local pastors retiring this year, and invited each to come forward. Lucia French and Pablo Guardiola were added to the names of the newly licensed. The local pastors were honored with applause and Bishop Bledsoe shook the hand of each.

Todd Harris, chair of the Committee on Preparations and Qualifications, presented to the clergy session the candidates for provisional membership and commissioning. Harris reported on the progress of the Making Disciples project. The candidates came and stood before the Bishop and each received a favorable vote by the membership.

Gary Stephens and JamesPaul Qazilbash were presented for provisional membership and commissioning for the ministry of deacon in preparation for ordination.

The following were presented for preparatory membership and commissioning in preparation for ordination on the elder track: Carolyn Allbritton, Scot Bontrager, Brian Dierolf, Jason McConnell, and Mona Millard.

The following persons were presented for election into full membership and ordination: As deacons: Kay DeBlance, Beth Lutz, and Ugonna Onuoha and as elders: Jimmy Greene, Melissa Hatch, Arthur Jones, Elizabeth LaBella-Foster, Julie Macpherson, Cheryl Murphy, and Nancy Sherman. Bishop Bledsoe asked these persons the historical questions originating with John Wesley and then the votes were taken on each person individually. All were approved and greeted with an extended standing ovation by the pastors.

Mueller invited the chairs of the three orders to come forward. He asked the question, “Are all clergy members of the conference blameless in their life and official administration?” Mueller called on the chairs to lead the prayer of confession. Mueller then answered question #17, “Yes, with one exception.”

Jan Davis introduced the restructuring of the BOM. She submitted the names of nominees from the BOM to chair each order for the next quadrennium: Larry Davis, Order of Local Pastors; Doug Meyer, order of deacons, Rusty Hedges, order of elders. They were approved.

Lisa Greenwood, Order of Elders, announced the 2012 Clergy Retreat as October 15–17 with keynote speaker Brian McLaren. She encouraged all to attend.

Gary Mueller moved passage of the entire report of the Board of Ordained Ministry and it was approved.

To conclude the meeting Bishop Bledsoe offered a word of thanks to the clergy and the North Texas Conference. He closed with a prayer from Bishop Reuben Job’s *Three Simple Questions*.

The full reports of the divisions of the Board of Ordained Ministry are printed in this journal in Section XIII. AGENCY REPORTS under the heading, Board of Ordained Ministry.

Worship Service **Custer Road United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas, 7:00 p.m.**

At opening worship, Ron Henderson welcomed everyone to Custer Road UMC. The theme of the 2012 Annual Conference, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,” was reflected in the spirituals of the Music Ministries of Custer Road as well as the liturgy of the service. As the service opened, Bishop Bledsoe commissioned the North Texas interns from Lydia Patterson Institute, Project Transformation, C2K and Bridgeport.

Bishop Bledsoe introduced the speaker whom he had invited for opening worship. Mike Baughman, 33, of Union Coffee House in Dallas delivered a message that started the 2012 Annual Conference with a bang. His sermon “Who Can Stop the Water?” was based on Acts 2. A member of the New Jersey Annual Conference, Baughman is a fourth generation United Methodist pastor. He wore his great-grandfather’s robe and a collar like the one his grandfather had worn. Baughman provided a look at the future of the denomination, serving up theology, hope, challenge and humor with an edge. He proclaimed that the United Methodist Church was not dying; it was dehydrated. Having looked up the symptoms, he declared they included lethargy, confusion, rapid heart rate associated with stressful situations, skin that lacks elasticity, aches and pains, especially in the head, and serious cases resulting in delirium and shutting down.

Baughman included a comical video of himself at the beach, sitting in a tiny, inflatable kiddie pool, while two of his children played in the ocean behind him. He declared that he would be damned (a word he defined by showing a picture of the Hoover Dam onscreen) if he is going to sit in the kiddie pools of faith while the waters of God roll behind him or swim in bottled water when God is calling us to get our hands, feet, souls, hearts, and selves dirty. Baughman’s sermon was quickly posted on websites and brought people to their feet with extended applause.

The worship service ended with the Renewal of Baptism vows. Large containers of water were stationed around the sanctuary. Worshipers streamed toward them, cupped the water into their hands and placed it on their heads. They remembered their baptisms, and they remembered the message that gave them great hope.

MONDAY MORNING SESSION

June 4, 2012

The Plano Centre, Plano, Texas

Organization of the Conference

Bishop Earl Bledsoe called the business session of the conference together and opened with a prayer from Ruben Job's *Three Simple Questions*. Karen Chraska led the conference in *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*.

Bishop Bledsoe then called upon Conference Secretary Judith Reedy for the organizational motions. Reedy moved that the bar of the conference be the stage and all seats in front of the platform and that the visitors' section be the second row of seats in front of both sections. The motion was approved. Reedy moved the election of persons to serve the 2012 business sessions as assistant secretaries: Kenny Dickson, Marsha Middleton, and Katherine Lyle; head teller, Abril Goforth; and the teller group as appointed by each of the district superintendents. They were elected.

Reedy moved the approval of Legislative Item number one in the conference workbook, [LA 1], for the equalization of clergy and lay members. The motion was approved.

Bishop Bledsoe introduced John Croft, newly retired chancellor of the North Texas Conference. Croft spoke to the Conference, expressing gratitude and hopes for the future.

Jan Davis introduced Pam Liston, FUMC Rowlett, graduate of Texas Tech, municipal judge in Rowlett, law firm partner, and M. Div. candidate at Perkins, as chancellor nominee for the next quadrennium. Liston was elected by a show of hands. She responded with thanks.

Standing Rules

Anne Todd presented the changes to the Standing Rules, based on a Judicial Council Ruling. She introduced five Legislative Items:

Legislative Item #2 [LA 2] stated that persons can be nominated from the floor but when such nominations are made they must replace by category of inclusivity and must call the name of the person to be replaced. Motion was approved.

Legislative Item #3 [LA 3] allows shorter terms in new agencies in order to set up rotation. Motion was approved.

Legislative Item #4 [LA 4] calls for committees to be reinstated under Missional Outreach—the Board of Church and Society (staggered terms), Board of Global Ministries, Ethnic Local Church Concerns, and Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. Todd moved that line 31 calling for a Conference Secretary of Global Ministries to be nominated by GBHEM be deleted from Legislative Item #4 [LA 4]. The deletion was approved. Legislative Item #4 [LA 4] was approved.

Legislative Item #5 [LA 5] reinstates the standing rules committee. It was approved.

Legislative Item #6 [LA 6] adds members to the Standing Rules Committee as outlined in the conference workbook. It was approved.

Episcopacy Committee

Scott Smith, chair of the committee, was accompanied on the platform by the committee members. Mrs. Bledsoe was escorted to the podium and received a standing ovation. Smith announced that a donation to the Center for Vision Loss had been made in her name. Mrs. Bledsoe addressed the conference, saying that she had lost sight but not vision. She added that the handicapped and disabled of the world are those who are without moral strength and commitment to God. She invited the Conference to come to the Center for Vision Loss to see technology that is available for those with weaker vision. She challenged everyone to keep touching people in the community. Smith spoke of the Bishop's unexpected retirement and the blessings of his leadership over the last four years. He then presented a gift certificate to Bishop and Mrs. Bledsoe so that they might travel and attend theatrical events. Bishop Bledsoe briefly offered his word of appreciation, and was greeted by the conference with a standing ovation.

General Conference Report

Don Underwood gave the report from the General Conference Delegation, inviting the lay and clergy delegation to join him on the platform. Underwood expressed his appreciation for the powerful manner in which the delegation worked together. Underwood then reported that the effort to restructure the general agencies had failed. Underwood began with history regarding the Call to Action campaign, highlighting reports commissioned by that campaign.

The General Boards and Agencies do great work individually; however, due to the autonomous structure, they are not collaborative. Agencies dictate rather than serve, have their own agenda, compete with Annual Conferences, and the issues of autonomy and lack of accountability get in the way of alignment and connection. This was not an attempt to restructure the church but to restructure the agencies with a leader who could pull the agencies out of silos and require them to collaborate on everything, including apportionments.

Underwood reported that a handful of general agency secretaries, unwilling to give up autonomy, worked against the plan. They won. Plan UMC, declared unconstitutional by the Judicial Council, was a well-crafted compromise. Underwood does not believe that the plan was unconstitutional. Those portions deemed unconstitutional could easily have been remedied. Underwood expressed high regard for individual members of the Judicial Council but stated that Ruling #1210 was very damaging to the Church.

Richard Hearne reported on the debate on homosexuality. Hearne stated that he had begun the process three General Conferences ago as a staunch conservative on the issue but has changed his mind considerably. He reported that he had worked diligently to remove the phrase from the Book of Discipline that the practice of homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." Hearne reported that even the Hamilton-Slaughter amendment to Par. 161.F, stating that not all agree with this phrase, had also failed. Members of General Conference from the Central Conferences, particularly Africa, voted together, making the amendment impossible to pass. Hearne urged the next General Conference to make the change.

Underwood thanked the Conference for the support of many who attended and supported General Conference and the delegation in person and through prayer. Underwood stated that the General Conference had been rendered "impotent" by the rulings of the Judicial Council but that the church

was not dead. Underwood emphasized that what the church needs is a change of culture in which social justice comes together with the powerful proclamation of the need for a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Underwood moved the endorsement of Gary Mueller as Bishop. The motion carried with a standing ovation. Mueller responded that the North Texas Conference is his home and that he is ready to go as bishop or come back home.

Jan Davis expressed a word of appreciation for the leadership of Don Underwood and Ricky Harrison. She then announced that the Annual Conference could nominate persons to General Boards through a jurisdictional pool and that Clayton Oliphint would take these names to Jurisdictional Conference. By Discipline, all of the delegation were nominated, filling each of the required categories: Javier Escalera, Dee Weaver—Hispanic; Peggy Larney—Native American; Chiv In, Ron Koo, Asian-American; Sarah Coissant, Cassidy Wohlfarth, Jennifer Balcirak, Maggie White, Robert Rohlf, Meaghan Rohlf, Olivia Dunlap, Rachel Magruder, James Lawrence, Adam Spore, Mary Schaffer, Jennifer Moltira, and Brittany Burrows—Young Adult; Matthew Paul, Mallory Magruder, Macy Crone, Jamal Pinson, Carson Ward, and Imani Harris—Youth; Tom Hudspeth, Charles Lee—Disabilities; Pres Pimentel, Espie del Rosario—Pacific Islander; Maria Dixon Hall—African-American. Davis moved that the names nominated from the floor be approved as nominees for the jurisdictional pool. Motion carried. Davis stated that nominees must provide contact information to the conference secretary. Larry Larney, Native American, was added by amendment.

Center for Connectional Resources

Conference Treasurer Jodi Smith presented the report for the Center for Connectional Resources. Smith congratulated the conference on their 95.8% payout of apportionments this year. She presented a banner from Africa University, sent to the conference in appreciation for the support of the North Texas Conference to Africa University.

Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Larry Womack presented the Board of Pensions report. Womack thanked his committee for a job well done. He expressed his joy at a one million dollar refund received due to HealthFlex participants becoming healthier. Legislative Items #8-11 [LA 8-11] were presented and approved.

Council on Finance and Administration

Bill Baxley introduced Legislative Item #7 [LA 7]. He first thanked the committee members who had served for the past four years on the Council on Finance and Administration. In addition, he thanked the center's Core Leadership chairs, Larry George, Jim Ozier, Keith Payne Boone, Jodi Smith and previous conference treasurer Marvin Guier for reducing the apportionment budget by 11% over the past five years. Baxley pointed out that all these persons were responsible for putting that money back in the local church. He praised the 95.8% apportionment payout in the midst of challenging economic times and reported that 269 of 300 churches had a 100% payout. He affirmed the Northwest and East districts for paying 100%.

Legislative Item #7 [LA 7] was presented in three sections for vote. Jodi Smith was elected as conference treasurer for the upcoming quadrennium. Thomas Stephen and Co., LLP was elected as the conference auditing firm. Baxley then moved that the conference apportionment budget be accepted for 2013, noting that the apportionment figure would be going down by 6/10 of 1% and

that the jurisdictional piece would be finalized after July. Bill Gavitt moved that the legislation be tabled until Tuesday afternoon. Motion failed. The proposed budget was adopted.

Insurance Advisory Committee

Scott Smith presented the Insurance Advisory report. Smith gave a history of using United Methodist Property and Casualty Trust satisfactorily until internal changes with UMPACT coincided with two bad years of losses within the conference, noting that most of the losses were weather related. As premiums increased substantially in October of 2011, the Bishop and others called together an Insurance Advisory Task Force, members of which were called to the platform—all with extensive experience in insurance, and all having signed a non-conflict-of-interest statement. The result was a completed detailed analysis and a subsequent search in the market, saving the conference \$800,000 and entering into an agreement with local broker MHB, who has a long-term record of working with churches. Within a week of the new agreement, there were between 9 and 13 tornadoes in the conference area, impacting 9 churches. They were able to receive a very favorable deductible. Each church will receive a visit within a year aimed at loss-prevention to help lower the deductibles.

Board of Trustees

Paul Goodrich directed the conference members to their workbooks for the presentation of two resolutions.

Legislative Item 15 [LA 15] allowed for the merger of El Buen Samaritano UMC and Elmwood UMC. This must be approved by both the Rio Grande Conference and the North Texas Conference. Motion carried.

Legislative Item 16 [LA 16] allowed for the closure of St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Arthur City, to merge with Mt. Zion UMC, Paris, Texas, with assets transferring to conference Trustees. Motion carried.

Nehemiah Project

Paul Rasmussen introduced the report from the Nehemiah Task Force. Kory Knott led the conference in an exercise with green stress balls, which were thrown into nets. A brief video followed. Kate Miner and the Revelation choir from Custer Road UMC sang, "Don't Stop Believin'." Rasmussen said that Annual Conference can be something people want to attend by building a clearly defined mission. He said that the Annual Conference can either be married to the model or to the mission and that Jesus, in the Markan story of healing on Sabbath, changed the model but stayed married to the mission.

Statistician's Report

Jodi Smith resented the statistician's report, indicating that in the past year, almost 800 more people gathered on Sundays to worship than last year. In addition, there were 3,000 professions of faith last year. James Lawrence, Project Transformation intern from Custer Road, told his story, and Stephanie Hayes, new Perkins student and candidate for ordained ministry, told hers. Smith celebrated the 150,000 members across the conference.

Nehemiah Project (continued)

Rasmussen read from the book of Nehemiah and recommended the implementation of the Nehemiah Project over a period of time. He thanked the task force for their faithfulness and dedication to making Annual Conference very special. The proposal includes transitioning to a third party task force, inviting world class speakers, including integrated worship, increasing funding through vendor fees and advance marketing.

Discussion ensued with questions from the floor. One concern was that the program not be a prepackaged business with little opportunity for input or debate, but a place where members of the annual conference get to be participants. Another concern related to providing a space for the Holy Spirit to work. Questions arose about who would pay the participant fees, and whether there are resources already allocated for a new venue. Affirmations included the witness of the Holy Spirit at work, a need for change without over-studying and debating, a request for specifying Holy Conferencing. Chris Yost called for a close to the debate. The motion was seconded. Bishop Bledsoe announced that Rasmussen would speak to concerns after lunch and that a written ballot would be taken on the Nehemiah Project.

Zan Holmes, Jr. closed the morning session with prayer.

MONDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

Bishop Bledsoe called the conference to order. Linda Parks offered the opening prayer, and Bishop Scott Jones was introduced to the conference. Bishop Jones addressed the conference briefly, expressing his joy to be present for the ordination of his son Arthur tonight.

Nehemiah Project (continued)

Paul Rasmussen addressed questions that had been previously asked. The third party would be talent within the conference, working collaboratively with the cabinet. North Texas is one of the only conferences that does not charge a registration fee currently. Participation of Annual Conference members is a top-tier value. Rasmussen said that the Holy Spirit has been present all along in the process. Voting for the Nehemiah Project would enable the Nehemiah Group to carry on their work.

Bishop Bledsoe called for the tellers to distribute ballots for a written vote. He then recognized Bruce Weaver for being in attendance at his 71st Annual Conference. Bishop Bledsoe led the conference in a midday prayer by Bishop Rueben Job.

Texas Methodist Foundation

On behalf of TMF Board and staff, Tom Locke thanked the conference, reporting approximately 400 million dollars in asset management and 90 million in loans to churches in the North Texas Conference. TMF is the largest foundation in Methodism, their endowment having grown to over 25 million dollars. Locke reported that the main change took place in the 1990's, when TMF stopped thinking of itself as a financial organization and started thinking of itself as a ministry. They took time to figure out principles, values, and a sense of purpose. Significant ministry has been in the area of clergy leadership training and support for the sake of the church. Locke stated that no institution has a better chance of filling the gap between potential and present reality than

the United Methodist Church. He noted that TMF and the conference had partnered in providing Bishop Schnase's book to each member of Annual Conference in 2012 and that they regarded it as an investment. Locke expressed gratitude to Bishop Bledsoe for his work on the board. The report was received by acclamation.

Bishop Bledsoe announced the vote on the Nehemiah Project. 746 voted "For." 65 voted against with 1 abstention and 3 blank ballots. Motion carried.

Core Leadership Team

Alfred White invited other CLT members to come forward, thanked the Conference, and presented a video entitled *Methodists in Black*. Four areas of focus were highlighted on the video and humor underscored the areas of focus. Black thanked Wes Magruder and FUMC Rowlett media team for the video. He referenced the written report in the conference workbook and encouraged members to be present for Center reports. The report was received with applause.

Center for New Church Development and Congregational Transformation

Jim Ozier introduced a video and then called on Liliana Pena Rangel to pray for all the churches in the Annual Conference. Ozier emphasized that all can do the church's work better when connected, like pieces of a puzzle, all trying to figure it out together. Ozier said that is what the Center does. Mission Insight gives great data on a church's mission field and is paid for with apportionment dollars. This is one of four centers, and they are still working out how to be connected. Ozier lifted up many examples of good teamwork—Diane Presley building bridges for Edgar Bazan to replace her, James Minor preparing the way for David Rangel, Albert Fisher for William DelValle-Gonzalez. Ozier asked church planters to stand. The video told of new church starts in a strip mall in Paris, a coffeehouse format in Dallas with generationally specific ministry, "The Village" out of St. Luke's "Community" UMC, and Corinth. Gloria Fowler is at the center to help in this area of transformation.

Ozier explained the center would use the Healthy Church Initiative and Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, as well as continuing to offer seminars and summits as vehicles of transformation, replacing the Don Nations DNA program. Nak Hoon Cho closed the report, singing *The Lord's Prayer* in Korean. The report was approved by acclamation.

Bishop Bledsoe affirmed Ozier for his work and called for a break.

Board of Ordained Ministry

Bishop Bledsoe called the conference to order and introduced Todd Harris as Chair of Preparation and Qualifications. Each ordinand had three minutes for their live presentation. Debbie Chapman introduced the candidates for deacon.

Beth Lutz, a sports minister at Trietsch, said that she had chalked up 69,888 hours on her journey to date, had worn out six mentors, been guided by two senior pastors, and enlisted one unauthorized bull dozer to dig up athletic fields. She gave credit to many people who have shown her how to build bridges and said that she wants to touch others as she has been touched.

Kay DeBlance, minister of outreach, youth and missions at Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, told of the Holy Spirit's sweeping her off her feet in Tegucigalpa.

She gave thanks to her mentors, charging all, in the words of Shane Claiborne, to “continue to dream big, live small, love loudly, interrupt injustice, and surprise the world with grace.”

Ugonna Onuoha, staff chaplain at Children’s Medical Center, expressed her gratitude to the North Texas Conference and asked for prayers for families of the people who had died the day before in Nigeria. Onuoha said she finds healing at Children’s Medical and claims it for her church. She said that agents called to righteousness and healing are called to fast, to pray, and to give so that the kingdom of God will be realized in the world.

Todd Harris introduced the candidates for elder and said it is the first time that the conference has ordained two people from Africa in the same year—Onuoha as deacon and Jimmy Greene as elder.

Beth LaBella-Foster thanked many people, including Ben Marshall, for over twenty years of spiritual friendship, collaboration, and holy conversations; her husband Greg, and her daughter Elise who endured more take-out food than any child should have to and was always there to give her a hug; and the many people who have walked with her on the journey. She said she had never felt alone, that she was rooted and grounded in love, freeing her to be hopeful for the future and released from the bonds of fear and angst.

Jimmy Greene said that ordination was both a personal and professional achievement, not a goal but a reminder of our mission to reach out in the world. He explained that his accent comes from someone who fled Liberia, his country of birth, and immigrated as a refugee to become a U.S. citizen. He thanked many pastors who helped him along the way, and he thanked God for God’s grace and prayed for peace in the world.

Melissa Hatch said that she wanted to talk about three things—the past, the present, and the future. She expressed gratitude for a past that included her family, including her father who died in 2007 and who would have been so happy that she was standing there. Her present included gratitude to those who shaped her along the way, including FUMC Plano. She said the future only God knows but she hopes she is able to fulfill Micah 6:8, working together with others to make more disciples of Jesus Christ.

Julie Macpherson, graduate of Austin College, quoted Clarissa Pinkola Estes, “One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul.” She expressed gratitude to all who had shared the light of their souls with her – Arapaho and Sun creek where she learned that when we help each other to focus on God’s light, we will find our way, and Perkins, her family, and many pastors and mentors. She expressed her indebtedness to all and said that she never felt alone.

Cheryl Murphy’s call first came to her when she was 15. She has had many encouragers along the way. One of the greatest gifts of being a United Methodist, she said, is the connection. It came to her powerfully at Lake Bridgeport camp this past summer, witnessing about Jesus’ love and serving as the body of Christ. The world needs us to be churches filled with the Holy Spirit.

Arthur Jones, a fourth generation graduate of the University of Kansas, thanked his dad, for growing up he got to see what it meant to love God’s children through his dad and

his family. Many have taught him, helped raise him, and some even helped change his diaper. He recalled being in Kenya with the Savutos and hearing Jerry's prayer for those within a stone's throw who were starving. Jones remarked that there are many within a stone's throw starving for the love and light of Jesus Christ. There is much to be done. "Let's get to work!"

Nancy Sherman thanked all those who have been on this ten year journey with her through both the raging rapids as well as the calm tranquil waters. She thanked God for the river rocks that slowed her down over the ten years to learn the powerful presence of God—a week in Taize, a mission trip to Cameroon, CPE, many spiritual retreats. She thanked God for the rapids and storms that have shaped and continue to mold her.

Bishop Bledsoe called for a standing ovation for the ordinands and encouraged all to be present for their ordination.

The Conference Secretary made announcements and invited everyone to take home one of the green balls on their table, pray for the person whose name is on the ball, and "don't stop believing."

Courtesies and Resolutions

Jackie Waiters-Lee offered the Courtesies and Resolutions. Waiters-Lee announced that John and Rona Fleming were celebrating their 18th wedding anniversary. She then called on Lucretia Facen, Jeremiah Booker, and Ouida Lee to read a resolution from the Black Methodists for Church Renewal, African American Clergy Fellowship, and North Texas Black Clergywomen.

Resolution Regarding the Early Retirement of Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe

We, the members and friends of the North Texas Conference African American Clergy Fellowship, the North Texas Conference Black Methodists for Church Renewal, and the North Texas Conference Black Clergywomen, offer the following resolution.

Whereas, we know that life in ministry is always a learning process whether as a member of the laity, clergy, or episcopacy. We are all on a journey. We are all seeking to grow in our faith walk with God, and

Whereas, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe has announced his retirement as an active Bishop in the United Methodist Church, and

Whereas, our hearts are saddened and our souls deeply troubled by the recent unexpected early retirement of Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, and

Whereas, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe has provided faithful and visionary leadership through some extremely difficult times in the North Texas Conference, and

Whereas, we have found Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe to be a righteous man of conviction, moral consciousness, and deep love for the United Methodist Church whose leadership has been firm but fair, and

Whereas, we believe Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe possesses the type of qualities we need in men and women of God in active episcopal leadership in our conference and in our connection, for the struggles that lie before us, and

Whereas, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe has at least two more quadrennial remaining as an active and effective Bishop of the United Methodist Church before the mandatory age of retirement. Therefore,

Be it resolved that we, the undersigned appreciate and affirm the leadership of Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe in the North Texas Conference over the last four years, and

Be it also resolved that we, the undersigned ask that Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe prayerfully reconsider and rescind his early retirement, and

Be it also resolved that we, the undersigned anticipate, expect and look forward to the return of Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe to the North Texas conference as our Bishop for another quadrennium, and

Be it finally resolved that we, the undersigned stand in unified solidarity, in our support of our Bishop, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe.

Prayerfully and hopefully submitted,

Rev. Lucretia Facen, Chairperson
North Texas Conference African American Clergy Fellowship

Dr. Jeremiah Booker, Chairperson
North Texas Conference Black Methodists for Church Renewal

Dr. Ouida Lee, National Chairperson
North Texas Conference Black Clergywomen

Bishop Bledsoe indicated his appreciation for the affirmation included in the resolution and said that he would address some of the issues that lead to his decision during the closing session tomorrow and would respond to the resolution at that time.

The session was adjourned at 3:56.

MONDAY EVENING

Service of Ordination St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas

Reverend Robert Hasley welcomed the conference to St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Plano for the service of ordination. Music was provided by the chancel choirs of FUMC Plano, FUMC McKinney, and FUMC Coppell. Following the processional hymn, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe led the congregation in a remembrance of our baptism and a reaffirmation of the ministry entrusted to all God's people.

Bishop Bledsoe introduced the preacher for the service, Bishop James Swanson, episcopal leader of the Holston Annual Conference in Tennessee. Bishop Swanson offered a challenging message that urged Holy Spirit-inspired patience and action in a sermon entitled “Ministry Requires That You Live *Mas*.” He joked, “I borrowed some of the title from the Taco Bell commercial.” Bishop Swanson based his sermon on Acts 2:1–21 and spoke to those being commissioned and ordained by painting a word picture of the emotions that the disciples were experiencing in the Book of Acts. He said that the disciples were anxious to do what Jesus wanted them to do but needed to wait on the power of the Holy Spirit. He cautioned them to be patient, that there would be some circumstances for which they were not prepared in school. “Ministry requires more than what you think it does. The bishop sends, but it is God who calls and will be with you always.”

Present for the commissioning and ordination were two additional bishops present to assist in the ordination of family members. Bishop Scott Jones, episcopal leader of the Kansas East and Kansas West Annual Conferences, was present for the ordination of his son Arthur Jones. Bishop Sunday N. Onuoha of The Methodist church in Nigeria assisted in the ordination of his wife Ugonna Onuoha.

Bishop Bledsoe presided in the commissioning and ordination rituals. Two deacons and seven elders were commissioned. Those commissioned as deacon were JamesPaul Aidan Qazilbash and Gary Boyd Stephens. Those commissioned for the work of an elder were Carolyn Jackson Allbritton, Scot Christian Bontrager, Brian Paul Dierolf, Jason Robert McConnell, Penny Lynn Mitchell, Mona Lisa Millard, and Michael Dennis Moore.

Three deacons and seven elders were received into membership in full connection. Elizabeth Dorothy Lutz, Ugonna Ndukwo Onuoha, and Kay Lynn DeBlance were ordained deacons. Jimmy Decee Greene, Jr., Melissa Allen Hatch, Arthur Dyatt Jones, Elizabeth LaBella-Foster, Julie Mielke Macpherson, Cheryl Bromwich Murphy, and Nancy Sherman were ordained as elders.

As part of the service’s sending forth, Bishop Bledsoe invited anyone in the congregation who believed they may be receiving the call to come to the altar. A reception for the newly commissioned and ordained followed immediately after the service at Custer Road UMC.

TUESDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

June 5, 2012

Opening Song

Bishop Bledsoe called the Conference to order at 8:30 a.m. and asked Karen Chraska to lead the conference in singing the opening hymn, *Standing on the Promises*. Bishop Bledsoe offered a prayer from Ruben Job’s *Three Simple Questions*, asking God to transform all into God’s likeness.

Southern Methodist University

Bishop Bledsoe introduced Gerald Turner, President of SMU. Turner addressed the conference and presented slides describing the groundbreaking of a new residential commons. He described the building projects in process, and those in the planning session. The capital campaign’s goal is 750 million dollars, with 613 million raised. Total assets are 4 billion. Turner described the impact of SMU on Dallas, the graduate schools and their programs, satellite campuses, and funds for Perkins students matched by the Perkins Foundation.

Nominations Committee

Richard Hearne and Linda Parks presented the report of the Nominations Committee, explaining that the process was new and that people had been invited to express interest in the various committees with a profile sheet turned in to the Conference and compiled by the Missional Center office. In addition, the Nominations Committee, the four district superintendents, and four additional representatives met twice to slot people for the positions. Hearne announced that all positions on all committees required by the Book of Discipline had been filled. Bishop Bledsoe asked if everyone who had asked for a job had received one. Hearne answered that almost all laity had and all but 6–7 clergy in that those had applied for positions already filled.

There were two corrections to the Board of Trustees for Southwestern University. April Bristow moved that Margie Steele replace April Johnson Bristow on the Committee on Finance and Administration. Ben Shinn stated that Pat Beghtel-Mahle would replace Gloria Fowler on Conference Relations. Ray Karrer asked where campus ministry now falls in the nominations and Keith Payne Boone replied that campus ministry now lies with the Advisory Committee under the Center for Leadership.

The report was approved in its entirety as Legislative Item #12 [LA 12]. Bishop Bledsoe congratulated Hearne and Parks on a fine report. The Bishop, Hearne, and Parks led an installation liturgy for the newly elected officers. Gifford Long requested that the Core Leadership Team present a schematic showing where all sub-units are now housed. Bishop Bledsoe agreed that this was a helpful idea and asked Keith Payne Boone to help with implementation.

Laity Address

Outgoing Conference Lay Leader Richard Hearne had asked permission of Bishop Bledsoe to dedicate half his time to incoming Lay Leader Linda Parks. Hearne reminded the conference of John Rosenberg's adage that if one is giving a farewell address and is crying but no one else is, then it is time to sit down. Hearne thanked all who had helped him along the way. He gave special thanks to his wife Candy and to Bishop Bledsoe. He then spoke to the laity, challenging them to accept responsibility to support the United Methodist Church with membership vows. He said the movement must start with the laity. Hearne talked about his high school football team who simply made up their minds to be winners, and over a period of years, moved from being a losing team to a winning team. Hearne challenged the laity to decide to be vital churches, connecting with each other and with people around them. "Stand for something! We don't spend enough time on areas of agreement. If it's going to be, it's up to me." Hearne concluded with John Denver's words, "Friends, I will remember you, think of you, pray for you. And when another day is through, I'll still remember you." Hearne received a standing ovation. He introduced Linda Parks, giving her the Lay Leader pin.

Parks shared ways that Hearne had mentored her, challenging her to encourage laity to stand up and be counted, speaking from the heart even when people did not want to hear his challenges, modeling an active prayer life. Parks lifted up a pair of Hearne's shoes, proclaiming that the laity could work together to fill his big shoes continuing strong advocacy, growing in partnership with the clergy, praying for one another, making sure there is a well-prepared Conference Lay Leader elect, increasing lay leadership through the Board of Laity, and growing the youth lay leadership. Parks credited Bishop Bledsoe with strengthening the laity by starting Laity Day with the Bishop four years ago. She thanked the Bishop for being a good listener.

Bishop Bledsoe complimented the Lay Leadership in the North Texas Conference, and the Conference applauded them.

Center for Leadership Development

Aleze Fulbright joined Keith Payne Boone for the Center presentation. Leadership development opportunities include the Confirmation Celebration with the Bishop on February 17, 2013. Camping programs included over 2000 campers. The Marks of Fruitfulness program was implemented for all persons under appointment, providing an ongoing dialogue between pastors and staff-parish relations committees. Campus ministry was highlighted as an important means through which principled Christian leaders are developed.

Boone introduced Legislative Item #13 [LA 13] regarding equitable compensation for 2012–2013, reflecting a 1.85% increase, and a budget request of \$65,000. The motion was approved by a show of hands. Fulbright brought amended Legislative Item #14 [LA 14] regarding MinistrySafe to become the Conference standard implemented effective January 1, 2013. Training will be provided between Annual Conference and the end of the year. Bishop Bledsoe opened the floor for questions.

An amendment to the amendment was accepted as friendly, including other entities in addition to the church as Mother's Day Out and pre-schools. An amendment to the amendment was accepted in relation to strike the words "for all persons" and insert "for all volunteers." Other clarifications were requested, including whether or not parents of new students at a day school would be allowed to volunteer and non-Christian parents be allowed to volunteer and if the requirements would apply to volunteers for Project Transformation. Charles Harrison moved to table the motion. He was declared out of order. Harrison then recommended that the issue be deferred. The Bishop asked that Boone and Fulbright meet with everyone who has questions and return to address those questions at 3 p.m. today.

Board of Ordained Ministry

Gary Mueller presented the report of the Board of Ordained Ministry. James Minor, chair of the Committee on Certification, presented specialized ministry certification certificates to Evelyn Glass in the area of Christian Education and Kristi Hassell in music ministry.

Todd Harris, chair of the Committee on Preparation and Qualifications, spoke of the success of the Making Disciples Project for those applying for ordination and full membership. This project is now a requirement for all candidates in the connection. Harris presented the newly ordained to the conference for greeting and applause. He told the current candidates to "trust the process, embrace the process, make it your friend."

Mueller honored the local pastors, who were greeted by the Conference. He then asked the newly and previously retired to stand and be greeted, followed by certified lay ministers. Mueller thanked the Bishop for his support of the Board of Ordained Ministry; he thanked the executive committee and the extended board.

The Conference Secretary asked that the first two rows be cleared for family members of those being memorialized. Larry George gave the closing prayer before the Memorial Service.

Memorial Service

The 2012 Annual Conference Memorial Service honored the memories of six clergy and ten clergy spouses. Conference Secretary Judith Reedy called the conference to order to the Memorial Service. Ugonna Oluoha carried the Christ candle to the table and family members of those being honored processed to the hymn, “For All the Saints.” Bishop Bledsoe led the Call to Worship and a Taize refrain was led by Keum Hwang, Brian Hehn, and Rafael Fontalvo. Debbie Lyons called the congregation into prayer and Allen Zugelter read scripture.

Reverend Jan Davis’ memorial sermon, “Living Letters,” reflected on 2 Timothy 4:1–8 and Paul’s letter encouraging Timothy to do good work. Davis brought words of comfort to the bereaved family members. She, too, had lost a loved one in the past year. Her mother, a church secretary at Epworth UMC in Western Pennsylvania, died on Christmas Eve. “My mother left each daughter a letter. In frail writing, she wrote in my letter, ‘I love you. I believe in you. I will be watching over you. Persevere in the work God called you to.’” Davis drew an analogy between the tents used on camping trips and our mortal bodies, known also as tents. “We are connected to these that we celebrate and remember today. We share so much in common. We have had the opportunity to know Jesus Christ. This is not the time to be timid. It is a time to be bold until it is time to take down our tents and go home to Jesus.”

The congregation responded with *It is Well with My Soul*, and conference secretary Judith Reedy read the names of each of the saints. With the reading of each name, persons in the congregation whose lives were touched by that minister or spouse stood in tribute. The persons being remembered were:

Clergy—Douglas Ewing Jackson, James B. Palmer, Sr., Elwood Spencer Poore, C. W. Anderson, Kathryn L. Mackenzie, Edgar James Bell

Clergy Spouses—Harriet McGee, Annette Palmer, Elizabeth Lucille Leffel, Hazel Johnson, Allie Aikin, Margaret “Peggy” Railey, Ida Louise Noblin, Lucille Greenhaw, Effie Vaughan, Dorris Youngblood

Julie Macpherson led the congregation in an affirmation of faith, and Bishop Bledsoe sent the congregation forth as children of the Light.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

Milton Gutierrez opened the afternoon session with prayer.

Young Persons’ Address

Kelly Carpenter, Youth Ministry Coordinator, introduced Sarah Perkins, Wesley UMC Greenville. She asked the conference to stand and repeat “I’m alive, awake, alert, enthusiastic.” Perkins taught a song with hand motions, celebrated the life of youth of the North Texas Conference, of mid-winter retreats, and local church events. She then asked persons to raise and lower hands by age groups. Not many were left under the age of 30. Perkins encouraged the Conference to believe in the youth and provide guidance and direction, both to see and hear children.

Incoming CCYM chair Sarah Finney, FUMC Denton, then greeted the Conference, lifting up the value of the voices of youth. Finney challenged the young people to step up to their opportunities and responsibilities because there is work to be done. The youth plan to increase their fundraising

for Project Transformation and Zoe Ministry. She asked if the adults would create space for the youth to walk beside them in the work of the Conference. The Conference stood twice to honor the youth.

C. C. Young Memorial Home

Stephen Cutshaw, Licensing Administrator, reported on C. C. Young, chartered in 1922 and founded by Christopher Conley, at its current site since 1961. Cutshaw noted that the continuing care retirement center has an emphasis on providing more options for long-term care. The economy is presenting a number of financial challenges, with cuts from both Medicare and Medicaid and further cuts expected. Cutshaw showed slides highlighting the campus and building programs currently underway. They serve over 400, have 239 independent living apartments, 113 apartments providing medication and food assistance, and health services cares for 134 patients. Hospice provides professional care in the final stages of life; home health offers companion services, therapy, and transitional care; and Wellness Center has a rehab gym, exercise area, and a nationally ranked Wii bowling team. C. C. Young is seeking a benevolence fund of seven million dollars to provide care for needy residents.

Retiring Clergy

Dennis Wilkinson, chairperson of the Conference Relations Committee, introduced the retiring clergy.

Leighton Bearden recalled that he grew up in a church when it was not a good day unless you went home feeling bad. It was a church of “thou shalt nots.” It was against everything, including dancing. After football games, they had to settle for hayrides, on dark country roads, and cold nights, wrapped up in blankets. His call, contrary to some, was not so much a surrender to preach but more like walking through a welcome door, good news without being wrapped in guilt.

Bearden thanked Perkins, the Conference and his colleagues. He noted that there had been some sacrifices. Looking out at some of his colleagues, he concluded that ministry, when done right, results in significant hair loss. Professing his oath to the itinerancy, he said that Bishop Donna had said that she was moving to Colorado, had invited him to go with her, and he was going.

Glen Blackmon, Sr. was not present, but Wilkinson thanked him for his twenty-four years of service.

Georgjean Blanton, retiring after 30 years of ministry, said she had thought a long time about what she would say to the Annual Conference when she could do so without worrying about repercussion yet now she found herself simply wanting to say “thank you.” She thanked God for weaving together her call of many colors in a multitude of settings. She thanked the Annual Conference, especially the clergywomen colleagues, and her home church Holy Covenant who sent her forth as a young widow with a child to live out its theology. She thanked Perkins where she watched herself on video as the first woman she had ever seen preach and her teacher Zan Holmes who said “Amen.”

Blanton thanked her churches—Kessler Park, Irwindell, Casa View, New World, and Preston Hollow; her Pathways board for keeping her grounded, those who understood her call to be a spiritual director; St. John’s, Austin where she will continue to work with her

friend and partner in ministry Paul Escamilla; and her family who made sacrifices, especially daughter Sonnet who followed her to seminary and every church after that. Blanton concluded by thanking the man who stood beside her, her husband Mike, her greatest cheerleader and most sensitive critic, who talked her off a ledge more than once, and when it was time climbed up and jumped with her. She thanked God that the wild ride was not done.

Betty Crowell, appointed to extension ministry in Buenos Aires for 15 years, spoke of the many individuals and churches who have helped her throughout her ministry. She said that Jim Brown had sent her off to Perkins and told her to tell the story. She credited Bishop Blake with sending her off to extension ministry and thanked Jo Biggerstaff for always having a smile for her and a word of “welcome home.” She thanked her family—her two daughters, her son, and her husband for encouraging her.

She is looking forward to the coming year, because last year was a tough year. Her daughter had colon cancer, her granddaughter by the age of 10 months had had 4 surgeries and there were other close family members who were ill. She is confident in God’s healing power and she says, “Send me, that I may be salt where it is needed and light so that illumination may come through me in Christ Jesus my Lord and Savior.”

Albert Fisher grew up in the Salvation Army, then joined the U. S. Navy, then entered Salvation Army officer school to serve for over 20 years. Fisher became a United Methodist pastor and has served as a local pastor. He traced his move to Vietnam, Christmas, 1966, at the Christmas Eve service. The chaplain was an Episcopal priest and offered him Communion. Fisher did not practice Holy Communion and was not intending to share, but the Spirit led him to the rail. He was offered bread and the cup. He drank deeply, and the chaplain said, “Save some for others.” Who could not love that vision.

A Catholic friend gave Fisher a chalice, which he brought with him. He told of being invited by Tom Graves to a supply position. He encouraged the clergy to hold the cup high and share it with all.

John Gowling was not present but his ministry was affirmed by voice.

Michael House has a new job and was not able to be present, but his ministry was affirmed by applause.

Kathy Johnson was ordained a deacon with the first class of deacons in 1997 after having served 18 years as a diaconal. Johnson said that her claim to fame is that she was born early in the first year of the baby boom. She said that boomers have made a lot of noise about every experience they have ever had in their lives. She does not even like the word retirement, but there have been contests to uncover a new word.

Johnson thanked her husband for his sacrifices, his infinite patience, and his sense of humor. She said that her daughters and grandchildren were the light of her life and that the three-year-old had a direct line to God. She was grateful for Casa View, Cochran Chapel, University Park, Northaven, Christ the Servant Lutheran in Allen, and now as minister of art and worship at St. Stephen UMC in Mesquite. She walked down memory lane with Will Bailey, Wally Chappell, De Wiksten, John Thornburg, Leighton Bearden, Bourdon Smith, and Thomas Q. Robbins, thanking each for shaping her ministry. Johnson concluded by proclaiming that she is not retired but renewed.

Steve Matthews was not present, but his ministry was affirmed by applause.

Calvin Page's ministry was affirmed by voice.

Ben Shinn said that he was recommended for a license to preach by the quarterly conference of Highland Park UMC 50 years ago. He expressed his appreciation to his golf group—Ken Shamblin, John Shuler, and Henry Suche, because that is how he took care of himself. Over the years, others have been added, including his brother George. Shinn gave thanks for the variety of positions to which he had been appointed—from associate to founding pastor to Assistant to the Bishop. He has put roofs on three sanctuaries and celebrated 100 year anniversaries twice and a sixtieth once. He said he was concluding his ministry in the best church he had ever served, Walnut Hill.

He acknowledged his daughters, Ruth Anne and Laura, watching the video stream, as casualties of the itinerate system, going many years without a Sunday School class or youth group as they moved around. Shinn spoke of how very successful they have both been in the work place and of the fun times he hopes to spend with them and his three granddaughters. He then thanked his best friend and wife Mary, for her support and said that she would continue her profession as flute teacher and as a member of the symphony. When she recently asked if he would do it all over again, he replied, "Of course I would." He concluded with Robert Frost's poem "And that has made all the difference."

William Boyd Smith, Highland Park UMC, was not present, but his ministry was affirmed by voice.

Carl Sterling, retired Coast Guard and local pastor with 7 years of service in the North Texas Conference, greeted the Conference with "Howdy!" Sterling told two stories, one about Jesus' turning water into wine, and another about two friends who made a pact that whoever died first would let the other know if there is baseball in heaven. The friend comes back with the good news that there is and the bad news that his friend is pitching the next night.

In closing, Sterling advised everyone never to give up. He recalled a personal time when he had been called to the bedside of a dying man in the hospital. The man was obviously touched by Sterling's offer to connect with him. When he made it home, he invited Sterling to come to his home, and there Sterling was able to tell him about Jesus.

Wilkinson asked all retirees to stand for a round of appreciation from the Conference.

The Bishop granted a moment of personal privilege to Paul Escamilla who said farewell to the North Texas Conference and expressed his gratitude as he was transferring to the Central Texas Conference.

The Conference adjourned for a break.

Center for Missional Outreach

Larry George presented the report from the Center for Missional Outreach and thanked Marji Bishir for her work in keeping the Conference informed about the Center's many programs. George acknowledged that facts and figures are not enough and that what matters are stories of people. He focused on Bachman Lake and Christ's Foundry United Methodist Mission with a video highlighting the major steps in its establishment. Owen Ross, pastor of Christ's Foundry, thanked

the Conference for sticking with the project, launched in 2000. Ross and Christ's Foundry were greeted with a standing ovation, having celebrated twelve years of work.

George reminded the conference of Margaret Mead's assertion that a small group of people can change the world, and that is all that has ever changed it. He then called on everyone to stop normalizing the existence of disease and poverty. He said that Jesus was asked, "Are you the one?" and that outsiders here and in other places are asking, "Are you the one?" George then introduced Elaine Heath as one who says that we are the ones.

Heath introduced New Day, a program that integrates disciple formation, justice, and evangelism. She presented a video describing New Day, a missional, monastic, and Methodist faith community. She described New Day communities as life boats, attached to the anchor of a local church. Heath described the relationship between FUMC, Mabank and Cherokee Shores, where a lay couple were called to buy an old house in a very poor area, rehab it, and start Kids Clubhouse, an afterschool program. Refugee ministries occur in two New Day communities, including Indigo Apartments in Garland, where a large population of refugees meet weekly for worship and help getting into the new culture.

George introduced Jay Cole, who spoke about Crossroads Community Services, associated with FUMC Dallas. CCS opened its doors in May of 2001 and provides nutritious food, nutrition and life-skills training, as well as clothing. Ministry happens one-by-one, but it is also necessary to be strategic. CCS is the first agency in the U.S. to provide food based on the 2010 Dietary guidelines. In addition, CCS has decided to give each family more food per visit to help them eliminate the charity circuit, giving the clients time for job search, education, and caring for their families.

George challenged the conference again with Eric Folkerth, who spoke about the global health initiative. The Connections Band joined Eric onstage. Their shows raise money for UMCOR or Imagine No Malaria. Since March, 2006, they have had 21 shows, raising \$205,000. INM received \$104,000 of the total. Joe Stobaugh sang "If You're Out There." One by one, people began to stand, signifying those who were out there would sing aloud and stand with the missions of the North Texas Conference.

Center for Leadership Development

Keith Payne Boone and Aleze Fulbright revisited Legislative Item #14 [LA 14] regarding MinistrySafe. Jay Cousino described the capable people and the process used to answer the questions from the morning session and to make the resulting changes. Membership fees of \$5 per person were waived, replaced by an assessment of no more than \$300 per congregation. Kim Meyers walked the conference through the revised document, page by page. Keith Payne Boone stated that representation from all sizes of churches had been present to assist with the complexities of the amended legislation. Boone presented the amended legislation for consideration. The changes were in bold on the printed copies, including using consistent language of children, youth and vulnerable persons. The Bishop called for questions. John McLarty asked if persons would be barred if they had not attended training. Boone said that would be affirmative for conference events and that churches would have until January 2013 to comply. The report was approved by a voice vote.

Courtesies and Resolutions

Rusty Hedges presented courtesies and resolutions and thanked his committee who had helped over the last eight years. He announced that Bishop and Mrs. Swanson were safely home and celebrating their anniversary and that recognition would be sent. Hedges reported that clergy

spouses had raised \$432 for INM at their luncheon. He lifted up Lon Morris College as it has suspended operation.

Mary Beth Hardesty-Crouch introduced her new daughter.

Hedges read the closing resolution which was adopted by voice vote.

WHEREAS, the North Texas Conference held its annual session June 3-5, 2012 at the Plano Centre in Plano, Texas with the theme "I Will Pour out My Spirit on All Things." We as an Annual Conference have benefited from the tireless efforts of all those who have labored to make this year's conference a success; and

WHEREAS, Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., Rev. Mike Baughman and Rev. Jan Davis, have inspired us with their faithfulness in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ along with the challenges placed before us by our Conference Lay Leader Richard Hearne. As an Annual Conference we especially want to extend our thanks to Richard Hearne for his faithful service and tireless efforts as our Conference Lay leader over the four years.

WHEREAS, we have been inspired by the worship services as planned by the Conference Worship Committee. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who led us in worship; and

WHEREAS, we have received the reports of the boards and agencies which reported that the mission and ministry of the conference is moving forward. We listened with a profound sense of thanksgiving to the presentations of those to be ordained and those entering into a retired relationship; and

WHEREAS, we recognize the faithfulness of Dr. Larry George, Rev. Jodi Smith, Dr. Sheron Patterson and other members of the conference staff in supporting the work of our conference.

WHEREAS, the North Texas Conference extends its thanks to all the volunteers who have given so freely of the time and talents to this conference session and to the churches and staffs who have opened their doors to us; and

WHEREAS, the North Texas Conference wishes to recognize and extend our appreciation to Mrs. Leslie Bledsoe who has served with great dignity, faith and grace as the first lady of our Annual Conference for the last four years. We have been inspired by her continuing efforts to advocate for the blind and for those whose vision is impaired.

WHEREAS, we, assembled here as members of the North Texas Conference, wish to extend our gratitude and appreciation to Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, for his faithful efforts as he has led us through a very challenging time in the history of our conference. Over the last four years he has given of himself selflessly as we have worked to shape the future of our ministry to the people of North Texas. We wish Bishop and Mrs. Bledsoe God's richest blessings and many years of continued service to the United Methodist Church as he enters into retired status as a bishop of our church; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, as a covenant community shall proclaim to the world that God is indeed pouring out the Holy Spirit on all of the creation. By the grace given to us we will share the Gospel of Christ to an often dark and hurting world and recommit ourselves to the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through our prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness.

Respectfully submitted, The Committee on Courtesies and Resolutions

Rusty Hedges, Chair	Kathy McLean Davis
Shante Buckley	Jim Pledger
Sharon Coleman	Jackye Waiters-Lee

The resolution was adopted by voice vote. Bishop Bledsoe asked new appointees to move to their new church area for a service of covenant and the reading of appointments.

Service of Covenant and Sending Forth With Reading of Appointments

Larry George explained that since there would be so many center reports, what they needed was not a state of the church address but rather a service of covenant and sending forth to do mission, where the appointments were interwoven with the liturgy lifted with love from Wesley's Covenant Service. Bishop Bledsoe preached on Mark 5:19, the story of the man who had been healed and told to go back home and preach the gospel. Bishop Bledsoe described the little town of Marlin, Texas where he was born and Davis Chapel where he worshipped.

He said he believes that Christ is calling everyone to go back home, not to live in the past, not to the same thing, doing things the same way, but to live out the gospel back home where the people live. Bishop Bledsoe observed that Jesus, according to the scripture, was a boundary crosser. Legion, the man possessed by many demons, confronted Jesus and asked if he were going to make his life any worse. It is then that we learn that Jesus has the power over the demons over our lives as well. In appreciation for Jesus' breaking his shackles, Legion wanted to go with Jesus and work with him, but Jesus said, "Go back home. Go back home and preach the gospel." The good news is not at Annual Conference or at district conference but back home. Go back home and preach the gospel, and, if necessary, use words. Preach the good news of forgiveness and wholeness. Welcome and love all people. Trust God in your journey.

Paul Gould, District Superintendent of the East District, read the appointments for that district. Responsive liturgy followed and the first verse of *Forth in Thy Name, O Lord*. Clara Reed read the appointments for the Metro District, followed by liturgy and the second verse of *Forth in Thy Name*. Frank Alegria read the appointments for the North Central District, followed by a responsive liturgy and the third verse of *Forth in Thy Name*, and Marvin Guier read the appointments for the Northwest district, followed by the fourth verse of *Forth in Thy Name*.

After the reading of appointments, Bishop Bledsoe asked that his wife Leslie be escorted to the front. He then addressed the resolution that had asked that he rescind his retirement. He explained that he had been called before the jurisdictional episcopacy committee two weeks before and told that North Texas did not want him to come back. He had then been told that the evaluation that North Texas had given him was so low that he would not be wanted in any other Conference. His options were voluntary or involuntary retirement. He had decided to voluntarily retire. Bishop Bledsoe said that he had given all his effort to serving North Texas in Christ and that he had been effective everywhere he had served. When he heard the statistician's report about the Conference's increased attendance and higher percentage of apportionment payout under his leadership, he decided that he would change his mind and stay and fight. He said he did not know who had poisoned the well, but he and Leslie had prayed about it and he would stay and fight. He said that with everyone's help, he believed that the next four years they would be able to accomplish great things in the North Texas Conference. He then called the Conference to respond with the closing liturgy and Doxology.