

The Bishop

Getting our priorities straight

BY BISHOP W. EARL BLEDSOE
North Texas Conference

What good things are happening in life? That is my reflection question for this week.

Much of our time seems to be focused on what is not working, what needs fixing or changing. When we focus on the problems for too long, we can become cynical, frustrated and even depressed if we see no possible solutions.



Bishop Bledsoe

I have discovered when I am feeling this way and am frustrated that things are not going as well as I wish, I go to scripture and remember the things of God. This enables me to see life from a different perspective.

Several key verses encourage us when we worry about the future or focus on our problems.

The first is Matthew 6:34: "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."

The second is Philippians 4:8, where Paul speaks of thinking on the good things in life: "Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse." (Quotations from *The Message*)

I don't know about you, but I, too, get focused on the worst, the bad and the not yet in life. When we do this, we get into this downward spiral,

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Charting a course for the future. . . 'A time to lead'

BY BISHOP W. EARL BLEDSOE
North Texas Conference, Dallas Area

Within a few days we will gather in Wichita Falls to decide the future of how we will relate to one another in our common vision and mission as the North Texas Conference.

It will be a time of fellowship, Christian nurture and support. As promised, the Strategic Planning Team that annual conference members unanimously affirmed last year is bringing back a plan.

The team worked hard all year long and did the due diligence necessary for details to fit together. They received your "Hopes and Dreams" cards. They scheduled listening conferences with both laity and clergy. They provided opportunities for feedback and buy-in along the way via online forums, group meetings and district conferences.

I believe the team, under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. John Fiedler, has provided us with a plan to move us forward in ministry together. I want to share my personal thanks to each team member for taking the time from their various job responsibilities to do this work.

This is a great plan. The mission of the church is clear and

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, center, discusses the Strategic Plan with Extended Cabinet members, shown from left, Wichita Falls District Superintendent Rev. John Rosenberg, Lay Leader Richard



Hearne, Sherman-McKinney District Superintendent Dr. Clara Reed, Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Connectional Ministries Rev. Fred Durham, Bishop Bledsoe, Paris-Sulphur Springs District Superintendent Dr. Keith Payne Boone, incoming Communications Officer Dr. Sheron Patterson, and Dallas-Denton District Superintendent Dr. Larry George.

urgent: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This plan seeks to orient the Annual Conference's work around helping local churches live out that mission. It answers the question: "What can the Annual Conference uniquely do to strengthen the ministry of local churches as they strive to reach their mission fields?"

At the same time, it fulfills all the requirements mandated by the *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, and it is in keeping with the overall mission and focus of the UMC around the world.

North Texas learned from the experiences of other annual conferences and built on their work, improving it where we could.

Rather than going over all the merits and benefits of the plan, I would encourage you to do as I did throughout this entire enterprise: I trusted in the power of prayer and in the spirit of God to work through the process. I am asking you as an annual conference to do the same.

There will be the temptation to only view the plan as change to be feared and criticized. As your bishop, I know what change is about, and like many of you,

have gone through many changes in the church.

I have learned that if we lean into the change, trusting in the power of God and in the process that emerges, we will get to the place to which God calls us, but we have to trust the process. I am convinced the time is here and now for us to make the changes necessary for the North Texas Conference to bear fruit for Christ right here in the mission field of North Texas.

If we can envision beyond Annual Conference and the new plan, it is clear the work is just

See "Charting..." on Page 8A

2010 Annual Conference to consider defining issues

BY DR. JOAN G. LABARR
Editor

When the 144th session of the North Texas Annual Conference gathers in Wichita Falls June 6–8 (Sunday through Tuesday), lay and clergy members will be making decisions with significant impact on the future ministry of the UMC in the 20 counties within its geographic bounds.

"Risk-Taking Mission" is the foundational principle of the 2010 conference, exemplified by words from Micah 6:8, "Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly" on the conference logo designed by Donna Aldridge of Greenland Hills UMC, Dallas.

Annual Conference members will have the special opportunity to embody the witness to mission by participating in three "Risk-

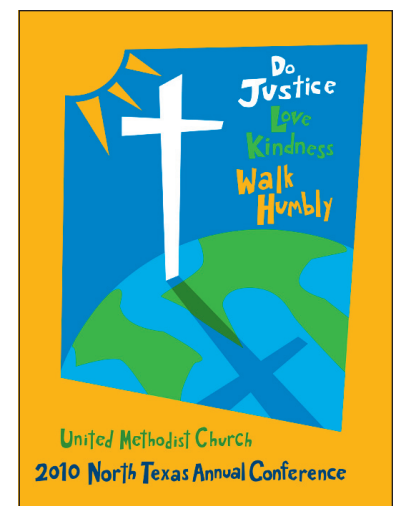
Taking Mission" projects: bringing health kits for the United Methodist Committee on Relief to conference; giving blood in Monday's Red Cross blood drive at the Multi-Purpose Events Center (MPEC), and participating in the Wednesday Day of Service that begins with breakfast at Floral Heights UMC at 8:30 a.m.

Business sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m. Monday at the MPEC. The primary item of business, scheduled for Monday morning is consideration of the proposed Strategic Plan, which will be presented by Strategic Planning Team Chair Dr. John Fiedler, pastor of First UMC, Dallas. Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe discusses the plan and its implications for the conference in the lead article for this edition of the NT UM Reporter.

Conference will begin at 3:30 p.m. Sunday with Lay and Clergy sessions scheduled at First UMC and Floral Heights UMC, Wichita Falls, respectively.

Opening worship will follow the clergy/laity dinner at Kay Yeager Coliseum. Dallas Northeast District Superintendent Dr. Clara Reed will be preacher for the service, replacing Bishop John G. Innis of Liberia who has health issues that prevent him from traveling. Offering for the service will go to the NTC **Imagine No Malaria** campaign. As is the NTC tradition, Project Transformation, C2K and camp interns will be consecrated during the opening service. The dinner and worship have been planned by the hard-working Wichita Falls local arrangements team.

After Bishop Bledsoe calls the



conference to order and Conference Secretary, Rev. Judith Reedy, leads in the organization process, the report of the Committee on Episcopacy, chaired by Scott Smith, First UMC,

See "Considering..." on Page 5A

Those who are to be ordained express gratitude for support throughout the ministry journey

Because the 2010 class of ordinands will be responding to specific questions from the Board of Ordained Ministry during their video speeches at the NTC Annual Conference, they have been given the opportunity to offer their expressions of gratitude through the NT UM Reporter. Most of the group chose to accept this opportunity and their personal words of thanks follow:

Rev. Marji Bishop

My journey, with its joys and missteps, started with being inspired in a women's Bible study by Rev. Jan Davis, who encouraged me throughout my journey. Rev. Todd Harris and Rev. Don Underwood hired me to serve on the staff of Christ UMC Plano. Rev. Linn Zink, Rev. Brian McPherson, and Rev. Joy Anderson were my mentors. Rev. Dr. Clara Reed guided me during my Perkins internship at All Nations UMC. I owe a great debt to Mary Brooke Casad and Rev. Duane VanGiesen, who hired me to serve in the North Texas Conference office in 2005 after Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Katrina, thanks to funding from Highland Park UMC. Rev. Dr. Joan Gray LaBarr and Rev. Fred Durham encouraged me. My lay ministry committee spent many nights over three years, always urging me on to be a faithful gospel-bearer. Final thanks go to my mom who was supportive all these years.

Rev. Wally Butts

So many to thank for the love and support I've received since beginning my journey into ordained ministry. First, I seek grace from the many unnamed saints who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, helped to nurture me, as I name but a few here: my family (on both sides of the pond!); Chuck Merrill of the Southwest Texas Conference, who saw in a 13 year-old boy a future United Methodist pastor; Barbara Marcum, who has graciously guided me since I began responding to that call in 1997; Larry Ravert, whose trusting and joy-filled demeanor is infectious; Kathleen Baskin-Ball, whose passion for the Covenant and our potential in Christ continues to shine through me and countless others; Doug Miller, my mentor and dear friend; and the people of Highland Park, Perkins, Heath, Lakewood, Sun creek, Celina and Cornerstone, who have faithfully served Christ

alongside me every step of the way.

Rev. Marc Corazao

There are many people to thank, and I will, individually, as is my way. But there are some other "Thank You's" I would like to give... Thank you, Residency, for being a faithful, frustrating, challenging, spiritual friend for more years than anyone should have the pleasure of sharing. Thank you, Family Systems Theory, for giving me triangle-shaped lenses and showing me just how messed up we really are with each other sometimes. Thank you, Youth Ministry, for showing me that no matter how much I learn, I really don't know much. Thank you, Depression, for laying out before me the driest desert so that I could recognize true Living Water when I find it. Thank you, Covenant, for grace upon grace from God that stands through all kinds of troubles. And thank you, Marriage, for giving me the purest glimpse of true, powerful, steadfast, merciful love this side of heaven.

Rev. Nancy M. DeStefano

There are so many people to recognize who have been with me on this journey. First thanks go to my parents, who gave me a strong and ecumenical foundation on which to build my faith. The people of the churches I have served: First UMC, Plano, Walnut Hill UMC and First UMC in Bells. Clergy mentors: Barbara Marcum, Kathleen Baskin-Ball, Judith Reedy, Mark Stamm, Alyce McKenzie, Phil Mercer, Gary Mueller, Paul Escamilla, Ben Shinn—and many others. My children who were asked to go with the flow and adapt to a new direction in my life. Most of all, I am grateful to my husband and best friend, Ed. Through this winding path he has believed in me and never faltered in his commitment to our life together. My heart overflows with gratitude to you all, and I never stop thanking God for your presence in my life.

Rev. Chris Dowd

Though there are more people to thank than I have space for in 150 words, I would like to thank the following people especially: My colleagues in the connection: Bishop Bledsoe and the Cabinet; my Mentor Pastor, Rev.

Brian McPherson; my Covenant Group and Rev. Cammy Gaston; the Board of Ordained Ministry; Dean Lawrence and the faculty of Perkins School of Theology. My Arapaho family, the place that has formed me in ministry over the past ten years, especially my Intern and Residency Committees, the youth, parents, and counselors of our UMYF program, and of course, Rev. Jack Soper, without whom I would not have even discerned my call. My family, for their love and support. And, most importantly, my wife, Whitney, and our son, Max, (and Sam on the way!). I have a glorious life because of you and could never fully express how much I love you.

Gloria Fowler

Thank you, Almighty God! Without your grace, a timid



young minority female could never have dreamed of proclaiming your name! Thank you, Appa and Umma, for your prayers, for believing in me and modeling Christian discipline and the joy of serving God. Abraham, my wonderful husband, thank you for being my inspiration, for your faithful support and encouragement, and for holding me accountable in Jesus. Without you I would not be here today. Thank you, Rev. Gifford Long! You have taught me to take authority and be true to God's calling. Thank you, Rev. Jan Davis! You have been my counsel and role model in ministry. Thank you, First UMC, Grand Prairie; Good Seed UMC; Korean Central UMC, and Subbu UMC for your unconditional love and for helping mold me into the servant leader that God has called me to be. Finally, thank you Rev. Cammy Gaston and my covenant group!

Rev. Daniel Alan Gurley

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those who supported me

through prayer, example, and instruction. First and foremost I would like to thank God for the call placed on my life and future. I would like to thank my wife, Angela, of 30 years who has loved me, prayed for me, and critiqued me throughout this journey. I could not have done it without her. I would like to thank my children who supported me, sacrificed, and followed me in my call no matter where it has led. I would like to thank the churches that gave me direction and support by teaching me how to be a pastor and not just a preacher. I want to thank the mentors, Vic Casad, Tommy Brummett, and Glen Blackmon, who gave me direction in how to be a better servant of God to God's people. Finally, I would like to thank the District Superintendents: Revs. Jim Pledger, Tom Graves, Fred Durham and Clara Reed, along with the wonderful bishops who had faith in me to appoint me to the greatest churches in the conference.

Rev. Derek Jacobs

On June 7th I will receive my Elders Orders at our Annual Conference. I realize I did not get to this point on my own. Over the years God has placed a number of people in my life who have supported me dearly and poured into my ministry. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for helping to mold me into the person I am today. I would like to thank Rev. Tyrone D. Gordon for being a mentor and a loyal friend who has poured much into my life and ministry. I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Ouida Lee for being the best mentor a candidate can have. I would like to thank St. Luke for being a teaching congregation which has taught me so much. I would like to thank my parents, David and Dorothy Jacobs, for raising me up to the person I am today. I would like to thank all of my brothers and sisters for your love and support. Most of all I would like to thank my wife Season and our son Dayson. Season, you have been there standing beside me from the beginning. Words cannot alone express how thankful I am to have you in my life. I love you!!! God bless each of you real good.

Rev. Mai Le

I owe a great debt to the One who has begun His work in me,

Father-Son-Holy Spirit. I thank the pastors and people at Christ UMC in Plano whose ministry touched my life beyond belief. To the people at Chapel Hill who have invested their love and trust in me, I am grateful. I thank Dr. Abraham, Dr. Bassler, Dr. Clark-Soles, Dr. Heller, Dr. Marshall, and Dean Lawrence of Perkins School of Theology who profoundly influenced my theological stance. I am grateful to Tom Brown, Milton Gutierrez, Pat Thresher, and Mary Beth Hardesty Crouch; Dr. Larry George, Dr. Copeland, and the congregation at Lovers Lane whose grace has helped me grow as a pastor. I thank my husband and our two daughters for their patience, love, and support. With love and gratitude, I remember my mother whose love, faith and sacrifice laid the foundation upon which I can hear and follow God's call.

Rev. Dean Libby

My first and greatest "thank you" goes to my family—Debbie, Caitlyn and Logan. Thank you for loving me and always pushing me to trust God for the strength to live out my calling. Thank you to Rev. Jim Ozier, who took a chance on a kid fresh out of seminary; Rev. Daniel Humbert, who taught me how to be "the pastor"; Rev. Kathy McLean-Davis, who taught me to trust and honor itinerancy; and Rev. Don Lee who taught me how to have compassion in the midst of gut-wrenching situations. Thank you to my clergy colleagues—Revs. Ann Willet, Chris Yost, Marc Corazao, Charley Pierce, Debbie Chapman, and many others! Your support, encouragement, and laughter along this journey were invaluable. Thank you to the NTC churches I have served: First Plano, Holy Covenant, Trietsch, and University! You were more gracious than I deserved and more loving than I could imagine.

Rev. Lisa Marshall

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I offer prayers of thanksgiving for all the many people who have guided and mentored me throughout the Ordination process. I am so grateful for each of you. I would like to give special thanks to Rev. Dina Steiner, Rev. Terri Swan, Rev. Martha Myre, Rev. George Fisk, Rev. Tom Palmer, Rev. Matt Gaston, and Rev. John Mollet for the many years of love, support, words of wisdom, laughter and tears we

have shared. Each of you have been such a powerful and spirit-filled influence on my ministry. I offer a special prayer of gratitude for Rev. Bill Crouch for his mentoring, support and love. There are so many others, both clergy and lay, who have supported and guided me over the years. I cannot begin to list them all, but I am so grateful for each of you. May God bless you!

Rev. Marie Mitchell

Heartfelt thanks for so many who have been instrumental in my growth and ministry to God's church, bless you! I praise God for your servant's heart. Special heartfelt thanks to those who have personally journeyed with me: Rev. Derrick Wright...you "saw"; Rev. Harold Dangerfield and Highland Hills UMC, you molded; Rev. Connie Millsap, you guided; Rev. Frank Drenner and Trinity UMC, Duncanville, you embraced; Rev. Marti Soper, you uplifted; Dr. Jim Bowden and First UMC, Duncanville, you enriched; My "Grace" Girls—Aleze, April, Lucretia, Margie, you encouraged; My family and friends, you supported; God...you "called" and gave much grace through Jesus. Hallelujah! I treasure you all!

Rev. Liz Moen

Any expression of gratitude for support through this journey for ordination must begin with Rik and Caleb Moen, who made great sacrifices along the way. I must also thank my pastors Dr. Vic Casad and Rev. Woody Weilage who have shared their wisdom both as friends and spiritual advisors. I am fortunate to have made the whole journey from candidacy through ordination with the members of Aldersgate UMC, who have blessed me with friendship and encouragement of every kind. I wish to thank my official and unofficial mentors: Duane VanGiesen, Eric Folkert, Marsha Middleton, Fred Durham, Cammy Gaston, Amy Forbus and the Ministry Center staff. To my friends who will be ordained with me, I have been honored to walk with you as we have held each other up and carried each other's burdens. I thank God for all of you and all those I have failed to mention.

Rev. Dana Norton

As this journey ends and another begins, my heart is filled with gratitude for those who have walked with me. Assigned mentors, Pat Grable, John Thornburg and Joyce Cravens,

Considering defining issues

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Carrollton, will be the first order of business. Bishop Bledsoe will then present the Episcopal Address, followed by the Laity Address by NTC Lay Leader Richard Hearne. The Young Persons address by Ricky Harrison and Rachel Magruder is scheduled for Monday afternoon.

This year the presentations by the 2010 ordination class members will be made on video and be interspersed throughout the two days of business. Ordinands have also been given an opportunity to share their personal gratitude to those who have supported them in their ministry journeys in written expressions that appear on pages 4–5A in this

newspaper.

If the Strategic Plan is approved by vote of the conference, there will be an order of the day at 3 p.m. Monday for the four new districts to meet with the superintendents assigned to each: Metro, Dr. Clara Reed; North Central, Rev. Milton Gutierrez; Northwest, Rev. John Rosenburg, and East, Rev. Paul Gould.

Imagine No Malaria team co-chairs Rev. Reedy and Lay Leader Hearne will present a report on the campaign to eradicate deaths from malaria in sub-Saharan Africa and the NTC's role as a leadership conference in the denomination-wide drive to achieve this goal by 2015.

Eighteen persons will be

uniquely helped me grow. While unofficial mentors are too many to name, Bill La Barr and Joan La Barr have both encouraged and paved the way for opportunities to grow in ministry. The people of Lovers Lane UMC and Stan Copeland confirmed my call to ministry while the people of Plymouth Park UMC made me a pastor and preacher. And no one has supported me more in all the ups and downs of this journey than my loving husband, Andy. In support of my calling, Andy along with our daughters, Naomi and Anna, have become a clergy family with all of the challenges and blessings. My parents, Daniel and Joanne Grissett, provided the foundation for all that has followed. Thank you.

Rev. Denise Peckham

There is not enough room on this page to express my gratitude to the many people who have journeyed with me toward ordination. I begin with Holy Covenant, where I was loved into a journey that would lead me to respond to a call to ordained ministry. To the saints of the Dallas-Denton Lay Speakers I give thanks. The clergy who have walked with me are too numerous to name, but there

ordained as elder and one as deacon and eleven persons will be commissioned for ministry on the elder and deacon tracks at the Service of Ordination and Commissioning at 7:00 p.m. Monday at First UMC, Wichita Falls. Dr. William B. Lawrence, Dean of Perkins School of Theology, SMU, will be preacher for the service, and the offering will support camp scholarships.

The 11 a.m. Memorial Service, celebrating the lives of clergy and spouses who died in the past year, will be order of the day on Tuesday. Dallas North-east Superintendent Rev. Pat Beghtel-Mahle will be preacher. Retiring clergy will address the conference during the afternoon session. They include: Revs. Beghtel-Mahle, Willie Johnson, Larry Kruger, Richard Smith and Local Pastor Rev. Robert Turk.

The business sessions will conclude Tuesday afternoon with the Reading of the Appointments, and those choosing to stay over until Wednesday will participate in Wednesday's Risk-Taking Mission Day of Service in Wichita Falls.

are those who shared intimately my triumphs and heartbreaks along the way: Pat Beghtel-Mahle, Kenny Dickson, Sandi and James Minor, John Taylor, Don Lee, Dr. Larry George, Dr. Richard Dunagin, Debbie Chapman and John Peel. To my family who prayed for this day, I am indebted. The congregation of Button Memorial continues to shower me with grace upon grace and I stand amazed. And in all things I thank God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who remains faithful to this child.

Rev. Rodney Whitfield

First I want to thank God for the calling and for the grace that has brought me finally to ordination as an elder. I also want to thank my wife Alli-

son for supporting me through seminary and our moves over the years. I want to thank the great churches I have been a part of both growing up as a preacher's kid, and those I have had the privilege to serve for 13 years of ministry in Arkansas and the North Texas Conferences. I cannot begin to thank all the laity and clergy who discerned, helped, loved, and encouraged me along this great adventure in ministry. However, if you want to blame someone for the North Texas Conference becoming my parish and my home you can thank, Mark and Sherry Boyd, Rev. Tim McLeMore, Rev. Brian Hardesty Crouch, Charles and Georgia Harrison, Mary Brooke Casad, and Rev. Clayton Oliphint.

Around the Conference

New Covenant UMC, Sunnyvale, 3032 N. Beltline Rd., is planning a special "**Communion of Silence**" for 7:00 p.m. June 3, with Rev. Doug Fox, First UMC, McKinney, leading the service. For more information contact the church at 972-226-1092.

Children's Music Camp for grades 3–5 is scheduled June 8–12 at Bridgeport Camp and Conference Center. Scottie Tisdell and Karen Ewing will be directors. For registration information, please go to the camp website: www.bridgeportcamp.com and look for CM Camp.

Custer Road UMC, Plano, will present the renowned **Raleigh Ringers** handbell choir at 7:30 p.m. June 22. The internationally acclaimed community choir is based in Raleigh, N.C. The group uses the most extensive collection of handbells and bell-like instruments owned by a single performing group in the world. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children under age 12. They are available at www.crumc.org/handbells through June 20 or for \$2 more at the door. For more information, call the church at 972-618-3450.

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Positions Available

Cokesbury Bookstore, Dallas, is seeking a part-time **sales associate**. Cokesbury is the retail arm of the United Methodist Publishing House. Contact **Katie Shockley** at 972-964-5777 to inquire about the position. Cokesbury is located at 19200 Preston Road, one block south of the George Bush Turnpike.

Schreiber Memorial UMC, Dallas, has openings for two part-time staff positions: **Choir Director** with responsibility for the chancel and handbell choirs and **Youth Director** with responsibility for junior and senior high youth activities. Send resumes to: Rev. David Howeth, 4525 Rickover, Dallas, TX 75244 or e-mail: davidhoweth@schreiberumc.org.

Priorities

Continued from front page that sucks the very life out of us, draining the resources we need to make a difference in the future. God has blessed us with a wonderful opportunity not only to witness to, but also to live out, what is true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling and gracious. What a great opportunity!

P.S. I just received an update on the financial response to the Haiti earthquake crisis, and to date, the North Texas Conference has contributed \$728,644.63 to The Advance #418325. Thank you for your generous and gracious response!

First UMC, Richardson, completes new education building

First UMC, Richardson, is celebrating the completion of its 15,000-square-foot education building, a facility designed to support both weekday and Sunday church and community programs.

The completion of the third 15,000-square-foot facility increases the amount of space for the church's daycare, Sunday School programs, and meeting rooms by 50 percent.

"Our church members saw the need to expand our education and meeting room

space to handle growth in visitors, new members, and involvement in existing ministries as well as establishment of new ministries. This new addition will add a third building to the two existing buildings," said Dan Murphree, Richardson resident and co-chair of the church's Pathway with Purpose campaign that funded the new construction.

First Richardson was able to build this addition without incurring additional mortgage debt, which Murphree credits

to the generosity of its members.

The new construction includes ten large children's classrooms, allowing the Mother's Day Out program to increase by 25 students for the 2010-2011 school year. Another large additional room provides our afterschool program with an age appropriate classroom for elementary children during the week, while on Sundays the classroom is used as a safe special needs classroom. The new space will also be used for weeknight studies and meetings for adults.

"The new classes upstairs are much needed during the school year as our Sunday School program continues to grow,"

said Director of Children's Ministries Allyson George.

"The additional classrooms enable the students to not feel cramped, and provide the Sunday School leaders with space for creativity, such as drama and active games that relate to the curriculum. During the Summer all of these rooms are full of day camp students, as our church offers special needs day camp, elementary all day care camp, and half day topical day camp, such as art or science," she said.

Information on enrollment in summer programming and other children's ministries is available at www.fumcr.com.



First UMC, Richardson, Senior Pastor Rev. Clayton Oliphint talks with John and Alice Hutchings and Terry Brehm during a reception celebrating the opening of the new education building.

Two 2010 commissioning candidates announced

The NTC Board of Ordained Ministry announced two additional persons to be commissioned at the 2010 North Texas Annual Conference. The announcement came after the press time for the May 21 North Texas UM Reporter in which the other candidate profiles were printed. The 2010 Service of Ordination and Commissioning will be at 7:00 p.m. June 7 at First UMC, Wichita Falls.

Cheryl A. Jones, elder track, has been serving at St. James/Haven Chapel in the Sherman area.

She received the Bachelor of Science degree in oral communication disorders from Lincoln University, MO in 1979, and the Master of Arts degree in Speech Pathology from Ohio State University, Columbus, OH in 1980, and she is presently completing work toward her Master of Divinity degree at Perkins School of Theology, SMU. Hamilton Park UMC, Dallas, is her home



Jones

church in the NTC. She is married to Odis Jones, Jr.

Mary Ncurubi Miriti, elder track, is a member of Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas,

where she has been serving as the women's president of the Heart of Africa Fellowship. She was born in Kenya, where she was educated and ultimately ordained as a lay preacher. She served as liturgical secretary at St. Peter's Methodist Church in Nairobi, Kenya, for two years and worked with the Kenyan branch of Wycliffe Bible Translators. She earned a B.A. in Business Administration in 1993 and is in the process of completing her Master of Divinity degree at Perkins School of Theology, SMU. She is married to Charles Miriti Maburuki. The couple has three children, Christopher, born Dec. 13, 1994, Erick, born March 7, 1998, and Emmanuel, born March 3, 2006.



Miriti

Cokesbury ready for Annual Conference

By KATIE SHOCKLEY
Manager, Dallas Cokesbury

Cokesbury is proud every year to be part of annual conferences across the country. Frances Long and I look forward to seeing everyone from the North Texas Conference in Wichita Falls this year. Here are some specials you will see:

- in-stock clergy robes 15% off and custom order clergy robes 20% off
- Bibles 30% off
- leather Bible cases 35% off
- reusable Cokesbury tote bag, 99¢
- blowout specials from 50%-80% off
- \$10 off purchases of \$50 or more (look for your coupon)

We will be prepared to measure for custom robes. We can also take your Vacation Bible School order—save \$50 when your church purchases \$250 or more in VBS materials. If I have not met you yet at the Dallas store, please stop by during Annual Conference and

say hello. If you have questions about what will be available from Cokesbury during annual conference, please call the Dallas store at 972-964-5777.

Cokesbury is the retail arm of the United Methodist Publishing House. Any profits are dedicated to helping fund clergy pensions.



Cokesbury associate Frances Long, left, and manager Katie Shockley compare stoles in preparation for sales at annual conference

Charting a course for the future

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beginning. We will need to make sure we have a Core Leadership Team that has the big picture in mind, can see the greater vision for the church beyond our local contexts, and can hold each of us accountable for being fruitful in living out our mission and core values.

We will need to make sure the new Centers are vibrant and populated with people and ideas that

enable us to develop and sustain principled Christian leaders among clergy and laity. Can you envision us working together in creative ways to start those 'new places for new people' and helping to transform our existing congregations into places of vital and vibrant ministry? Can you envision your Bishop, Cabinet, lay leaders, youth leaders and others reaching out and working with the poor in our midst? Do you see us as a church helping to alleviate suffering by working together

to stamp out killer diseases in the world?

We will have a lot of work to do beyond the adoption of the new Strategic Plan to build clergy morale and establish Christian community. This work of building trust in our relationships is foundational to the effectiveness of the

aTime to lead

new process, and its importance cannot be underestimated. Please join me in stepping out in faith to listen to God's lead-

ing, to trust in the workings of the Holy Spirit among us and to respond with courage and bold action.

I believe the Strategic Planning Team that has adopted the plan now owns it as the vehicle to get us to the place God wants us to be.

Now it is time for the North Texas Conference to adopt and own it as a basis for moving forward in ministry. It is a time to lead, and I ask for your enthusiastic support!