

VIII. DAILY PROCEEDINGS

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING

June 7, 2009

Laity Session and Dinner

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

The laity session of The North Texas Conference was held at St. Andrew United Methodist Church of Plano. Conference Lay Leader, Richard Hearne, welcomed the lay members of annual conference and Doug Meyer opened the session in prayer.

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe spoke to the laity session via DVD, saying that the laity will be a key part in the strategic planning. Bishop Bledsoe's wife Leslie was recognized as a special guest.

Hearne noted the provision for annual conference sessions divided half and half laity and clergy. He asked all first-time lay members to stand. They represented approximately one-third of the gathering.

Ben Bennett, lay leader for Paris/Sulphur Springs District, led the memorial service for lay members of conference who have died within the past year. Linda Parks, conference lay-leader elect, reported on the Bishop's Strategic Plan Team, legislative item #22, reminding laity that the Strategic Planning Team consists of twenty clergy and nine laity. She reminded everyone that Hopes and Dreams cards are available and may be turned in at the opening worship or any time until July 31 at www.holyconferencing.com website.

Richard Stanford briefed lay members on constitutional amendments being offered for vote.

The closing prayer also served as a blessing, and the members had dinner at St. Andrew United Methodist Church.

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 3:33 p.m. Holly Bandel gave the opening prayer and the pastors sang the hymn, "And Are We Yet Alive."

Bishop Bledsoe 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.)

The chairperson called for a moment of silent prayer in memory of Kathleen Baskin-Ball, previous Board of Ordained Ministry chair. Mueller stated that the Board found all members blameless in their lives and official administration. He then referred clergy to the names of persons being nominated for the Committee on Investigation and the Administrative Review Committee under question 18 of the printed report. These persons were elected. Mueller, along with 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.

Edlen Cowley, 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.

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

Mike Miller, chair of the Local Pastors Division, presented the names of local pastors in answer to questions 20 – 23. The names, part-time and full-time, were approved unanimously.

Fred Durham, 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.

Dennis Wilkinson, chair of Conference Relations Committee, 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 and Bishop Bledsoe asked Janet Bell Odom to lead a memorial prayer. (See also Memorial Service in Section VIII. DAILY PROCEEDINGS for Tuesday, June 10, and Section XIV. MEMORIALS.)

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

Mike Miller read the names of all local pastors retiring this year, and each came forward. They were honored with applause and Bishop Bledsoe shook the hand of each.

Todd Harris, chair of the Committee on Preparation and Qualifications, informed the clergy that six hours of Systematic Theology would be required for both deacons and elders beginning 2010 and that deacons would have an added requirement to complete a project called "Making Disciples," which would take the place of a second Bible Study. Harris then presented to the clergy session the candidates for probationary membership and commissioning. They came and stood before the Bishop and each received a favorable vote by the membership.

Janet Collinsworth, Paul Maletic, and Susan Robb were presented for probationary 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: John Baldwin, Abril Goforth, Alan Hitt, Arthur Jones, Elizabeth LaBella, Walt Lunde, Scott Melton, Monty Moore, Cheryl Murphy, Nancy Sherman, Ed Volfe, Preston Weaver, and Jessica Wright.

The following persons were presented for election into full membership and ordination: As a deacon: Paul McKay and Caroline Noll; as elders: Judith Brandt, Veronica Lynn Greanead, Leslie Herrscher, Ashleigh Joyner, Sandi Minor, Frank Edward Rahm, Paul Rasmussen, James Abe Smith, Jodi Sellars Smith, Carol Sparks, DonnaLea Sutton, Terri Swan, and Chris Yost. 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 moved passage of the entire report of the Board of Ordained Ministry and it was approved. Kathryn Ransdell reported on Clergy Effectiveness. Maxie Moore, Fellowship of Local Pastors, spoke of "watching over one another in love." Debbie Chapman, Order of Deacons, encouraged clergy to find more ways of holding each other accountable. Lisa Greenwood, Order of Elders,

announced the Clergy Retreat as October 19-21 and encouraged all to attend. She reminded the clergy that the early disciples gathered and that small groups are part of the Wesleyan heritage.

Gary Mueller thanked the Bishop for carrying the session through in such a timely manner. To conclude the meeting Bishop Bledsoe asked Willie Johnson to offer the closing prayer.

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 **First United Methodist Church, Richardson, Texas, 7:00 p.m.**

Caleb Rangel, Pianist, Casa Linda United Methodist Church, Dallas, provided the gathering music. Host pastor Clayton Oliphint offered a welcome and introduced Mrs. Leslie Bledsoe, Bishop Bledsoe's wife and partner in ministry and their daughter Letitia. Bishop Bledsoe then introduced and welcomed Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, on whose cabinet he served as a district superintendent, and her spouse, Rev. Robert Huie.

The anthem was a rousing "Clap Praise," sung by the St. Luke "Community" United Methodist Church choir. Director Monya Logan led the congregation in rhythmic praise claps by sections as the choir continued.

The theme for the evening was the theme for the conference: "Let Every Soul Be Jesus' Guest," chosen to inspire focus on hospitality and invite every soul to be Jesus' guest, even those who are on the margins of society. Bishop Huie emphasized the theme by focusing on the large open Eucharist table, walking around it, talking about a table that is open to all and provides an abundance of grace and love beyond our imagining. She called up other tables, from rusting TV trays to tables open to friends and strangers alike. She noted that John Wesley encouraged his followers to compel all people to come to the table. She finished with a command to "Go! Christ awaits at the table, arms wide open, even for us poor sinners."

Interns from Project Transformation assisted in serving communion to the conference members. Separate blessings were offered for Hopes and Dreams cards and for Project Transformation interns. These interns were commissioned to their work at the end of the service.

A reception following the service honored Bishop and Mrs. Bledsoe.

MONDAY MORNING SESSION

June 8, 2009

The Plano Centre, Plano, Texas

Organization of the Conference

The business session of the conference began with Perry Crenshaw and Tim McLemore leading the hymn "I Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Jesus" and "Lord, You are More Precious than Silver." Bishop Bledsoe gaveled to order the 39th session of the North Texas Annual Conference and called on Julie Macpherson for the opening prayer.

Bishop Bledsoe then called upon Marvin Guier who moved that Judith Reedy be elected as conference secretary for the 2009-2012 Quadrennium. The motion was seconded and carried.

Bishop Bledsoe called upon the conference secretary for the organizational motions. Reedy moved that the bar of the conference be the sections of seats in front of the platform and the visitors' section to be the seats to the sides of the stage. The motion was approved. Reedy moved the election of persons to serve the 2009 business sessions as assistant secretaries: Todd Bristow, Kenny Dickson, and Marsha Middleton; head teller, Pete Adrian; 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.

Episcopacy Committee

James R. Adams, chair of the committee, was accompanied on the platform by the committee members. Bishop and Mrs. Bledsoe were escorted to the podium. In gratitude for their leadership and ministry, they were presented gifts. Mrs. Bledsoe received a "Moses Stick" – a walking stick with Ten Commandments carved into it, and a bouquet of yellow roses. Mrs. Bledsoe offered a gracious thank-you to the conference for the welcome the couple has received. Her customary humor and good will was accepted by the conference with a standing ovation. Bishop Bledsoe was presented a chef's hat and a bass fishing hat, both of which he tried on for the conference to great applause. The committee then presented him a gift certificate for a bass fishing tour. Bishop Bledsoe offered a warm response for the welcome he and Mrs. Bledsoe have received.

Episcopacy Address

Bishop Bledsoe began his address by quoting Charles Dickens' antithetical opening lines from A Tale of Two Cities. "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times....." He paused to observe, "Sounds like today – a growing population, but a declining church." He went on to say that to be a great conference, God is calling us into something much greater than yesterday or today.

Bishop Bledsoe paused for a clip of Trietsch Memorial from Fox News showing Twittering in worship. He observed that North Texas has much opportunity. He talked about the questions people have asked him since his arrival: What are you passionate about? How will you spend your time? He stated that the question is not "What is your vision?" but "What is God's vision?"

Bishop Bledsoe was clear about four grassroots foci: developing leaders, creating new places for new people, engaging in ministry with the poor and improving global health. When he spoke of creating new places for new people, he stopped for a clip of Christ's Foundry Fellowship. Bishop Bledsoe encouraged more members to learn to speak Spanish. He concluded with a challenge to clergy and laity alike to make the necessary changes to close the door to past hurts, disappointments, and failures; to face current and future challenges; to stay with it through the "messiness of change." The conference responded with a standing ovation.

Statistician's Report

Marvin Guier reported that in spite of some bright spots in some of our churches in 2008, for the third time in the last four years, the total membership, the average worship attendance, the number of new members received, the number of professions of faith, and the average Sunday School attendance of the churches of the North Texas conference all declined. Total conference membership decreased for the fourth year in a row to 158,606 in 2008, and the number of new members received was the lowest in more than a decade.

The best news came in the form of the financial report. The grand total paid for all causes, in a year which ended with great economic challenge and uncertainty, increased by 4.9% to \$148,423,935. (See the full report in Section XVI. STATISTICIAN'S REPORT).

Guier concluded by thanking Bishop Bledsoe for initiating a Strategic Planning Process to help the conference get clear about priorities and the concrete steps needed to increased effectiveness in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in the years ahead.

Creating Congregations

Richard Dunagin called those involved in church starts to the platform. He emphasized five of the new projects begun by Creating Congregations during the last year. Dunagin then lifted up the committee's hopes of starting three new churches out of the closing of three struggling congregations, each re-emerging as a part of "Rethink Church." He explained the idea behind "Rethink Church," and the Bishop greeted launch team members. Jim Ozier offered prayer for those in launch team process.

Ozier, whose job description now includes Congregational Transformation, explained that Bishop Bledsoe, as a district superintendent, had great success in congregational transformation and that he was carrying the banner for Church Transformation in this conference. Ozier then explained Congregational Transformation and the resources that will be provided for congregations who participate. He reported that 271 of 300 churches given the survey had responded. Of the 271 churches, 6% were Transforming, 84% were Maintaining, and 10% were Declining. He explained that after conference, letters of invitation will be sent to some churches to participate officially with a coach for three years and that churches not participating officially will still receive the workbook, website, and training events.

As an analogy for churches who cannot see clearly, Ozier talked about the blind person that Jesus healed. He could not see people clearly. Rather the people looked like trees walking and, Ozier exclaimed, "Everyone knows that trees don't walk!" At that moment the tree behind Ozier began to walk around onstage as Ozier continued to speak of not wanting to go out on a limb but to branch out, and not wanting to sound like a sap, but, he asked, "How can we be more fruitful? How do we get to the root of our problem?" Ozier concluded by saying that it was not trees but people he was talking about – people Jesus called to serve in His name.

Africa University Initiative

Tyrone Gordon announced that 1 million dollars had been raised for a health clinic and scholarships. Lisa Tichenor presented James Salley from Africa University with a check for \$500,000 for scholarships. Salley reported that Africa University has grown and become increasingly academic and fiscally strong. This year there were 361 graduates, and there are now more than 3,000 Africa University alumni. He gave North Texas Annual Conference great thanks and said that on July 16th, at 10 AM, the health clinic will be dedicated. The Minister of Health has declared that it will be the top health facility in the nation of Zimbabwe.

Chancellor's Report

John Croft, Conference Chancellor, greeted the Conference in Spanish and then explained the role of Conference Chancellor, of how the Chancellor relates to the Conference and to local churches. He stated that the North Texas Conference has a good legal reputation and hopes to keep it that way. His best advice was this: If you would not want your actions displayed on the front page of

your local newspaper – don’t do it! Croft reminded the Conference that it is easier to stay out of legal trouble than to get out of it.

Methodist Hospital

Carole Somers-Clark presented persons who serve on the board of the Methodist Health System: Clayton Oliphint, who serves on the board of Methodist Richardson Medical Center; John Mollet, Methodist Hospital, McKinney; Robert Hasley, Methodist Hospital for Special Surgery, Addison; Sheron Patterson, Methodist Health Center, Oak Cliff, Midlothian, and Mansfield.

Lydia Patterson Institute

Dr. Socorro de Anda, president of LPI, spoke of the tragic violence occurring at the Texas-Mexico border - now on both sides. She said, nevertheless, that they would not give up hope for educating new principled Christian leaders, because Lydia Patterson does not build fences; it builds bridges.

Laity Address

Conference Lay Leader Richard Hearne delivered his first laity address to the Conference, telling the members how indebted he and his family are to them for their outpouring of support and prayers in his recent illness. “I think the Body of Christ is at its best when supporting each other.” Hearne lifted up the places where the Conference has continued to be active in mission – the Africa University initiative and Christ Foundry’s *O For A Thousand Bells to Ring* campaign. He then observed that the laity often wait until a pastor or a group comes to them with an idea for mission. He encouraged all members to believe that one person, one small church, can make a difference. Hearne gave examples of such actions, one of which was Robert Rhoads, member of First United Methodist Church of Bogata, who to date has picked up in his own truck and trailer 45,800 pounds of food for the Bogata Food Bank. “Don’t tell me that one person cannot make a difference!”

Hearne also celebrated accomplishments of large churches such as Highland Park United Methodist Church who builds more Habitat for Humanity Homes than any church in America and Lovers Lane United Methodist Church who has a broad range of prison ministries.

Hearne said there is so much more that still needs to be done. He said that, in response to the downward trend of the denomination, the laity should not look to the clergy to reverse the trends but to themselves. He issued a challenge: “Get involved in mission with the poor in your community.” He expressed a particular concern about the children. “Imagine the impact if all 309 United Methodist congregations in the North Texas conference adopted at least one low income/high risk elementary school in their community. Lives would be changed physically, mentally and spiritually with the schools and the churches.”

Hearne promised to detail specifics of his challenge over the coming months.

Cokesbury and United Methodist Publishing House

Whit Whittington addressed the Conference and mentioned books written by persons associated with the North Texas Conference, programs, and website opportunities from the publishing house. Whittington then explained that for six decades Cokesbury has made annual contributions to clergy pensions amounting to about \$50 million; however, this year, because the United Methodist Publishing House has been adversely affected by the downturn in the economy, Cokesbury did not have a check for the conference. It is their hope, however, that they can rebuild their capacity.

Bishop Bledsoe requested prayer for the United Methodist Publishing House that it might recover from the negative economic impact.

Anti-Racism Team

James Minor and Reid Fade, co-chairs of the team, shared the reporting on the team's work (See Section XIII. AGENCY REPORTS). Fade defined racism as race prejudice plus abuse of power. Referring to Acts 9:17-18, she said that with a lot of work, the scales will fall from our eyes. Minor encouraged anti-racist identity as a potential hope and dream for the strategic plan.

Fade and Minor asked the conference to please invite them to their churches for anti-racism presentations. They lifted up and encouraged participation in a new initiative – an Anti-Racism caucus which will meet on the second Thursday of each month at Casa Linda United Methodist Church.

Mt. Sequoyah Assembly

John and Sheri Altland provided a clip on Mt. Sequoyah, showing how the mountain has been rebuilt after a storm. The Altlands announced upcoming initiatives and conferences to meet at Mt. Sequoyah, the “heartbeat of leadership and ministry training for the 15 conferences of the South Central Jurisdiction. They presented a new initiative to assist new war veterans in conjunction with service organizations to rebuild the mountain and to rebuild their lives. They gave a special word of thanks to First United Methodist Church, Richardson, for their support.

Nominations Committee

Vivian Crowson presented the revised list of nominations as a legislative item (see Section XII. ROSTER OF CONFERENCE AGENCIES – Green pages). Crowson asked that any corrections to the report be written out and taken to the conference secretary's table. The amended report was approved by acclamation. [LA 24]

Standing Rules

Ann Todd moved the approval of legislative item number two in the conference workbook, [LA 2], to reflect that when a pastoral change comes at Annual Conference, the new appointment shall begin July 1. Motion was approved.

Courtesies and Resolutions

Javier Escalera, member of the Higher Education and Campus Ministry Task Force, announced that the GBHEM scholarship for \$1,500 was awarded this year to Sara Croissant, First United Methodist Church, Denton. Sara is active in youth council, youth choir, and mission trips. Sara is headed for Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, where she will major in environmental science, minor in religion, and be a part of the tennis team.

The Frances Asbury Award was awarded to University United Methodist Church, Wichita Falls and pastor Dean Libby, for providing a place for the Wesley Foundation of Midwestern University to office so that campus ministry can continue while the Foundation is without a building.

MONDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

Tim McLemore and Perry Crenshaw began by leading the conference in “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” and “Change My Heart, O God.” Jessica Wright offered the opening prayer.

Young Person’s Address

Looking back on her thirteen years in the local church and this conference, Chidi Anyadike, president of the Conference Council on Youth Ministry, said she felt so blessed to have been surrounded by such a strong and steadfast community of faith. This past year’s midwinter camps had almost 530 youth in attendance, and she has been able to see how God works through some wonderful people. Her exposure as a leader, however, has also showed her the “dark side” of ministry, the hypocrisy, gossip, and power struggles, all leading to lack of efficiency, gridlock, and financial worries. Anyadike implored the conference to believe what the youth believe: God has no limits. Do not minimize God’s power to transform. God is the God of all people – poor and rich, gay and straight, citizens and immigrants, liberals and conservatives, lay and clergy, Methodists and nonbelievers. We must trust each other and stop limiting God.

Anyadike introduced her friend Ricky Harrison, the incoming president of the Conference Council on Youth Ministry. Harrison spoke of the hope he was given as he saw over 700 confirmands come together with their leaders and Bishop Bledsoe, the worship service led by eight confirmands, the graduating seniors who have spent the last seven years of their lives growing up surrounded by a community of faith, the mission work that youth are called to do. The challenge, he said, is at the district level, where he hopes to start building active youth districts. Then Harrison echoed Anyadike, by seeing the future of the church as a place that is all-inclusive and that we must not be a silent church to a hurting world. We must be the church of Jesus Christ in a world that desperately needs to hear His voice and see His hands.

Wesley Village

Kathy Busby introduced Joan Douglass, Grace United Methodist Church, Sherman. Douglass, volunteer and vice-president of the Board of Directors of Wesley Village in its twenty-second year of service, gave some of the history of the Village where her mother moved fifteen years ago. She highlighted the benefits of privacy, security, and good food.

Gulfside Association

Mollie Stewart, president and CEO of Gulfside United Methodist Association, in Waveland, Mississippi, introduced Wilma Dunbar, operator of the Association. She told of the Association’s restoration ministry of the gulfside and the transformation of the church and the world. Stewart acknowledged Bishop Bledsoe as the long-range planning chairperson who had challenged Gulfside to a period of prayer and meditation upon the sacred land where buildings once stood before Katrina. It was during that time that God got in the midst of their hearts to guide and empower their planning.

Board of Pension and Health Benefits

John Fiedler introduced the committee and directed the conference members to their workbooks, for the presentation of four resolutions (See Section IX. LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS)

The motion to keep pension benefits designated as housing allowances for retired or disabled clergypersons [LA 3] was approved by the body. [LA 4] to establish the pre-1982 service annuity rate was approved. [LA 5] the pre-1982 pensions liability funding plan was submitted and approved. [LA 6] the budget for the Board of Pension and Health Benefits was approved. Fiedler reminded the members that while no further contributions would be required for the coming budget year, next year, given the decrease in assets resulting from the market decline, there would be both an additional amount needed for pensions liability funding and the budget would have to increase.

Fiedler reminded members that the best way to manage health care costs and provide for the Conference's collective health is to practice wellness. The latest incentive, in addition to the rebate for annual health assessments, is the official pension and health benefits pedometer, which allows us to walk our way to wellness and earn cash rebates.

Board of Trustees

Bill Avera presented two supplemental legislative items, numbers one and two, and directed the conference members to their workbooks for the presentation of six resolutions.

Supplemental Legislative Item 1 [LA 25] called for the discontinuance of Seven Hills United Methodist Church. Paul Lewellen from Chinn's Chapel spoke about the experience of his congregation which became revitalized after almost closing. Avera said the property will be held for a potential new church start site if deemed appropriate. The legislation was adopted.

Supplemental Legislative Item 2 [LA 26] called for the discontinuance of Spring Creek United Methodist Church. The legislation was adopted.

Legislative Item 7 [LA 7] allowed for the discontinuance of Joy United Methodist Church. The resolution was approved.

Legislative Item 8 [LA 8] called for the discontinuance of Slidell United Methodist Church. The resolution was approved.

Legislative Item 9 [LA 9] called for the discontinuance of Grant Street United Methodist Church. The resolution was approved.

Legislative Item 10 [LA 10] called for the discontinuance of Merit United Methodist Church. The resolution was approved.

Legislative Item 11 [LA 11] called for the discontinuance of Munger Place United Methodist Church and the transfer of title to Highland Park United Methodist Church for the beginning of new ministry. Charles Stovall, current pastor of Munger Place United Methodist Church, recognized the need for discontinuance but spoke of the diversity present in the congregation. He encouraged new efforts to be made building churches on diversity. Motion carried.

Legislative Item 12 [LA 12] allowed for the merger of Lambuth United Methodist Church and Crest-Moore-King United Methodist Church. Motion carried.

Equitable Compensation

David Rucker moved the approval of the apportionment and schedule for equitable compensation for 2010. Rucker noted that in eight years, the budget had never been raised, but equitable salary

level had always increased. The percentage increase for this year is 1.8%, with guidelines remaining the same as in recent years. This legislative item [LA 13] was approved.

Methodist Children’s Home

Trey Oakley brought greetings from Methodist Children’s Home, reported on the opening of their Waxahachie facility, and challenged the conference to open their doors.

Sending Servants

Mel Caraway, representing Jan Davis, presented seven legislative items and called members’ attention to the workbook. Caraway moved the adoption of three legislative items (see Section IX. LEGISLATIVE ITEMS [LA 14, 15, and 16] which establish the conference special days with offering, the conference special emphases without offering, and the Advance specials. These were approved. (See also Section XIII. AGENCY REPORTS).

Caraway brought forth four additional pieces of legislation - Legislative Item 17 [LA 17] a resolution in support of the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund, Legislative Item 18 [LA 18] a resolution to establish a “green team” in North Texas, Legislative Item 19 [LA 19] calling for the continued support of *Justice For Our Neighbors*, and Legislative Item 20 [LA 20] in support of expanding chaplaincy and prison ministry in Texas. The resolutions passed.

Caraway concluded his report by presenting Bishop Bledsoe with a “Green Bible,” on behalf of the Sending Servants Team.

Strategic Planning Team

Paul Rasmussen came forth to speak of the role of Holy Conferencing in strengthening our conference. He said that Bishop Bledsoe has reminded us to seize a bright future and reclaim the best parts of our past and to exercise Holy Conferencing. Rasmussen stopped for a DVD, which was received with applause. Bishop Bledsoe encouraged full participation in the twenty-six breakout groups throughout the Convention Center, an unprecedented move and the order of the day. Rasmussen explained logistics of small group participation. Members broke into their discussion groups as indicated by the number on their badge, and they adjourned at 4:30 to prepare for ordination.

MONDAY EVENING

Service of Ordination Custer Road United Methodist Church, Plano

Reverend Ron Henderson welcomed the conference to Custer Road United Methodist Church for the service of ordination. 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 preached from John 15 under the title “Stay Connected.” He asked the ordinands, “Can you hear me now? How well connected are you?” He noted that Jesus thought it important to communicate to his disciples what it meant to be in relationship with God, with one another, and

with the community at large; he did this by using metaphors and imagery. Using the metaphor of the vine and the branches, Bishop Bledsoe counseled the ordinands to stay connected with Jesus, the True Vine; to stay connected with others; and to stay connected with the connection in order to produce the best fruit.

After the offering plate was passed throughout the congregation in support of Africa University and Christ's Foundry Fellowship, Bishop Bledsoe asked, "What happened to the offering plate? I wouldn't ask you to do something I wouldn't ask these up here to do." The offering plates were extended to the chancel area.

Bishop Bledsoe presided in the commissioning and ordination rituals. A host of other worship leaders were involved in this special service, including Kansas Bishop Scott Jones, on hand to be involved in the commissioning of his son, Arthur Jones. Three deacons and thirteen elders were commissioned. Those commissioned as deacon were Janet Lynn Collinsworth, Paul Robert Maletic, and Susan Elaine Gorham Robb. Those commissioned for the work of an elder were John Dixon Baldwin, Abril Celeste Goforth, Alan Edward Hitt, Arthur Dyatt Jones, Elizabeth Linnea Kolander LaBella, Walter Arne Lunde, Jr., John Scott Melton, Monty Lyn Moore, Cheryl Bromwich Murphy, Nancy Ann Wilson Sherman, Edilson De Assis Volfe, Preston Wayne Weaver, and Jessica Kay Wright.

Two deacons and thirteen elders were received into membership in full connection. Paul David McKay and Caroline Elizabeth Noll were ordained deacons. Christinah Kwaramba was ordained deacon as a courtesy for The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. Judith Sarkozy Brandt, Veronica Lynn Greanad, Leslie Ann Herrscher, Ashleigh Metta Joyner, Sandra Annette Minor, Frank Edward Rahm, Paul Leinhardt Rasmussen, James Abram Smith, Jodi Sellars Smith, Carol Diane Sparks, DonnaLea Braun Sutton, Terri Sue Swan, and Christopher Neil Yost were ordained as elders.

Custer Road United Methodist Church hosted a reception following the service.

TUESDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

June 9, 2009

Opening Song

John Thornburg led the members in "We Have Come Again" and "Big, Big Thing Jesus Doin' for Me," both from the Cameroon tradition.

Texas United Methodist College Association

Bishop Dan Solomon referred the conference to the workbook, to a list of students who have received Texas United Methodist College Association scholarships, and he brought greetings to the conference.

Board of Ordained Ministry

As Gary Mueller came to present the report of the Board of Ordained Ministry, Bishop Bledsoe commended him, thanked all members of the board, the district committees on ordained ministry

and asked all churches with someone who was commissioned or ordained the night before to stand. They were applauded for their work and time.

James Minor was called upon to present the certificate of specialized ministry to Rick Ostroski for specialized ministry with youth. Rick works with youth at First United Methodist Church, Allen.

Mueller then called upon Todd Harris, chair of the Division on Preparation and Qualifications. Harris brought on stage and honored the newly commissioned: deacon track, Janet Collinworth, Paul Meletic, Susan Robb; elder track, John Baldwin, Abril Goforth, Alan Hitt, Arthur Jones, Elizabeth LaBella, Walt Lunde, Scott Melton, Monty Moore, Sheryl Murphy, Nancy Sherman, Ed Volfe, Preston Weaver, and Jessica Wright.

Each year, persons being ordained deacon or elder briefly address the conference. Harris said that the Division on Preparation and Qualifications examines each candidate thoroughly on the basis of his or her theology, proclamation, effectiveness, call to ministry, service and disciplined life. Harris called upon Debbie Chapman, vice-chair of the Division on Preparation and Qualifications to introduce those persons elected by the clergy of the conference for full membership in the conference and for ordination as deacon:

Caroline Noll is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science degree, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins. She presently serves as an associate pastor at First United Methodist Church, Garland. She and husband Patrick are parents of a one-year-old son Bennett.

Noll talked about the word grace, wondering what it meant as a child, knowing it must be good, coming to understand grace as the unmerited, unconditional love of God that comes before and that is for all of creation. She said that she had experienced grace and seen the face of Jesus through the people, that she serves as a deacon called to children's ministry so that the children today and tomorrow may come to claim that grace of God for themselves.

Paul D. McKay is a graduate of the University of North Texas, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins. He presently serves in extension ministry in the Pastoral Care Department of Baylor Medical Center, Garland. He is married to Margo McKay and has four young adult children: Courtney, Megan, Amy and Adam.

Accompanied onstage by his daughter Megan, McKay said that the conference could know him by logging on to Jitterbuggingforjesus.com. McKay expressed his thanks to Methodists everywhere for meaningful landmarks in his life. He brought with him his certificate of baptism, his prayer book he had received as a child, and a picture of his son Adam who is serving the country.

Todd Harris introduced those elected by the clergy of the conference for full membership in the conference and for ordination as elder:

Judith Sarkozy Brandt graduate of Sul Ross University, Alpine, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and a 2005 graduate of Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree. She is a veteran of the United States Air Force, and is currently serving as pastor of Oak Grove United Methodist Church in Denton County. Judith is married to Kurt Martin Brandt, and they are the parents of Amy, Andrea and Anna, and the grandparents of one-year-old Jason.

Brandt began by saying, “Wow! This is so awesome!” It is awesome, she said, to know that so many have been on this journey, praying for her, encouraging her, sharing their experience, shaping her. She thanked God, her husband, her three daughters and her new grandson, repeating, “Wow! God is so awesome!”

Veronica Lynn Greanead is a graduate of Texas Women’s University, Denton, with a Bachelor of Science degree and a 2002 graduate of Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree. She presently serves as associate pastor at First United Methodist Church, Nocona. She is the mother of a teenage son Philip.

Greanead said that she was not trying to become the next conference statistician, but she praised God for the eight years of ministry and the five congregations she has served, the three districts and the four District Superintendents, and the seven mentor pastors who helped her along the journey.

She said that even if all of our hopes and dreams do not come true as we envision them, she believes that God has a great plan in store for the church and for faithful disciples, a plan greater than any we could ever hope or dream. She knows because she is a living witness of what God can do.

Leslie Ann Herrscher is a graduate of Dickinson University, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Latin American Studies, and a 2004 graduate of Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree and certificate in Hispanic Ministries. She presently serves as an associate pastor at Custer Road United Methodist Church, Plano. She is married to William Thomas Herrscher. He brought to their marriage two young sons, William Otto and Jacob Thomas.

Speaking in support of the initiative to develop new and young leaders, Herrscher said that when she was a college freshman, the Rev. Dr. Karen Layman, senior pastor of the United Methodist church on her college campus, discerned her call; sponsored her to attend the United Methodist National Student Movement Forum; made arrangements with Dr. Socorro De Anda during Herrscher’s senior year for her to experience Juarez, Mexican Methodism, and the Lydia Patterson Institute; and connected her with Perkins School of Theology.

She expressed gratitude for those who trust that God will complete the work and are willing to invest unconditionally in leadership develop and the promise of ministry. She invited members to pour themselves in others before they ask and thereby open doors for others to enter, follow, and claim how God is calling them.

Ashleigh Metta Joyner is a graduate of Texas A&M University, with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a 2005 graduate of Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, with a Master of Divinity degree. She is presently an associate pastor on the staff of First United Methodist Church, Coppell. Joyner previously served as a project manager in the business world and is single.

Joyner talked how humble some of the giants in preaching are. She learned that when she heard Archbishop Desmond Tutu tell the story about his daughter picking up her three-year-old son from school, only to find him signing autographs, like his grandfather. When she reminded him that his grandfather was famous, he asked, “What has he done?” Joyner thanked the Trinity – the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer; her family, and many others, including the three rural churches she served in North Carolina.

Sandra Annette Minor is a graduate of Triune Biblical University, Kelso, Washington, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration, and a 2006 graduate of Perkins School of Theology, with a Master of Divinity degree. Minor is presently an associate pastor at Vista Ridge United Methodist Church, Lewisville. She is married to Rev. James Minor, an elder in the North Texas Conference. They are the parents of three adult children, Scott, Jackii and James, and proud grandparents of Darius, Shanice, Redmon, Haley and Nicholas.

Minor said that she has learned to trust in God's Word, to move with the Spirit of God, and to walk by faith and not so much by sight. She promised to stay before the throne of grace and mercy, listening to the heart of God, caring for the souls of God's people, holding them close to her heart while equipping them for discipleship.

Frank Edward Rahm is a graduate of the University of Texas, Austin, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics, and a 2005 graduate of Perkins School of theology with a Master of Divinity degree. He presently serves as an associate pastor at First United Methodist Church, Rockwall, as he works in partnership with that congregation to plant a new church in the area. He and wife Tracy Wilson Rahm are the parents of Emily and Caroline.

Rahm shared a seminary experience when he was to preach before a congregation of peers and professors and found that he was getting nervous. His friend counseled him to just preach the word, man! He said he could definitely do that. He could tell the story of what a difference Jesus has made in his life, on church members in times of joy and sorrow, and he could tell the story of the effect of the love of Jesus that he has seen on the faces of the people whose lives have been changed by Jesus. He advised everyone in the room to just preach the word, and sometimes, if necessary, even use words.

Paul Leinhardt Rasmussen is a graduate of Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history, a graduate of the University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia, with a Master of Arts degree in sports marketing, and a graduate of Perkins School of Theology, with a Master of Divinity degree. He presently serves as an associate pastor on the staff of Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas. He and his wife Ashley Joel are parents of three young children, Paul, Jr., Arden, and Luke.

Rasmussen gave thanks for the grace he received from Bishop Moncure when he missed showing up for the vote at the clergy session to be commissioned. He remembered the hug that Bishop Rhymes Moncure gave him when he asked to meet with him after the clergy session, squeezing the life out of him and, at the same time, putting all the life back in him.

Rasmussen learned from Mark Craig that, in ministry, you have a choice – to be married to the model or married to the mission, and that you should choose the mission and never abandon the mission even if that means you must retool the model.

James Abram (Abe) Smith is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, with a Bachelor of Science degree with study concentration in education and science, and a 2005 graduate of Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree. He presently serves as an associate pastor on the staff of Christ United Methodist Church, Plano. James is married to Amy, and the couple has four young children, Abigail, Anna Beth, Addison, and James Abram.

Smith talked about the hours he spent commuting in traffic jams from home to school and back while he was attending seminary. When the traffic jams happened, he would try to find something to listen to on the radio. One day, on a Sunday, he realized there was no traffic jam. As he was thanking God for this, God spoke to him with a punch. He was to be the creator of traffic jams, people lined up on Sundays anxious to get to church. Now, in traffic jams, Smith prays for everyone to be creators of traffic jams.

Jodi Kay Sellars Smith is a graduate of the University of Texas, Austin, with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in government and accounting, and a 2004 graduate of Perkins School of Theology, with a Master of Divinity degree. She is presently pastor of First United Methodist Church, Celina. Jodi and husband Steven are parents of three young adult children, Ryan, Clayton, and Jessica.

Smith recalled a recent Sunday when she was confirming five youth in her congregation, thinking that this was the beginning for them. She said that same thought was with her the previous night as Bishop Bledsoe ordained her to go forth and take authority. She felt like this was really the beginning for her. She referenced Hebrews 12, saying that she was surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses and prayed that all would run with perseverance the race that is set before them.

Carol Diane Sparks is a graduate of Northeast Louisiana State University (now the University of Louisiana at Monroe), Monroe, Louisiana, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in general studies, and a 2004 graduate of Perkins School of Theology, with a Master of Divinity degree. She presently serves as an associate pastor at Flower Mound United Methodist Church, Flower Mound. She is the mother of two children, Chelsea and Shelby.

Sparks said she would like to apologize in advance for the moments when she forgets a name, steamrolls with her zeal, and becomes impatient with timelines and committees. She said she did not apologize for sharing in authentic relationships. She said that she was no more nor more less than anyone else in the conference or in her church. Rather she stands ready to join arms with everyone so that together they can change the world in the name of Christ.

DonnaLea Braun Sutton is a graduate of Dallas Christian College, with a Bachelor of Science degree in ministry and leadership, and a 2003 graduate of Perkins School of Theology, with a Master of Divinity degree. She presently serves as an associate at Wylie United Methodist Church, Wylie. She and her husband, Steven, are parents of three children, Jacob, Camille and Andrew.

Sutton told of the little boy who prayed, “Our father, who art in heaven, how did you know my name?” She wondered how God knew her name, and she thanked the clergy for their help and the laity for listening to bad sermons, fumbled liturgy, and awkward questions during Bible studies. She thanked God for knowing her name and calling her into service, and trusting her to preach the Good News, visit the sick, and walk in love each day. Her greatest hope is that the most powerful sermon she will ever preach will be the life she lives and the love she shows for Christ.

Terri Sue Swan is a graduate of Texas A&M University, Commerce, with a Bachelor of Science degree in counseling, and a 2006 graduate of Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree. She presently serves as an associate pastor at Stonebridge

United Methodist Church, McKinney. Terri and her husband Joe have two daughters, Holly and Laura.

Swan talked about the advantages of her long journey and the many people who have supported and encouraged her as well as the church family of Stonebridge United Methodist Church who raised her up as a pastor. She closed with the words of the apostle Paul. “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy...” She is taking a new turn in her journey and serving in St. Louis, Missouri, but reminded her partners in Christ that “Swannie will be praying for you.”

Christopher Neil Yost is a graduate of Dallas Baptist University with a Bachelor of Arts and Science degree in Christian ministry and nuclear engineering, and a 2005 graduate of Perkins School of Theology, with a Master of Divinity. He presently serves as pastor of First United Methodist Church, Henrietta. Christopher and his wife Melissa are the parents of three young children, Emma, Caleb and Heidi.

Yost said that he switched off nuclear power for eternal power. He said that he felt like the least of the apostles. He was grateful to many, and to Joerg Rieger, for spending time with him on the streets of Germany and making his call into ministry make sense.

After hearing from all the newly ordained, Gary Mueller said that he had a few words for them. “You have done good!”

Southern Methodist University and Perkins School of Theology

Dr. William B. Lawrence, Dean of Perkins School of Theology, reported that Dr. Steve Rankin has been assigned as the new chaplain of Perkins. Lawrence said that not everyone who answers the call to ordained ministry is summoned to the office of the President to defend a sermon. Christinah Kwarambah, a Perkins student, ordained deacon last evening as a courtesy to Zimbabwe East, was summoned to defend her sermon, to which she responded, “I don’t defend sermons. I just preach them.” She did just that.

Lawrence reported that of the 400 students enrolled at Perkins, 70% are United Methodist, 54% are women, and 26% are ethnic minority. He highlighted future opportunities, such as Exploration 2009 on November 13-14, in Dallas, with an emphasis on identifying, recruiting, and inviting high school youth and college-age young adults to explore their calls. He reminded the conference that babies baptized this spring and summer would be entering seminary in 2030.

Lawrence announced that the scholarship budget is up 12%, and he invited all to join him on September 11 at the dedication of the renovated Kirby and Selecman buildings which now have elevators and an adequate number of restrooms. Lawrence said that two weeks ago, he sat in a pew with Bishop Bledsoe, celebrating the life of Elizabeth Perkins Prothro, benefactor of Perkins, former trustee of SMU, disciple of Jesus Christ who did all that she could to transform the world. The new building that is dedicated on September 11 will be in honor of Prothro whose parents spearheaded desegregation of SMU with the admittance of five Perkins African-American students. One of those first five, Rev. Cecil Williams, will be honored as the SMU Distinguished Alumni this year.

Methodist Mission Home

Jennifer Sample from the Methodist Mission Home showed a brief DVD presentation on Methodist Mission Home. She thanked the North Texas Conference and reminded them that the Methodist

Mission Home does not receive money from apportionments; rather, they rely on offerings taken to support the Home. Her report was received by acclamation.

Council on Finance and Administration

Bill Baxley presented the CF&A report including the 2010 apportionment budget. The vote was then taken on the three parts of the legislative item as presented and each was approved. (See Section IX. LEGISLATIVE ITEMS [LA 21]).

Courtesies and Resolutions

Shante Buckley reported for the courtesies and resolutions committee, requesting prayer for Libby Inglis, who fell on Monday at the conference center. Trevor Swearingen, First United Methodist Church, Rowlett, was recognized as having received his Eagle Scout Award, which included building an altar for the Deaf Fellowship of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church. Trevor, a young deaf man, serves on the United Methodist Committee on Ministries with Deaf, Late-Deafed, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind People. He is eighteen-years-old.

Bishop Bledsoe called upon Paul Goodrich to close in prayer.

Memorial Service

The 2009 Annual Conference memorial service honored the memories of five clergy and twelve clergy spouses. Bishop Bledsoe led the Call to Worship and family members of those being honored processed to the hymn, “Shall We Gather at the River” and took seats reserved for them in the front rows. A litany was led by Allika Williams and Syan Hinnant.

Scriptures were read by Reverend Beverly Olsen and Reverend Seong Joon Park, and then as conference secretary, Judith Reedy, read each of the names as an ordinand brought a white rose and placed it in the vase on the altar. 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 – John W. Morphis, Jr., Russell Noland, Kathleen Baskin-Ball, DeForrest Wiksten, and John Van Zant

Clergy Spouses – Clara Reese Topper, Barbara Beights, Elvesta Staats, Florence Campbell, Tru Dianne Finnin, Ruth Cooper, Thelma Goodrich, Nancy Oliphint, Mary Stell Chappell, Sibyl Penn, Amy Cajuat, and Barbara Scott Hares

Reverend Dr. Larry George’s memorial sermon, “It Ends in Joy,” focused on Micah 6:8 – “...and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Quoting from Barbara Brown Taylor’s *Bread for Angels*, Dr. George said, “It is our life together that makes us Christ’s Body – a mysterious organism that is much more than a collection of individuals.” He said that Rev. Taylor’s words were for those gathered today in the solitariness of their sorrow, held in one another’s arms, glimpsing the light of eternity as the very Body of Christ and that because this good life begins, is sustained by and ultimately returns to God, we can in faith proclaim: It ends in joy!

Dr. George eulogized by name each of the departed, saying that they were ones who understood that the world is changed, lives are saved, and hope is born through the consistent witness of those disciples who do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with their God.

The service concluded with a memorial prayer led by Reverend Vivian Crowson. Following the closing hymn, “For All the Saints,” Bishop Bledsoe pronounced the benediction.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

Bishop Bledsoe invited Bishop Monk Bryan to address the Annual Conference. Bishop Bryan said that his father who was a pastor taught him always to keep your love for the Annual Conference strong. He shared his love and thanks for the North Texas Annual Conference from him and his wife Twila.

Bishop Bledsoe invited Steve Rankin, new chaplain at Perkins, to share a word of greeting with the conference. Paul Gould offered the prayer for the afternoon session.

Board of Ministry Report - Retiring Clergy

Dennis Wilkinson, chair of the Conference Relations Committee, reminded us that we are beneficiaries of those who have gone before us. Today we are especially reminded of that as we hear from our retiring clergy. Wilkinson stated that members of the committee – Donna Whitehead, Jill Jackson-Sears, Dick Wilson, and Sally Vonner - would share in the introductions of the thirteen clergy persons who were retiring. Those are Keith Cupples, Craig Emerick, Doyle Henderson, Dwight Judy, Susanne Orman, Walt Purkey, Duane VanGiesen, Bob Walker, Phyllis Wilson, Jayne Coffman Wolfe, Paul Bailey, Charles Hahn, and Bob Sivils.

James Keith Cupples served 36 years. He grew up in this conference, was well known as an athlete, attended SMU, went to the Oklahoma conference but returned to serve in the North Texas Conference. Cupples is retiring to become involved in another calling. He is married to Christy Thomas, and they are a clergy couple.

Cupples said the retirees had received their instructions to limit their talks to three minutes but that they had taken a vote and decided each to give the full twenty-minute sermon! Always give thanks, he said, referencing Colossians 3:15b. He gave thanks for his parents Jim and Billie Fred, standing in that great cloud of witnesses today. His dad found a place for him to get involved in church as a young adult. He gave thanks for his colleagues, Goody and Donnie, and those like W. Richie Hogg who have given him God’s grace. He thanked his wife Christy and the churches where he has served. He closed by singing his childhood favorite Roy Rogers and Dale Evans’ closing song, “Happy Trails.”

Craig Lewis Emerick has served 42 years. Emerick received his Master of Divinity and Doctorate of Divinity from Perkins. He has served for 39 years in extension ministry as faculty of Course of Study at Perkins and associate director of the intern program at Perkins. Emerick is married to Trudy, and they have two children and a grandson.

Emerick said that he and Trudy have discovered over the years, in good times and in hard times, especially in the hard times, that gratitude is their deepest response – for the way God’s unbounded Grace keeps showing up in their lives and for the presence of the Risen Lord in their lives. He said that he has team-taught a Doctorate of Ministry course at Garrett Seminary over the years and will continue coaching and consulting for what he has come to call his work – “The Deeper Work of Leaders,” the work of helping leaders

re-connect their outward role with their soul and draw from the deep springs of Christian spirituality.

Emerick said his deepest gratitude is to be a part of the Body of Christ with his friends and colleagues in this Annual Conference. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

Doyle Henderson has served 40 years. He was born in Muenster, Texas. Doyle received his Master of Divinity at Brite Seminary and has served in both the Central Conference and the North Texas Conference. Doyle is married to Lisa. They will live in Whitesboro after retirement and will be helping at the Sadler church as well as enjoying their family.

Henderson spoke of having served in parts of five different decades, meeting his wife during those first years. He mentioned many of the influential factors on their lives, and said that he was probably more of the Forrest Gump type, knowing when to take a break at Annual Conference and who the interesting speakers are.

He said as his farewell reception was happening, and he heard all the wonderful things they said about him, he got to thinking about one of those Saturday Night Live sayings, "Well, isn't that special?" He said not to let ego get in the way of ministry. He said he was greatly honored to have served all the churches in both conferences; he has had a great ministry and career.

Dwight Judy is married to Ruth. He received his Ph.D. from Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and has led numerous leadership and spiritual retreats. He is presently serving at Garrett Theological Seminary in Illinois and plans to continue for a few years.

He said that he once thought to himself in the mid-70's that he would not be in extension ministry, but he wrote and wondered in his journal if he could be a contemplative and a United Methodist minister. He has been working in the area of spiritual formation. The great occasion that occurred in his career was working with colleagues at Garrett toward developing the program of spiritual formation at Garrett where he will continue to serve.

He spoke highly of extension ministry and his delight to be able to celebrate forty-one years of ministry.

Susanne Orman served for 13 years. Susanne is a doer and a contributor. She and her husband Don were recently recognized for their volunteer service in both Forney and Mesquite. She and her husband are traveling and spending time with their son, daughter-in-law and two-year-old granddaughter.

Orman said that she had just been given her marching orders to stay at three minutes and be funny. She then proceeded to tell about the time she found a squirrel in the toilet at Wolfe City and had to call the veterinarian who showed up to fish the squirrel out of the toilet. When Orman asked him not to let the squirrel go since it was cold, but two blocks down the street, the squirrel got active, so the veterinarian let him out in front of the Baptist church!

She then spoke of what has become dear to her heart – the Brickyard Cemetery Restoration Project, a project restoring desecrated gravesites at an old Dallas brickyard where black folks were buried. She invited those who were interested to participate. She said it was not an issue of guilt; it was a matter of justice, and we are called to do justice.

Walter Purkey, with 35 years of service, was recognized by Dick Wilson. He was on a trip with his family and unable to attend, but Purkey said that he was grateful for his years in ministry.

Duane VanGiesen, with 43 years of service, is married to Lana. VanGiesen has served in the Missouri East Annual Conference, served as district superintendent and in many leadership roles. He and Lana moved to Dallas to be with their daughter and granddaughter. Sadly, their daughter died seven years ago, but they still celebrate her life through their granddaughter. Duane currently serves at the Conference Ministry Center and will continue working part-time to help the Board of Ordained Ministry.

“Inside any older person is a younger person wondering what the heck happened.” VanGiesen said he knew what happened, because he took his first appointment as a sophomore in college 48 years ago. At Hendrix College, the tenor next to him was Justin Tull, and the alto who was singing with him at the 1964 General Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, became his wife.

He talked about his wonderful marriage and said that Lana had always spoken the truth to him in love. He cited several examples, including the sermon on radio which he had considered powerful, only to be told by Lana that he had continued to announce that “God had rolled the tomb away from the stone.”

VanGiesen thanked the Missouri East Conference as well as the North Texas Conference and the Conference staff with whom he has worked the last five years. He concluded by saying, he was thankful to be needed still. “Keep the notes coming. I will be there to help. God bless.”

Bob Walker, with 31 years of service, was unable to be present, but Donna Whitehead shared his thanks to the conference for their love and support over the years.

Phyllis Wilson has eleven years of service as a deacon and eighteen years of service as a diaconal. She is looking forward to spending more time with her grandchildren.

She began by taking a survey of those who have been to Alaska and those who have driven to Alaska. Some people do not know you can drive to Alaska because when they look on the weather map, Alaska is down at the bottom, and people think it is an island. She has just driven to Alaska – 10,453 miles, 100 of those without seeing another car or person.

She said a big “thank you” to the conference for the years that she has served at St. Marks and at Lovers Lane and at First United Methodist in Cedar Hill. She especially thanked all the children and young people she has had a chance to work with and who now are going on to serve. She expressed gratitude to the nine senior pastors with whom she has served. She has enjoyed visiting many of the churches in the conference this last year, seeing the many exciting things that are happening. She said she would be happy to fill in between traveling and taking care of her three wonderful grandchildren.

Jayne Coffman Wolfe, with 11 years of service, and 17 years as a diaconal, has had a ministry called REACH, a ministry with adults living with disabilities. Before that, she was a teacher of Special Education. She has three children, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

She said she did not get the memo about telling jokes and being funny. Instead, she said the conference would hear about how sacred the work with which she has been blessed has been. Her ministry has been with all ages of persons living with disabilities. She told the conference how “sacred” it has been to work in extension ministry. Each day, she said, has its sacredness. Her grandson’s call this morning was her most sacred moment of the day. God’s plans for her life have blessed her. Given little hope that Jayne would live as a baby, her mother and aunt took her home, fed and cared for her twenty-four hours a day and then insisted she go out and do things.

Wolfe gave credit to her sister in ministry who has helped her care for so many different persons living with disabilities. She said they would continue to do that for Chad, an adult with disabilities, who was present as a guest as Wolfe spoke. Wolfe said that she and her sister take care of Chad every day and that tomorrow, when the conference is over, they will continue to take care of Chad and she would continue to give thanks for her mother every day of her life.

Paul Bailey, with three years of service, has served in many churches in the Paris-Sulphur Springs District. Bailey said that he felt a bit like George Strait in his recent appearance. He said it feels like you think I am leaving, but I am not leaving. He said he truly enjoys serving in the ministry. He said that before he came to conference, he was with his grandson Jackson who said, “Don’t say too many words, because they may not like it, like I sometimes don’t.” He said he was going to take his grandson’s advice and just leave everyone with a word from Jesus: “Freely you have received. Freely give.” Bailey said he planned to continue doing just that.

Charles Hahn, with 11 years of service, had a first career in the military for 29 years. He met his wife on a Walk to Emmaus. She was the piano player. He said that God has done a great thing for them. Together they have eight children.

Hahn said that he was looking forward to this being his last move. He said that the church is a work place and not a place of rest and that we all have talents that we need to use to make the church better. He thought of the time when a member of his church asked if her daughter could sign the next Sunday service. He said that would be good, because the congregation could see just what signing was all about. That was the only time in six years they ever did the signing. That Sunday they had an out-of-town visitor who came to church with her family. She was deaf. That was just one example of being shown who is really in charge.

Hahn and his wife Joyce wished God’s love and grace for everyone in the conference.

Bob Sivils, with six years of service, is married to Dr. Linda Sivils. Sivils plans to spend more time with his wife in Colorado, snow skiing, boating, and going to musicals. He has most recently served Poetry United Methodist Church.

Sivils said that he was a Baptist minister who realized that he was in the wrong church and had been to the wrong seminary. He said that was difficult to explain to a District Committee on Ordained Ministry. Sivils said he was surprised that he was supposed to limit his speech to two minutes because that was twice as long as his average sermon. He closed by asking everyone to turn to the gospel of Paul, paused, and then quoted from Timothy and thanked everyone for their support.

Bishop Bledsoe called for a standing ovation for the retiring clergy.

Strategic Planning Team

John Fiedler, member of the Strategic Planning Team, invited the members of the team to join him behind the podium, and he referred the conference to legislative item number twenty-two [LA 22], “Affirming the Work of the Strategic Planning Team.” Fiedler said that because Bishop Bledsoe believes that God does have a vision for the churches of the North Texas Conference, he created a Strategic Planning Team to listen to the hopes, dreams and ideas of the people of the North Texas Conference and to shape those thoughts into a strategic plan for the conference.

It is clear that the church’s mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, and it is clear on the grassroots priorities that are laid out in four focus areas as we seek to be fruitful in making disciples. These four areas are:

- Developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.
- Creating new places for new people and transforming existing congregations.
- Engaging in ministry with the poor.
- Combating the disease of poverty by improving health globally.

Statements from Hopes and Dreams cards already completed were then read by various members of the Strategic Planning Team, in answer to the statement, “I believe that God is leading us to be a church that.....” The Strategic Planning Team will continue to meet throughout the next year with the charge of bringing to the 2010 Annual Conference its recommendations. The motion was seconded and approved.

Constitutional Amendments

Gary Mueller, on behalf of the General Conference delegation, explained the process for voting, those eligible to vote, and offered a motion to structure debate concerning constitutional amendments. That structure would include voting on the amendments in sections that are almost identical in intent and limiting the number of speeches “for” and “against” as well as a limit of two minutes per speech. Motion carried.

Mark Craig moved for a reconsideration of the motion so that the conference could bypass debates and go directly to a vote. Motion was seconded but failed.

Results of the voting were reported after close of conference and were posted on the conference website. Those results were reported to the Council of Bishops: Amendment I (295 for, 385 against, 12 abstained); Amendment II (117 for, 570 against, 15 abstained); Amendment III (290 for, 392 against, 15 abstained); Amendment IV (238 for, 456 against, 10 abstained); Amendment V (317 for, 367 against, 15 abstained); Amendment VI (406 for, 271 against, 29 abstained); Amendment VII (318 for, 367 against, 14 abstained); Amendment VIII (572 for, 123 against, 9 abstained); Amendment IX (538 for, 131 against, 35 abstained); Amendment X (252 for, 442 against, 10 abstained); Amendment XI (317 for, 370 against, 13 abstained); Amendment XII (319 for, 366 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XIII (251 for, 442 against, 12 abstained); Amendment XIV (319 for, 368 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XV (298 for, 410 against, 7 abstained); Amendment XVI (320 for, 366 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XVII (506 for, 180 against, 16 abstained); Amendment XVIII (319 for, 367 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XIX (552 for, 141 against, 7 abstained); Amendment XX (317 for, 366 against, 15 abstained); Amendment XXI (318 for, 366 against, 16 abstained); Amendment XXII (643 for, 44 against, 16 abstained); Amendment XXIII (246 for, 447 against, 12 abstained); Amendment XXIV (318 for, 367 against, 15 abstained); Amendment XXV (320 for, 358 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XXVI (249 for, 443 against, 12 abstained); Amendment XXVII (320 for, 358 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XXVIII (321

for, 355 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XXIX (318 for, 359 against, 15 abstained); Amendment XXX (324 for, 354 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XXXI (319 for, 358 against, 14 abstained); Amendment XXXII (320 for, 356 against, 14 abstained).

The deciding factor will be which amendments achieve a 2/3 majority affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the several annual conferences present and voting. (United Methodist Discipline, Paragraph 59, Article I.)

Courtesies and Resolutions

Rusty Hedges gave the closing courtesies and resolutions. The conference was asked to pray for Virginia Taylor, who fell leaving the conference and was taken to the hospital and for Heidi, the young daughter of Chris and Melissa Yost, who fell in the nursery. Gifford and Cathy Long celebrated the favorable report that their daughter Emily received after undergoing treatment for cancer. Barbara and Don Wiggins, Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, are celebrating fifty-eight years of marriage today; thirty-eight of those years have been as delegates to Annual Conference.

Linda Parks, lay leader for the Wichita Falls district and conference lay leader elect, announced that the invitation had been accepted to conduct Annual Conference in Wichita Falls in 2010.

Hedges then read the closing resolution:

WHEREAS, The North Texas Conference held its annual session June 7-9, 2009 at the Plano Centre in Plano, Texas with the theme of “Let Every Soul Be Jesus’ Guest” and

WHEREAS, We as an Annual Conference have benefited from the tireless efforts of all who had a part in carrying out this year’s conference, providing a warm welcome, and facilities for our time together, and

WHEREAS, Rev. Rusty King, members of the Annual Conference Planning Committee and the conference staff worked faithfully in planning and preparing for this year’s session of the Annual Conference, and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Leslie Bledsoe has quickly become an important part of our conference family through her vital spirit and indomitable faith, we acknowledge her in Christian love as the first Lady of our Conference; and

WHEREAS, we welcomed Bishop Earl Bledsoe among us as our new Episcopal leader. He has charted a new direction for our conference and inspired us with his leadership as well as his challenging proclamation of the Word. We gratefully acknowledge Bishop Bledsoe’s ministry in his new role as a Bishop of the Church.

WHEREAS, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie and Rev. Larry George blessed us with their powerful and inspiring preaching along with the challenges put before us in the address by our Conference Lay Leader, Richard Hearne, and

WHEREAS, the conference has adopted Sabine Pass United Methodist Church as our 2009 conference project, we look forward to this partnership with Rev. Kitty Key and her congregation in their continuing efforts to help their community recover from the effects of Hurricanes Rita and Ike.

WHEREAS, the inspiration continued with worship services planned by the Conference Worship Committee. We thank the liturgists who led us in worship and the choirs and soloists who moved us with their artistry; and

WHEREAS, The North Texas Conference received the reports of the boards and agencies which reported that the work of the church is going forward and is in good hands. We listened with thanksgiving to the comments of those who entered retired status at this conference session; and

WHEREAS, The mission and ministry of our conference continues to be faithfully supported by Rev. Fred Durham, Dr. Marvin Guier and Dr. Joan LaBarr and the other members of our conference staff. We acknowledge their exemplary service to our churches and the North Texas Annual Conference; and

WHEREAS, The North Texas Conference extends its thanks to the many people who unselfishly offered their time, skills and talents in the support of this conference session. This includes those who produced the displays, logos, worship bulletins, video and power point presentations. We thank the communications team of the Annual Conference who provided sound, lighting, photography, news coverage, and the video images for the conference and the taping of the worship services; and

WHEREAS, First United Methodist Church, Richardson; First United Methodist Church, Plano; St. Andrew United Methodist Church and Custer Road United Methodist Church, Plano, showed radical hospitality by hosting conference sessions or worship, and providing childcare through the efforts of their staffs and volunteers. We extend our thanks to the staff of the Plano Centre who helped make our conference run smoothly; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, as a covenant community having engaged in holy conferencing will carry the theme of this 2009 Annual Conference with us into our mission and ministry. Together we celebrate the hospitality and openness of God that brings light and life to all God's children through Christ, our Lord.

Respectfully submitted,

The Committee on Courtesy and Resolutions

Rusty Hedges, chair

Shante Buckley

Sharon Coleman

Jim Pledger

Jackye Waiters-Lee

Reading of Appointments

Bishop Bledsoe called for the reading of only the appointments which indicate a change. Names were then read by district superintendents: Larry George, for the Dallas-Denton district; Pat Beghtel-Mahle; for the Dallas Northeast district; Milton Gutierrez for the Dallas South district; Keith Boone, for the Paris-Sulphur Springs district; Clara Reed, for the Sherman-McKinney district; and John Rosenburg, for the Wichita Falls District.

Closing Hymn and Benediction

After the appointments were read, Bishop Bledsoe gave the benediction that ended the 2009 session of the North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.