

# CONNECTION

## Getting your priorities straight

By Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe  
*North Texas Conference*



**Bishop Bledsoe**

Have you ever had to learn an important lesson by it being told to you more than once? I mean really learn a lesson.

I'm not talking about things

that you pick up over time; I mean focusing in on learning a lesson by being reminded again and again.

A childhood classmate of mine visited with us last week and reminded me of something I had long forgotten. As an elementary school student, I was a big talker in class—imagine that! The teacher tried to teach me to be quiet, so she took me from among my friends and placed me with the girls, but I struck up a conversation with them as well. One day she asked me to stay after school and write 50 times on the blackboard: "I will never talk again in class." After writing that so many times, I never talked in class again—in fact, I was quiet as a mouse. In the process of not talking so much, I learned an important lesson of listening. This lesson helped me throughout college and in graduate school. I had forgotten that experience, but my childhood classmate, whom I had not seen in 46 years, remembered it vividly.

Sometimes we have to focus in on things to determine what's important in life. By doing things over and over again and being reminded of them, we do learn important lessons. I am reminded of that lesson when I read about Simon Peter in the scriptures. Peter always let his

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## Surveys help churches build momentum

John Maxwell, in his best selling 21 Laws of Leadership, calls momentum "a leader's best friend. ... When you have momentum on your side, the future looks bright, obstacles appear small, and trouble seems temporary."

Here's the good news: We learn from books such as Malcolm Gladwell's *Tipping Point* that once an organization starts taking small strides forward—measurable movement forward—it can lead to incredible momentum for the future.

That's why, the North Texas Conference committed to a "Three Year Transformation Process" in 2009 in which we identified 13 key variables that we would track. We want our churches to actually see the connections between "measurement" and "momentum." We entered into this commitment together, because of our connection and covenant, so it's only fair to ask and expect each church to participate so as a conference we can move forward together.

The reason we ask each church to keep track of these 13 objective variables is not so we can compare one church to another. Rather, it is to equip our churches with the tools to generate momentum within the congregation.

Each year, for three years, every church in the Conference is expected to complete the brief Congregational Transformation Survey. It takes about an hour and is designed to compare a church's progress relative to the previous year, not against other churches.

And it's great to be able to report to your congregation that, for example, on nine of the 13 variables, you made progress over the previous year. Not only does it put measurable objectives in front of your people, but it also starts to build good momentum.

Here's the reality: Sometimes clergy are resistant to measurements. They fear measurement as something artificial or imposed and therefore threatening rather than seeing it as way to build momentum.

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## Q&A: MissionInsite gives churches insight

MissionInsite is a 4-year-old demographics company created by the founders of Percept. Annual conferences around the country have found that MissionInsite's newer, state-of-the-art technology and its extensive experience working with churches provide top service.

### What kind of "insight" into our communities and mission fields will it provide?

Everything you need to know who the people are in your community and how best to reach them — what their basic life attitudes are, what they want from church, how much they might contribute, and how far they would drive to get there. And what kind of sermons, worship and music they are most likely to respond to. Plus much, much, more.

### What is the timeline for the change-over?

This month. (See training dates at the back).

### Who should attend training?

Pastors, program staff, administrative staff, lay members and anyone who may need to use demographic services to enhance the local church's ministry.

### How much does it cost?

Thanks to apportionments, there is no cost to your church for the demographic services included in our contract with MissionInsite. Local churches may purchase an add-on feature to enrich ministry programming for \$75 per year. The details of this feature will be included in the training seminars.

### Can we still use Percept?

Yes, during the transition to MissionInsite, you can access Percept until Dec. 31.

# INFORMaTion:

Enrollment is now open at [www.BeADisciple.com/discipleonlinecourses](http://www.BeADisciple.com/discipleonlinecourses) for individuals who wish to participate in **Disciple I, Disciple II, and Youth Disciple** in an online format with others from all over. Participants follow the format of Disciple. They study the Bible on their own during the week then meet with their group members through the Internet with special software at a set day and time to review the week's study. For more information, visit [www.BeADisciple.com](http://www.BeADisciple.com) or email [BeADisciple@sckans.edu](mailto:BeADisciple@sckans.edu).

## Wesley Ministry Network Fall Selection of Online Classes Beginning September 13, 2010

**A Life Worthy of the Gospel** – *This eloquent, challenging and inspiring six-week introduction to Christian ethics avoids pat answers and simplistic lists of do's and don'ts for living a life worthy of the Gospel.*

**In God's Time: The Bible and the Future** – *This class encourages Christians both to take seriously and to think sensibly about the hope of God's ultimate victory. It is a relatively advanced course that will appeal most to people who have a background in biblical studies, such as completion of the first year of the Disciple Bible Study course.*

**Simply Christian** – *This course offers a fresh presentation of the timeless truths of Christianity.*

**Devotion to Jesus: The Divinity of Christ in Early Christianity** -- *This course takes on revisionist accounts of how and when the first Christians came to believe in Jesus as the divine son of God.*

**Religion and Science: Pathways to Truth** – *In this ground-breaking series, over a dozen leading scientists, theologians, and philosophers explore the contrasts and similarities between religion and science.*

**Advanced Courses in Lay Speaking Ministries for the UMC**  
*The next scheduled GBOD approved course, **Biblical Storytelling I**, will be held September 20-October 3, 2010. Information on this course is available at <http://beadisciple.com/workshops.html#Storytelling>*

*For more information, visit [www.BeADisciple.com](http://www.BeADisciple.com) or email [BeADisciple@sckans.edu](mailto:BeADisciple@sckans.edu).*

**Tim Brown** was elected **president and CEO of Methodist Children's Home** during a recent meeting of the agency's board of directors. The announcement was made by **Rev. Dr. Clayton Oliphint, chairperson of the board.** Brown has held various leadership roles during 26 years of service at MCH, most recently as vice president for community services. He was named interim president at MCH April 1 **following the retirement of Bobby Gilliam**, who served seven years as president. Brown becomes the **10th president in the Home's 120-year history.**

**Methodism's Breadbasket** will celebrate 40 years of service with a **Luncheon of Appreciation** at 11:30 a.m. Friday, Sept. 24 at Zan W. Holmes, Jr. Community Life Center, 6211 E. Grand Ave., Dallas. Breadbasket founder **Rev. John W. Tatum, Sr.** will be recognized along with volunteers. Tours and a silent auction begin at 10:30 am. For more information, contact Breadbasket director **Cynthia Martin** at 214-887-3926. Cost is \$40 per person or \$320 per table of eight, with proceeds benefiting Methodism's Breadbasket.

**Rev. Andy Stoker**, associate director of the Center for Leadership Development of the North Texas Annual Conference, has been appointed as an **intern to First UMC Dallas** via a unique Lilly Foundation grant, effective Sept. 1. The **Lilly Foundation** awarded the generous grant to First UMC Dallas to develop promising pastors under age 35 to lead large churches. The Lilly Foundation is a tax-exempt, private foundation established by Eli Lilly and Co. to support philanthropic initiatives.

### CLERGY RETREAT

Tanglewood Resort\*\*\*\*Oct. 18–20, 2010

Please call 1-800-833-6569 and ask for the North Texas Clergy reservations  
Costs: Single room \$383.00  
Double room \$298.00  
Daily rates are available

### Survey help...

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In 2009, more than 90 percent of our churches completed the survey. That has dropped off this year. (My thanks to the 186 churches who have completed it, but we still need the remaining 134!)

If you haven't sent your completed survey to your district office (and copied my office), please do so. If you've misplaced your survey, contact your District Office and a survey will be e-mailed to you immediately.

## MissionInsite TRAINING DATES

*Each person must register because space is limited at each session. District superintendents, center directors and their administrative assistants will begin training Sept. 9. The district schedule follows.*

**Metro District:** 9 a.m. to noon Friday, Sept. 10 at the Conference Ministry Center, Plano. Register with Deniece at the Conference Center at [deniece@ntcumc.org](mailto:deniece@ntcumc.org).

**North Central District:** 1–4 p.m. Friday, Sept. 10 at the Conference Ministry Center, Plano. Register with Deniece at the Conference Center at [deniece@ntcumc.org](mailto:deniece@ntcumc.org).

**Northwest District:** 1–4 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 1, location TBA. Register with District Office.

**East District:** 1–4 p.m. Monday, September 20th, 1:00–4:00pm, at First UMC Sulphur Springs. Register with District Office.

*Saturday training: For those who cannot make weekday training, 9 a.m. to noon Sept. 11 at the Conference Ministry Center, Plano. Register with Deniece at the Conference Center at [deniece@ntcumc.org](mailto:deniece@ntcumc.org).*

## Getting your...

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mouth and emotions get ahead of his actions; thus, he was always the first to volunteer for things, the first to jump into something over his head, the first to back down and deny Christ when the going got tough.

Jesus' encounter with Peter in John 21:15–19 suggests that he wanted Peter to focus in on life, on the true purpose of his Christian life. Thus, he asks him three times, "Do you love me?" Do you love me more than you love your fishing career? "Feed my lambs." Simon, do you really love me? "Tend my sheep." Simon, do you really, really love me? "Feed my sheep."

I believe Jesus repeats the questions to help Peter realize that it was an important question. It had to do with the purpose of being a follower of Jesus Christ. Essentially, what Jesus is saying to those who would follow him, to those who are looking for purpose in life, is this: When you give yourself in the service of caring for others, you are doing the work of Christ.

What about you? If Christ came and asked you, "Do you love me more than you love the things of life?" what would you say? Would he have to ask more than one time to get your attention or would you have to be reminded years later?