

A NEW VISION, A NEW VOICE

The North Texas Conference



Inspiration
for a changing
congregation

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A Message From The Bishop

W. Earl Bledsoe

A granddaughter lost, and a time to lean hard on faith

The recent death of my 9-year-old granddaughter Hannah is one of the most trying situations I have ever faced. I was blessed to preach this eulogy at her funeral Jan. 28. Below is an excerpt.



If anyone would have suggested that a grandfather would be giving the eulogy for one of his grandchildren, I would not have believed it. No great-grandparent, grandparent, mother, father, older brothers or sisters would ever think of having to bury a child, but such is our occasion today. My good friend, the Rev. Dr. Hector Grant of San Antonio, reminded me that “the deepest sorrow is not death, but the unnatural ordering of death.” In our minds, we usually think: great-grandparents die, grandparents die, parents die and then their children. That is our hoped-for ordering of life and death.

However, we all know that this is not always the way in which our human experience is lived out. And when that hoped-for ordering is broken, there is true mourning. So the question for us is, “Where is God in the process?” Dr. Grant had to remind a bishop of the

Zan Holmes to guide St. Luke for the interim

The members of St. Luke “Community” United Methodist Church are preparing for a transition in top leadership.

On Sunday, Jan. 22, the Rev. Tyrone Gordon announced during the two worship services that he was stepping down as senior pastor of the nearly 6,000-member congregation.

The Rev. Dr. Zan Wesley Holmes has been asked and consented to serve as interim pastor until an appointment can be made at the Annual Conference in June 2012.

Dr. Holmes served as senior pastor of St. Luke for 27 years and was named pastor emeritus upon his retirement 10 years ago.

Since then, Dr. Holmes has been actively preaching and teaching at churches and conferences across the country.

“This is an unexpected challenge for me,” Dr. Holmes said.

“I am sure that working together, with the grace of God, we can make it,” he said.

Dr. Holmes’ first Sunday in the pulpit of St. Luke is scheduled for Feb. 19.



The Rev. Zan W. Holmes

Bishop meets with laity for give-and-take session

By JOHN LOVELACE
Special Contributor

In the eight-state South Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, stretching from Nebraska to Louisiana, only one bishop is said to reserve one day per year to meet with the laity.

On Saturday, Jan. 21, at McKinney’s Stonebridge UMC, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe held his fourth annual give-and-take session, attracting about 150 laypersons and a handful of clergy.

Both conference lay leader Richard Hearne and the bishop cited Eastman Kodak as an example of what happens “when we keep doing the same things the same way,” referring to the camera giant’s clinging to film as the industry moved to the digital era. Eastman Kodak, which, ironically,

invented the digital camera in 1975, recently filed for bankruptcy.

Bishop Bledsoe labeled 2012 “a defining year” for The United Methodist Church, with its once-every-four-years lawmaking General Conference convening this spring in Tampa, Fla.

The four points in the church’s Call to Action, he said, are:

1. Leadership development.
2. New places for new people.
3. Ministry with the poor. “John Wesley’s kinship with the poor keeps us grounded,” he said.
4. “Things going on in the world.” He mentioned Nothing But Nets, a program promoted by the UMC, the National Basketball



Photos by John Lovelace



Above, from left: Wilford Job, Robin A. Phillips, Jenna Morrison and John Bodnar, representing different NTC churches, joined together for lunch. Left: Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe made a point with Susan Leddy of First UMC Blossom.

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Bishop meets with laity for a give-and-take session

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League and others to send free mosquito nets to help stop children's deaths from malaria.

As for issues he backs for approval by the 2012 General Conference, he listed:

Creating the office of a "set-aside" bishop, perhaps a retired bishop, to "help deal with issues." He said he spends more time "in the air" between meetings than he does in the North Texas Conference.

Eliminating guaranteed appointments for all elders. "Some clergy," he noted, "say it's OK for them not to do much because their next appointment is guaranteed. The bishop can't do much about it. There's no place to put them."

Reducing the number of churchwide agencies. This "could free up \$60 million for vital congregations and other work closer to home," he said.

After a midmorning break, which the bishop spent in multiple one-on-one conversations, Lay Leader Hearne called for questions.

Asked what can be done "to get information beyond the pastor's desk," Hearne recommended that local church lay leaders go on the conference website, www.ntcumc.org, at least once a week and share what they find helpful.

The bishop was asked about the data that local churches are required to

gather. "I'm not interested in merely gathering more data," Hearne said. "What does the church have to say about unemployment, for instance, and what are we doing about it? Understand what God is calling you to do, then you can understand the data. . . . We are called to do acts of justice and mercy, and we're better at mercy than we are at justice."

In preparing for lunch, Hearne urged participants: "Don't sit with the people you came with; talk about issues in your church."

The suggestion apparently worked.

After lunch, handwritten notes passed to the bishop helped him choose laity to tell



Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe and a Laity Day participant exchange viewpoints at the annual event.

about their churches' work in such fields as prison ministry, aid to special-needs children and women's ministries.

Formula for a successful Laity Day? The bishop speaks, the people listen. The people speak, the bishop listens.

From Bogata to Burkburnett

Can't find volunteers for ministry project? Try 'Pestern Union'

One of the most common complaints that I hear from clergy and laity is the difficulty of recruiting volunteers for some of the ministries of the local church, district, annual conference and general church. Maybe you want to try a new approach.

At right is one of the most creative ways to communicate the need. Ed Clark, a member of my church,



by Richard Hearne

University Park UMC, has been the Amigos Day coordinator for several years.

Last year he began to issue Pestergrams to our congregation to encourage folks to participate. The results have been incredible in generating interest and getting people to join in the process. My normal response when I see an email from someone who I know is in recruiting mode is dread, but I look forward to reading what Ed has to say. The Pestergram – he issued about 15 last year – always brings a smile.

The result is that I find a way to participate in some manner. Read on and tell me what you think.

AMIGOS PESTERGRAM #1

HOME SELECTION DATE FEB. 2; WALNUT HILL UMC

Everyone,

I was just noodling on songs I am writing, "A Year Without Beer and Bacon"; "Hat Hair Is Better Than No Hair"; "Get a Long Little Doggy," a country-Western number about dachshunds; "The Abdominal Snowman Has Crohn's," a number for next holiday season; and a special arrangement of "I'll Never Smile Again," for the Puritan Defense League, and I was also wondering if Jesus had a Twitter account, would he tweet "healing a leper at 2 p.m., come watch" or some such. . . . when it dawned on me it's a new year and Amigos is just around the corner.

For those who have asked in the past how we select our home, now's your chance to experience the process firsthand. Feel free to join me on Feb. 2 at Walnut Hill UMC, 10066 Marsh Lane, at 7-8 p.m. Twenty or so other churches will also have delegates. I've discovered this to be an organized and civil process; there's no kicking, biting or hitting below the belt.

Why is a church on Marsh Lane not called Marsh Lane UMC? Why is a church on Northwest Highway not called Northwest Highway UMC? I digress.

During the home selection process, the city [of Dallas] will also be providing updated lead-based training. Another incentive to attend: You can learn about proper lead-based paint evacuation from the pros and discover that I'm not making this stuff up when I insist we tarp the perimeter of the home with plastic sheeting.

Hope to see you then. Otherwise expect a Pestergram update in early February on the final home selected and more details on the homeowner. As a friendly reminder, the dates for this year's Amigos event is April 13-14 and 20-21.

Blessings,

Ed

So if you are having little luck recruiting folks, why not try a new approach. Be creative, try humor (don't take yourself too seriously) and see what happens. It is certainly working for Ed. How about you?

Richard Hearne is Lay Leader of the North Texas Conference, which stretches from just this side of Bogata to just that side of Burkburnett. E-mail him at rbhearne@sbcglobal.net.

AMIGOS DAYS

Amigos Days is a hands-on ministry of The United Methodist Church and People Helping People (a City of Dallas Housing Revitalization Program). It teams with inner-city Methodist host churches to repair and restore homes to make a positive difference in neighborhoods.

When: April 13-14 and April 20-21

Project leader: Ann Meyer

For more info and to volunteer: www.ntcmissonaloutreach.org/AmigosDays/Home.htm

North Texas Conference
United Methodist Reporter
Communications Team

Sheron C. Patterson, editor
Linda Johnson, associate editor

972-526-5000 800-969-8201
www.ntcumc.org

General Conference 2012

Three-day briefing gives delegates, others a preview of proposals

TAMPA, Fla. — In a three-day briefing, more than 300 delegates, communicators and others got a preview of the diverse issues that the lawmaking body of The United Methodist Church will tackle in spring.

Representing the North Texas Conference, the Rev. Jan Davis, the second elected clergy, and Ricky

United Methodist Communications sponsored the event, with involvement and support from other agencies and ministries of the church.

Other agencies and ministries of the church also supported and were involved in the preview of some of the issues the delegates will face April 24-May 4.

After attending the briefing, “I feel prepared in my mind because there is so much legislation that we learned about,” Rev. Davis said.

“I feel prepared in my heart because we talked about the issues that could potentially divide us,” she said. “I feel prepared in my spirit because I am open to what God wants to do through The United Methodist Church. And I am so thankful that North Texas gets to be a part of that.”

Harrison was also optimistic and excited.



NTC delegates the Rev. Jan Davis (above) and Ricky Harrison attended the briefing in Tampa, Fla.



Harrison, the first elected layperson and lay delegation leader, joined the Pre-General Conference meeting Jan. 19-21 at the Tampa Convention Center.

“This has been a great experience for me as a first-time delegate. I am taking it all in,” he said in Tampa. “We’ve been talking about the big issues. . . . I have met folks from all across the jurisdiction and across the country. I have met people on my legislative team, and we talked about the issues we will

focus on when we come back here for General Conference.”

He also provided some perspective as a younger delegate.

“This is a wonderful experience to be here as a young person,” Harrison said. “It is good to meet other young persons in the UM connection,

those in college and in high school.

“I am enjoying meeting the young adult leaders, whether lay or clergy, and working with them to see what it means to be a young leader in The United Methodist Church.”

United Methodist News Service contributed to this report.

Some of the proposed changes you want to pay attention to

Here are some of the General Conference issues presented at the Pre-General Conference Briefing. For a full listing, see gc2012.org.

Leading vital congregations

Proposed changes to the ordination process will eliminate guaranteed appointments, streamline the ordination process and sharpen the focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, said members of the Study of Ministry Commission in their presentation on clergy effectiveness proposals.

Set-aside bishop

Bishop Larry Goodpaster, episcopal leader of the Western North Carolina area and current Council of Bishops president, discussed the propos-



Goodpaster

al to create a “set-aside bishop” without residential responsibilities. “It is nearly impossible to be president of the Council of Bishops and lead an episcopal area,” he said.

Ethnic initiatives

Representatives of United Methodist ethnic/racial ministries expressed concerns about the proposed restructuring of The United Methodist Church, which includes consolidating nine of the denomination’s 13 general agencies into a new United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry. The representatives said there was little or no consultation with them about the structure proposed by the Interim Operations Team. The restructuring has been endorsed by the Council of Bishops and by the Connectional Table, which drafted the legislation.

Worldwide nature of the church

The 20-member Committee to Study the Worldwide Nature



of The United Methodist Church considered how to forge deeper connections, establish greater local authority and create a more equitable sharing of power and representation, reported Kansas Area Bishop Scott Jones, who chaired the committee.

Church budget

The General Council on Finance and Administration’s main task is to present a proposed church budget for 2013-16. The agency also submitted 43 petitions. (See gcfa.org/gc2012.) The agency established an economic advisory committee, which created three economic scenarios and worked with the projections of denominational agencies.

At \$603 million, the recommended budget reflects general reductions of 6.6 percent and

marks the first time that the proposed budget is smaller than the one presented for the previous quadrennium.

The World Service Fund, at \$311.6 million, represents 52 percent of the budget. Other categories are Ministerial Education, \$105.6 million; Episcopal (the bishops), \$90.3 million; General Administration, \$8.2 million; Black College, \$42.1 million; Africa University, \$9.4 million; and Interdenominational Cooperation, \$8.2 million.

Changes to clergy pensions

The General Conference will consider two proposals that would change clergy pensions, shifting more of the risk in retirement preparation from annual conferences to individual clergy. The United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits is asking the denomination’s top lawmaking body to choose between the two options. The first would combine a defined benefit component with a defined contribu-

tion component, like the clergy’s current retirement program but with a reduced benefit for clergy and, consequently, a lower contribution for conferences. The second option would be a defined contribution-only plan.

A defined benefit plan provides a monthly pension payment for life, with the employer assuming the bulk of the investment risk. A defined contribution plan, like the 401(k) plans most corporate employees now have, provides an account balance to use during retirement, with the clergyperson assuming most of



the risk that the money will not run out in that person’s lifetime. The pension board recommends the first option, which combines a reduced defined benefit component with a defined contribution component. Either option would cut costs to conferences by about 15 percent.

269 churches pay apportionments in full; 45 go 2nd mile to help 31

By JODI SMITH

Central for Connectional Resources

Congratulations to the 269 churches in the North Texas Conference that were able to pay 100 percent of their apportionments for 2011.

The conference's total payout for 2011 was at 95.8 percent, up from 94.6 percent in 2010.

In addition, a very heartfelt thank you goes to the 45 churches that were able to go above and beyond their apportionment in sacrificial

second-mile giving on behalf of the 31 churches that were unable to complete their payout this year for various reasons.

You have each demonstrated faithfulness in your support of the work of the Lord in and through The United Methodist Church with your financial gifts as well as your gifts of prayers, presence, service and witness.

May the Lord our God receive all the glory in this time of celebration.



Apportionments go for missions such as Nothing But Nets, which aims to prevent deaths from malaria. First UMC Dallas youth, the Cameroonian Professional Society and McCulloch Intermediate students last year raised \$20,000 for the cause.

The 100 Percenters

Aldersgate	Chicot	Forest Hill	Lake Highlands	Plano First	Telephone
Aley	Chinn's Chapel	Forestburg	Lakeway	Pleasant Grove	Terrell First
Allen First	Clarksville	Forney	Lakewood	Pleasant Mound	Terrell Warren
Alvord	McKenzie	Friberg-Cooper	Lancaster First	Urban Park	Chapel
Anna	Memorial	Friendship	Lannius	Pleasant Valley	The Woods
Annona	Clarksville	Frisco First	Leonard	Plymouth Park	Tinney Chapel
Antelope	St. Paul	Gafford Chapel	Lewisville First	Poetry	Tioga
Arapaho	Cochran Chapel	Gainesville First	Lone Oak	Ponder	Tira
Arbala	Cockrell Hill	Garland First	Lone Star	Powderly First	Tom Bean
Arcadia Park	College Mound	Garvin	Lovers Lane	Preston Hollow	Trenton
Archer City	Collinsville	Glen Oaks	Mabank	Price	Trietsch Memorial
Argyle	Commerce First	God's Kingdom	Martin Memorial	Princeton	Tyler Street
Avery	Community	Good Shepherd	Marvin	Quinlan First	UM Church of
Axe Memorial	Como	Grace Avenue	McKinney First	Rhome	the Disciple
Becker	Cooper	Grand Prairie First	Mesquite	Richardson First	Umphress Road
Belk	Cooper Creek	Greenland Hills	St. Mark's	Ridgewood Park	University
Bellevue	Copeville	Greenville	Miller Grove	Rockwall First	University Park
Bells	Coppell First	Wesley	Mission	Rosalie	Valley View
Ben Franklin	Corinth Faith	Grove Hill	Montague	Rosser First	Van Alstyne
Beverly Drive	Cornerstone	Hail	Morris Memorial	Rosston	Vashti
Birthright	Cottage Hill	Harless	Mount Calvary	Rowlett First	Verona
Blanton Chapel	Creekwood	Memorial	Mount Tabor-	Roxton	Virginia Point
Blossom	Cumby	Haven Chapel	Sumner	Royse City First	Vista Ridge
Blue Mound	Custer Road	Heath	Mount Vernon	Sachse First	Waples Memorial
Blue Ridge	Cuthand	Henrietta	First	Sadler	Webb Chapel
Bogata	Dallas First	Highland Park	Mount Zion	Saint Jo	Wesley Korean
Bonham First	Dallas Grace	Holliday	Mulberry	Salem-Kinser	Wesley Sulphur Springs
Bonham Wesley	Decatur First	Holy Covenant	New World	Salttillo	Westview
Bowie	Denton First	Honey Grove	Nocona	Sanger	Whaley
Boxelder	Denton Trinity	McKenzie	Northaven	Schreiber Memorial	Wheatland
Boyd	Deport	Howe	Northgate	Shady Grove	White Rock East
Bridgeport	DeSoto First	Iowa Park	Oak Cliff	Sherman First	White Rock Metro
Bryson	Duncanville First	Irving First	Oak Grove Aubrey	Sherman Grace	Whitesboro
Buckingham	Duncanville Trinity	Jacksboro	Oak Grove Decatur	Shooks Chapel	Whitewright
Burkburnett	Dundee	Josephine	Oak Haven	Sivell's Bend	Wichita Falls First
Byers	Ector	Justin	Oak Lawn	Southwood	Wichita Falls
Caddo Mills	Electra	Kaufman	Oak Park	Spring Valley	St. Mark's
Callisburg	Elm Ridge	Kavanaugh	Old Salttillo	St. Andrew	Wichita Falls Trinity
Calvary	Enloe	Kemp	Paradise	St. James	Wichita Falls Wesley
Campbell	Era	Kessler Park	Paris First	St. Philip's	Williams Chapel
Camp Wisdom	Faith	Kingston	Pecan Gap	St. Stephen	Wilson Chapel
Caney	Farmers Branch Christ	Kirkwood	Perrin	Stony	Windom
Carrollton First	Farmersville	Korean Central	Petrolia	Sulphur Bluff	Winnsboro First
Celeste	Fellowship	Krum First	Pickton	Sulphur Springs	Wolfe City First
Celina	First Korean	Ladonia	Pilot Point	First	Woodland
Chambersville	Floral Heights	Lake Cities	Pine Forest	Suncreek	Wylie
Chapel Hill	Flower Mound	Lake Creek	Plano Christ	Sunset	
Charleston	Floyd				

The Bishop

Leaning on faith after the death of a precious granddaughter

Continued from Page 1A

church, and I remind us all that God cries with us.

The name Hannah in Hebrew means *beauty* and *passion*, and that she was. Not only was she a beautiful child from the inside out, but one who had a passion for life. Hannah was precocious.

She had a special insight that enabled her to get along with everyone and to show the love of God in very special ways. Hannah at an early age developed a love for technology and used it quite well. When her mom gave her a cell phone for emergency purposes, Hannah would call all those in the family needing an encouraging word. The only problem is that the calls were often made late at night.

Hannah's dream was to go to college, study veterinarian medicine and become a veterinarian. She loved people and she loved animals.

We may not be able to see Hannah complete her dream, but we can enable Hannah's dream to be lived out in the lives of others. An endowment/scholarship fund has been established at the Texas Methodist Foundation in Austin to enable Hannah's dream to become a reality in the life of another.

What can we say during a difficult time such as this? I have learned that our words, though many, are just not adequate for such an occasion. The prayers, visits, cards, flowers, gifts and expressions of love enable us to know that we are not alone in our grief, that others have walked this path and empathize with our loss. I've walked this path with many families and uttered words of hope and comfort, but it is so different when it is your own family that grieves the loss.

The only sense of peace that I have experienced is from the word of God. That word begins in the Book of Samuel with the name Hannah and her devotion to God, crying out to God for a son and making a vow to God that when the child was weaned, she would give him over to the Lord for service. God heard Hannah's prayer and blessed her with a child. She named him Samuel and gave him over to the temple for upbringing.

The second word comes from the Book of Psalms and reminds us "that weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning."

We all have done our share of weeping. If I could take away the pain of a loving daughter weeping for her baby child, as a father I would. However, that is not possible – we all have to weep and cry for our



Hannah dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. A fund has been established in her honor so that others can achieve that same dream for themselves.

children. Weeping is a part of the natural process of grieving, and everyone grieves in his or her own way. Hannah would remind

us that it's OK to cry. The tears for the loss of a child are ways in which we experience catharsis and get our hurts out. For some, it may be for a short time; for others, the hurt and pain may be there for a long time. No matter how long, each of us must grieve in our own way.

There will be a time when we come to know the love and care of the true and living God that enables us to experience what those first believers experienced when they discovered that Christ was not dead, but alive for ever more.

We will see Hannah again because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Until that time, we have all these signs and reminders of the gift that God gave us in the life of Hannah. When we see her pictures, her smile and her unique way of expressing the joy of life, we will rejoice in the Lord for such a great gift.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." So weep on . . . joy comes in the morning!

Around the Conference

Arapaho UMC celebrates addition

Arapaho UMC in Richardson consecrated its 10,000-square-foot addition on Jan. 15 and plans an open house to show off the facilities on Feb. 12.

The addition includes five adult education classes, two large nurseries, a youth center and an art gallery, as well as a storage building for the Boy Scouts, a courtyard and renovations of spaces including the Fellowship Hall and choir room.

It is the first expansion project under **Pastor Jack Soper**, in his 20th year as senior pastor at the 1,000-member church.

The building project took four



The Rev. Jack Soper, left, in space designed to be an art gallery. Above: Some of the renovations that occurred during 11 months of construction.

years and cost \$1.8 million, Dr. Soper said.

"We started with the use of three demographic studies," he explained. "We made use of the annual conference resources, Precept and MissionSite. These resources gave us very valuable

OPEN HOUSE

When: 2-4 p.m. Feb. 12

Where: 1400 W. Arapaho Road, Richardson 75080

Contact: www.arapaho-umc.org

information about our parish. We discovered people in this area who were longing for progressive biblical theology, a truly inclusive church and an emphasis on mission. That is us."

Arapaho UMC is also known as the "Pumpkin Church" because for the past 15 autumns, the church's lawn is covered with bright yellow and orange pumpkins that are sold to benefit missions efforts.

Mexican activist to speak on human costs of drug war

Mexican activist **Juan Fraire Escobedo**, whose mother, Marisela Escobedo, was killed while protesting the lack of justice for the murder of his sister, Rubi, will speak at 7 p.m. Feb. 8 at First UMC Plano about the struggle to end violence in Ciudad Juarez and along the Texas border.

Escobedo brings a powerful testimony of the human costs of the drug war, militarism and gun trafficking, and is part of a movement to forge peace in Mexico. His story has been featured on NBC's *Dateline*.

John Lindsay-Poland of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who addresses gun trafficking to Mexico, the drug war and what the United States can do, will also speak.

