

††† 2016 DAILY JOURNAL †††

Thursday Afternoon, June 9, 2016

*Laity Session*

The Laity Session was held in the Sunset Ballroom of the Overton Hotel and Convention Center. Mr. Murray Murphy, Conference Lay Leader, opened the session and Mr. Randy Hollums gave the opening prayer. Murray introduced Associate Lay Leader, Jeff Fisher, who presented Murray a John Wesley bobble head statue as going away gift. Ms. Kay Hanna, United Methodist Women President reported that “A Fresh Wind is Blowing” is the theme for United Methodist Women. She reported on the various opportunities of events for 2016. She introduced the 2016 Leadership Team. The District Lay Leaders gave a report: Dan Swanson, Big Spring District, talked about the Wesley Foundation at Howard College. Dale West, Amarillo District, gave a report and mentioned Faith Southwest, the newest church, in Amarillo, had an average attendance of 178. He also gave some opportunities available in 2016.

Ron Enns, Murray Murphy, Leia Williams, Jeff Fisher, Randy Stutes, and Mark Pittman gave a report from General Conference including their reflections and actions that were taken at General Conference.

Jeff Fisher gave the closing prayer.

*Executive Session*

The Executive Session was held in the Sanctuary of the First United Methodist Church, Lubbock and was opened with prayer. Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe and Rev. Steve Brooks, Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry, went through the Business Questions that required a vote. Those clergy who were retiring and present were asked to stand to be recognized. Matthew “Matt” Sheldon Gary, John B. Faulkenberry Miller, Joshua “Josh” Glenn Stueve, Matthew “Matt” Scott Wolfington, and Karan Ann Young were elected to Provisional Membership as Elder in Full Connection. Jay Brent Gage and Kirk Warren Watson were elected as Elder in Full Connection. Rev. Blossom Matthews was elected Chair of the Order of Elders and Rev. Toni Bailey was elected Chair of the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. It was announced that the Licensing of New Local Pastors, Commissioning, and Ordination Service would be held on Friday evening, June 10, 2016 in the Sanctuary of First United Methodist Church, Lubbock.

After announcements were made, the Session was closed with prayer.

The Clergy Spouses’ Reception, hosted by Mrs. Leslie Bledsoe, was held in the Parlor of First United Methodist Church, Lubbock, while the Clergy Session were being held.

After the Clergy and Laity Sessions, the Conference participated in Fellowship Time at the Overton Hotel and Convention Center.

*Business Session*

The One Hundred Seventh Session of the Northwest Texas Annual Conference was called to order by Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe in the Sunset Ballroom of the Overton Hotel and Convention Center at three fifteen in the afternoon.

Rev. Richard Edwards, Host District Superintendent of the Lubbock District brought greetings to the Conference. Mr. Dan Pope, Mayor of Lubbock, brought greetings from the city. Mr. Jeff Fisher, Lubbock District Lay Leader, also brought greetings to the Conference.

Rev. Jorge Jorge gave the opening devotional.

The Conference Theme video “Journey of a Disciple” was shown.

Bishop Bledsoe recognized Rosemary Prumer, Conference Secretary. She then moved that online registrations, registrations received in the mail, and onsite registrations be the official roll call for the Conference. She moved that the agenda, as printed in the Worship Booklet and as it is amended, be the official agenda for the Conference. She then moved that the Sunset Ballroom be the Bar of the Conference. The motions passed.

Rev. Richard Edwards, Dean of the Cabinet, brought Nominations Report 1. Additions and corrections were given: Conference Leadership Team, delete Josh Kouri. The new president of the UMW will be added to the Nurture Ministry Team when elected in January. CCYM Big Spring District Adult Coordinator, delete Kelly Inman and replace with Amanda Jones, also replace Kelly as the JYT Adult Representative. Delete Danny Sanders as a clergy member on the Council on Finance and Administration. Committee on Investigation for Diaconal Ministers, Four Diaconal Members, delete Juanita Hardaway and replace with Jane Kirby. Under Five Diaconal Ministers or Professing Members, Replace Jane Kirby with Betsy Bellah. For Pages and Tellers Lubbock District add Jesse Tarango. Add Martha Webster to the Committee on Bylaws, Resolutions, and Rules. Abilene District Board of Ordained Ministry, delete Felicia Hopkins and put Lou Ellerbrook as the District Representative to the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Nominees for the Strategic Planning Task Force and the Jurisdictional Pool were passed out. Richard explained to the Conference that all nominations would be voted on Saturday morning.

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He moved the pages, tellers, minutes committee be elected. The motion passed.

Mr. Ron Enns, Chairperson of the Committee on Bylaws, Resolutions, and Rules brought Report 1. He announced the committee would meet at end of session in a corner of the ballroom.

Dr. Craig Curry, Clergy Member of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A), gave Report 1. He referred to the Conference Budget and he laid the entire report on the table. It will be voted on Saturday morning. The motion carried.

Introductions of the Cabinet Spouses and the Bishop's Ministry Assistant were made by Rev. Richard Edwards, Dean of the Cabinet. Introduced were Leslie Bledsoe, wife of Bishop Bledsoe; Diane Lippitt, the Bishop's Ministry Assistant; Diane Murphy, wife of Murray Murphy, Conference Lay Leader; Mary Nunn, wife of Jimmy Nunn, Conference Director of Mission and Administration; Jennifer Andersen, wife of Dave Andersen, Chief Financial/Chief Benefits Officer; Karen Price, wife of George Price, Abilene District Superintendent; Barbara Bauernfeind, wife of Paul Bauernfeind, Amarillo District Superintendent; Sandy Patterson, wife of Derrell Patterson, Big Spring District Superintendent; and Jo Beth Edwards, wife of Richard Edwards, Lubbock District Superintendent.

Bishop Bledsoe gave the State of the Church Address.

### “BEING REFINED: SHAPED BY THE WORD OF GOD”

The State of the Church Episcopal Address

Northwest Texas Annual Conference

Thursday, June 9, 2016

3:30 P.M.

Overton Hotel, Lubbock, Texas

I greet you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Before I began the State of the Church address I want to thank those who responded to the call to pray for this year's General Conference. I do believe by the power of prayer, we avoided a potential split in the United Methodist church. The lines for battle had been drawn and no one on each side of the hot button issues in the church seemed to be willing to back down. I saw first-hand the power of prayer in the life of the General conference. You prayed as a conference, churches prayed, pastors and laity prayed. I saw bishop after bishop praying hour on hour. One of our bishops from West Virginia signed up for the 2:00a.m. slot during GC and got up each night to pray for one hour. We need prayer in the life of the church in order for God's intended purpose for our lives to be not only revealed but also for us to begin to live them out.

This year's "State of the Church" address will include a review of what we have done over the last three years together, highlighting key themes and experiences. I will then give you an update on where we are today in our mission as well as how we are doing as an overall conference. Finally, I hope to help set the stage for one of the most critical decisions this annual conference will need to make in order to move forward into the future.

#### **Overview from previous annual conferences:**

- **2013 Theme: "Uprooted"** – We met in the historic church setting of Polk Street UMC, Amarillo, Texas - Some of you may recall my sharing the story of getting a box of strawberry plants that looked dead on arrival at our home in Albuquerque. However, I took those dried out plants and potted them in my beds in the backyard and within a few weeks, they not only took root, but grew and produced some of the most delicious and sweet strawberries I had ever eaten. I shared with you that those plants, which had been "uprooted" from their original soil and appearing dead on arrival, were planted in the right soil. Many times we are like those plants and unless our lives and churches are willing to be uprooted by the spirit of God, we too may appear to be dead on arrival in our ministries. We stressed the importance of each church being uprooted from situations and traditions that keeps us from becoming vital and effective in accomplishing our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. I spent a lot of time sharing my background and where I grew up and what influenced me to become the person that I am today. I spoke honestly about times when I felt uprooted from my culture, family and traditions in order to serve Christ in other contexts. During the 2013 Annual Conference, we welcomed many co-laborers in the gospel of Christ from the Rio Grande conference and welcomed their presence, gifts and service. I left the sanctuary of Polk Street renewed for ministry and determined to go in the name of Christ to so many wonderful congregations throughout this conference. I issued a challenge to each congregation that I would go where invited, sleep where you sleep and eat whatever you eat.

- **2014 Theme: “Redeemed”** - We met on the beautiful campus of McMurry University in Abilene, Texas – I mentioned that those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior have been “bought with a price,” we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ to go forth and do great works in His name. We encouraged local congregations to begin sharing their faith stories of how the spirit of God was working in the churches to connect with their various mission fields. Our conference lay leader, Murray Murphy shared that each local church should see itself as a “Redemption Center” helping individuals and families become reconnected with Jesus Christ and His mission in the world. We also suggested that the Northwest Texas Conference begin to develop “Strategies” or use certain “Levers” to accomplish our mission. We lifted up Bishop Robert Schnase’s new book: “*Seven Levers*” suggesting three of those seven levers we believe were most applicable to the work of the Northwest Texas conference: (1) Starting new congregations; (2) Clergy and lay peer learning; and (3) Congregational Intervention. We closed the Episcopal address by inviting members to join in the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer of commitment.

- **2015 Theme: “Rise”**– Last year we met where we are today at the Overton Hotel in Lubbock, Texas. Our theme was based on Acts 3:6, where Peter and John are going up to the temple to pray. A lame beggar is sitting at the entrance of the temple looking for a handout. Peter says to him, “Look at us!” The lame man fixed his gaze on them, thinking they would give him a token or handout to tie him over for the day. Look at what Peter said: “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” Eugene Petersen puts it in *The Message*: “I don’t have a nickel to my name, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!” And straight way the lame beggar took the hand of Peter, rose up and walked.

- **2016 Theme: “Refine”**– where we hope to enable both laity and clergy to know of the power of God that shapes us for the work ahead, encourages us to continue to move forward in ministry as we learn by sitting at the feet of Jesus to have faith in Christ rather than fearing change that happens all around us. The biblical image of what it means to be refined is found in the book of Jeremiah 18: 1-12, where God led the prophet Jeremiah down to the potter’s house. He sees the potter shaping a vessel on the potter’s wheel. As the potter shapes and molds the clay to its intended purpose, the vessel is spoiled or damaged on the potter’s wheel. The potter does not just throw or cast it aside, the potter starts all over again and begins to reshape the spoiled or damaged vessel into something new. The prophet receives God’s message for God’s people, that they too are like clay on the potter’s wheel and that God does not give us in any of us. The gospel message of Jesus Christ is that God’s intent is that not one life should perish. In this instance, we can allow the spirit of God to either shape us, or we can choose to reject the sovereignty of God, never quite accomplishing our intended purpose in life.

**What Does Being Refined and Shaped by the Word mean?**

As Christian, I believe we are shaped and molded not only by the spirit of God but also by God’s Word. We as individuals can choose to live by the Spirit of God believing in God’s Word to guide and direct our lives or we can choose to live by our own individual, preferences, likes and dislikes irrespective of what the Word of God says. This is what theologians refer to as “Free Will.” God has so ordained and made us not as robots or mechanical beings, but rather we have the power to choose God and God’s Will for our lives or go our own separate ways. Being Refined and shaped by the Word is a clarion call for:

- Clergy and laity. This call of God Includes not just clergy alone, but the voices of the laity and young people. The laity and young persons are not just spectators or future decision makers in the life of the church – they are the church! Without the engagement and participation of the laity and the young, there is no church of the future.

- Extending the invitation to all persons in the world to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live out that acceptance pursuing the goal of being perfected in love in all that we say or do in relationship with others. This relationship is not only lived out in the local church among other believers, but is mostly lived out in the world transforming the lives of others by the power of God’s Word and love for all of humanity.

- Baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ all persons who accept Christ as Lord and Savior. When I heard the global statistics of the United Methodist church, I was encouraged and depressed as well. Outside the USA, the church is growing in powerful ways. In the US last year, 70% of our churches had no baptisms in our churches. Baptisms are a sign of God’s unique activity among us. Whenever we baptize an infant, a young person or an adult, it reminds us of our purpose and reason for being as a church called by God to make disciples. This past January, Leslie and I took the ordinands on a trip to the Holy Land. We had several Presbyterians that also joined us. When we journeyed to the Jordan, a 70 year old lady asked to be baptized. I thought, “Surely at her age she had been baptized.” I then heard her story. She had been raised in a church that did not believe in baptizing. When she joined other churches, no one bothered to ask her whether she had been baptized in the faith. When we approached the Jordan River, as I placed my hands on her head and repeated the words of Scripture, “*I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son*

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*and Holy Spirit,*” something happened in all our lives as the remembrance of God’s promise that not one shall perish in my name came to mind. It matters not the age, all of us need to be refined and shaped by the Holy Spirit and the power of God’s Word in our lives.

### **How Are We Doing as a Conference in 2016?**

Our number one goal in the conference has been focused on aligning the conference resources to enable vitality in local congregations. We believe that strong churches make strong districts which make a strong conference. It is not conferences or districts that enable others to become disciples of Jesus Christ. It is local congregations where disciple making actually takes place. So, what are the measures of effectiveness in the areas of worship attendance, professions of faith, baptisms and participation in shared ministries?

- Worship Attendance in the conference over the last three years . . .
- Professions of Faith/Baptism over the last three years . . .
- Participation in Shared Ministries . . .
- Overall giving in the conference by our local congregations . . .

Our second goal has to do with developing effective leaders (both clergy and laity). Thanks to the work of the Conference Board of Ordained ministry, we are providing additional resources to assist clergy going to seminary and returning to this conference to serve. Through the work of the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) we are empowering clergy and laity to learn from one another through prescriptions and coaching tools. Our Hispanic Christian Academy provides excellent leadership to serve a growing Hispanic population in our midst. I want to thank the Texas Methodist Foundation for a major gift this year to provide support for an Hispanic School of Evangelism to help develop ways to reach persons for Jesus Christ.

Our third area of focus has to do with creating new places for new people. We have seen great growth in this area in 2014. With increased resources of both personnel and finances, we can do more. I’m especially proud of the St. Stephens UMC in Amarillo who opened their doors and reached out to provide a place for African refugees to worship and ministry. There are others congregations in the conference that are starting new faith communities to reach new people for Christ.

Finally, we have made significant progress in the Congo Mission Initiative. I’m thankful for the work of Derrell and Sandy Patterson, who for years have taken mission teams to the Congo, providing clean drinking water, education and meeting medical needs. We owe a debt of thanks to missionaries David and Lori Persons who though retired, continue to care for the people of the Congo. I’m happy to report that for the first time in the history of the work in the Congo, we have a “Strategic Plan” for the Mulungwishi Seminary in the Congo. It was the work of Rev. Jimmy Nunn, Rev. Deborah Shepherd as well as the support of our boards and agencies that enable the plan to finally take shape.

### **The Call for Strategic Planning.**

We have reached capacity in the conference with the current focus. In order for us as an annual conference to reach the next level or take the next step, we need to do some strategic planning as a conference. To that end, you will be asked to elect a small group of clergy and laity to work with a consultant over the next year discerning where God is calling us as a Conference. If approved, this team will work vigorously over the next year and bring back a plan to the 2017 Annual Conference for your consideration as a plan going forward.

### **Closing Statement.**

I do believe the Spirit of God is at work among us in so many ways. Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, we are being shaped and molded by the active and alive Word of God that is refining us into a conference that not only loves God, but also loves its neighbors and is ready to reach out and serve them in mighty and glorious ways, giving all praise and glory to God. Amen! Amen! Amen!

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Rev. Dave Andersen, Chief Financial/Chief Benefits Officer, brought the Conference Treasurer's Report. A short video was shown. The report included: balance sheet is strong, we have no long term debt, retiree's pension plans are fully funded, and reserves are adequate but not excessive. He presented information on what our giving has provided all over the world. The treasurer's report was presented for approval and it passed.

Mr. Murray Murphy, Conference Lay Leader, and Jeff Fisher, Associate Lay Leader, presented the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) Report Number 1 – Strategic Plan. The report was laid on the table and will be voted on Saturday.

Rev. Gilbert Bela, Member of the Hispanic/Latino Movement Task Force, presented a video showing the work of the Hispanic/Latino Movement and the wonderful work that is being done across our Conference. All of the persons involved in United Theological Seminary classes, were asked to come forward and were presented to the Conference. Erin Gildner, from United Theological Seminary, gave a report. Bishop Bledsoe offered a prayer for those involved in the classes.

Ms. Leia Williams, Director of Communications introduced the team members, Mrs. Jaime Montgomery, Mr. Levi McKay, and Ms. Angie Brokaw, intern. She reported we now have apps for Apple and Androids. There have been 1,251 launches and over 8,000 views. A new giving website is now available. Jimmy report that the team had received three awards from the Religions Communicators Council: Award of Excellence for Levi McKay, Jaime Montgomery, and Leia Williams for Snapshots of Hope; Award of Merit to Jaime Montgomery and Leia Williams for the Website; and Award of Excellence for Levi McKay, Jaime Montgomery, and Leia Williams "Rise" Theme Video.

Mrs. Beryl Waddell, Conference Archivist, introduced Zandra Luttrell who will be the new chairperson of Archives & History. Beryl reported that the South Central Jurisdiction Archives and History Convocation will be held October 4-7 in Lubbock at the Overton Hotel. A Local Church Historian Workshop will be held at the end of the convocation on October 7. She introduced Barbara Jochetz Jones, sister of Rev. Milton Jochetz, and Paula Jochetz Millhollon, his daughter, who gave the archives a walking cane that was given to him. The cane was used by Reverend Ira Ellis, who attended the 1784 Christmas Conference in Baltimore, MD, where the Methodist Church was officially organized in the USA.

Mrs. Sue Cates, Mission in Motion Coordinator on the Deploy Team, gave instructions on making the UMCOR Kits. The goal is to assemble 200 health kits and 200 school kits while at Conference.

Mr. Derrell Loyless, President of the Texas Methodist College Association, gave the TUMCA report. He thanked the Conference for their generosity to allow students to receive aid to be able to attend Texas Methodist Colleges. He also thanked Bishop Dan Solomon for this service to TUMCA.

Rev. Steve Brooks, Chairperson of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, presented the new local pastors: Pat Boone-Rodriguez, Robert Burke, Vladimir Labrador, Arturo Nunez, Maricela Nunez, Vondel Stevens, Benji Van Fleet, Bobby Wilson, and Linda Wimberley. He also introduced Matt Gary, John Miller, Joshua Josh Stueve, Matt Wolfington, and Karan Young who will be commissioned as Provisional Elder in Full Connection. He then introduced Jay Gage and Kirk Watson who will be ordained Elder in Full Connection on Friday night at First United Methodist Church.

Rev. Brooks, then introduced the new Chair of the Order of Elders and Deacons, Rev. Blossom Matthews; and Chair of the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, Rev. Toni Bailey.

Mr. Trey Oakley, Methodist Children's Home Vice President for Development, brought greetings from President, Mr. Tim Brown, and the report of Methodist Children's Home. He moved approval of the Statement of Covenant Relationship Between Methodist Children's Home and the Northwest Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church for adoption by the conference. The motion passed. The Annual conference then showed their gratitude to Methodist Children's Home for sponsoring the dinner to be held later.

Courtesies and Announcements were made by Ms. Kay Hanna. On June 19, Clyde UMC is honoring Rev. James Holman for his seventy years of ministry. She invited participants to go by the Nurture Display to sign cards for the eight pastors that are retiring. Rev. Steve Ulrey asked that we remember Tom Woodward and his family on the death of this forty-one year old daughter.

Rev. Stan Cosby closed the Session with prayer.

The Conference was in recess for dinner.

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### Thursday Evening, June 9, 2016

The Conference was at Worship at seven thirty in the evening in Sunset Ballroom of the Overton Hotel and Convention Center. Rev. Olu Brown, Senior Pastor of Impact Church, Point East, Georgia and Conference Teacher and Preacher brought the message. Holy Communion was celebrated. Assisting with the service were Rev. Richard Edwards, Lubbock District Superintendent; Rev. Bill Couch, Senior Pastor of LakeRidge United Methodist Church, Lubbock; and Rev. Craig Curry, Senior Pastor First United Methodist Church, Lubbock. Communion Servers were women clergy from the Lubbock District; Rev. Shera Atkinson, Associate, First United Methodist Church, Lubbock; Rev. Donna Lindley, Kress United Methodist Church; Rev. Karan Young, Tulia United Methodist Church; Rev. Blossom Matthews, Associate LakeRidge United Methodist Church, Lubbock; Rev. Janet Edwards, Abernathy United Methodist Church; Rev. Susan Felty, Canyon United Methodist Church, Lubbock; Rev. Mindy McLanahan, First United Methodist Church, Muleshoe; Rev. Yolanda Tarango, El Divino Salvado United Methodist Church, Muleshoe; Rev. Ann Akin, St. John's United Methodist Church, Lubbock; Rev. Maricela Nunez, Associate, El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church, Tulia; and Rev. Sharon Wiese, Retired Member of Petersburg United Methodist Church.

### Friday Morning, June 10, 2016

Bishop Bledsoe called the Session to Order. Rev. Mindy McLanahan gave the Devotional.

The Conference Theme video "Journey of a Disciple" was shown.

Bishop reminded the conference that this is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women. He asked for all female clergy to stand and be recognized.

Mrs. Natalie Hermes, Chairperson of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, brought their report beginning with a video on the Health Flex Exchange. It is projected that the cost for insurance would go up 8½% in 2017 with only two options. The Conference Pension and Health Benefits formed a task force to study the options and they propose that we go to the Health Flex Exchange, which will provide six options. They also propose that we only have one billing rate for the local churches, which would be the rate for single coverage. There will be workshops in the Conference in the fall, videos, and live support to explain the new plan. We received a \$300,000 performance dividend. They are doing another free month of insurance payments for the local churches in August. The report was adopted.

Rev. Jimmy Nunn, Conference Director of Mission and Administration, facilitated reflections from our General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates that attended General Conference. Each member expressed a quick reflection of their experience of General Conference, what committee they served on, and the take away they had.

Mr. Murphy Murphy, Chairperson of the Northwest Texas Episcopacy Committee, presented the Resolution Requesting that Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe be Reassigned to the Northwest Texas/New Mexico Episcopal Area for adoption. The resolution was adopted. Assignment of the Bishops in the Jurisdiction will be done at Jurisdictional Conference in July.

Bishop Bledsoe introduced Rev. Steve McElroy, newly retired District Superintendent of the El Paso District, and incoming Dean of the Cabinet Rev. Jane Vaughan, District Superintendent of the Clovis District.

Mr. Murray Murphy, Conference Lay Leader, and Mr. Jeff Fisher, Assistant Lay Leader, presented CLT Report Number 2 – Strategic Plan. Rev. Kevin Bushart, FUMC Hereford, asked for clarification of the expense for the strategic plan. The plan was adopted.

Rev. Marcy Garza, Chairperson of the Invite Ministry Team, presented the Denman Awards. Rev. Jim Wright, Pastor of Knox City and Benjamin United Methodist Churches was presented the Clergy Award. Ms. Becky Woodall, Director of Children's Ministry at First United Methodist Church, Big Spring, was presented the Laity Award.

Rev. Betsey Heavner, Retired Deacon in Full Connection of our Conference and Representative from Discipleship Ministries, presented the One Matters Award. It was presented to Hamlin United Methodist Church. Rev. E. C. Ice accepted the award on behalf of the church.

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Rev. Lloyd Stice, Chairperson of the Conference Camping Task Force, recognized Brad Street, Executive Director of Butman Methodist Camp and Retreat Center who will be retiring in October of 2016, and Carolyn Street, Chief Financial Officer, who retired in November 2015. He also moved the adoption of the camping report. The report was adopted.

Rev. Eric McKinney, Representative from Texas Methodist Foundation, brought greetings and moved their report.

Rev. Paul Bauernfeind, Amarillo District Superintendent and member of the Lydia Patterson Institute Board, presented a video and the resolution “The Second 100 Years Capital Campaign of Lydia Patterson Institute.” The resolution was approved.

Mr. Clyde Stanfield, Educational Opportunities, presented information on “A Trip to Cuba” to be held in October of 2017. Bishop Bledsoe gave some background information on the trip.

Courtesies and announcements were presented by Rev. Wendell Horn: the Asbury Seminary lunch will be held at the TX Tech University Wesley Foundation today at noon. Leia announced there are still kits that still need to be assembled. Jim Wright presented a photograph of the original “Methodist Tree of Life.”

The Conference was in recess for a break.

After the break, the Conference was Called to Order by Bishop Bledsoe.

The Address of the Lay Leader was given by Mr. Murray Murphy. Murray challenged the laity to make their pastors feel loved and appreciated and to pass our mantle to the younger generation of our Conference.

Bishop Bledsoe, NWTX Cabinet, Clergy and Lay Members of this 2016 annual conference, and guests. I am honored and privileged to address you this one last time as your NWTX Lay Leader. I have been humbled and greatly honored to represent the laity of this conference for the past 8 years as your Lay Leader.

Bishop Bledsoe, I thank you and this conference for the opportunity to serve in this role and on the Ministry Cabinet of NWTX. IN these past 8 years, I have seen a conference that has been challenged financially. Just a few short years ago, we were on the brink of financial collapse as a Conference with no true vision for the future, no real direction. But then our friend and brother, the Rev. Jimmy Nunn became our Conference Administrator. Now, it has been said Jimmy’s favorite word is “Free” but I have also learned that Jimmy’s heart and dedication is with the NWTX Conference. Under his leadership, and the leadership of our Bishop, Jimmy has helped NWTX become debt free and stable. Under his leadership, NWTX has reduced cost to our local churches in shared ministry, and has helped secure our future as being bright. He brought an idea of resource and mission to our conference and has helped to impact our local churches in a very positive manner. As a result, our budgets at the conference level reflect what we can truly afford today. Thank you Rev. Jimmy Nunn! As you know, Jimmy is an Episcopal candidate for the SCJ, and if it is God’s will, he will be elected in July in Wichita, Kansas.

Bishop, I stand here today to say that the laity of the NWTX Conference are strong and stand ready to make our local churches what God would have them be... A place for ALL people seeking and loving Jesus.

Over my past 8 years, as Lay Leader, I have been in many of our conference’s churches. I have met and know of many laity dedicated to their local churches. They are dear friends and brothers and sisters of Christ. You are far to many to mention, but please know I treasure you and will continue to pray for you and the churches you love.

As members of this 2016 annual conference, you all are leaders and/or representatives of our over 200 churches of NWTX. We all know that the true strength and mission of our beloved UMC rests squarely on the day to day work at the local church level. You are the leaders, clergy and laity, of today and of the future here in NWTX, and your challenges are before you. Great challenges! But I know if we look to scripture and listen to God, those challenges can be met. The answers to our questions rest in Scripture. When you go back home Saturday, dedicate yourselves to building up your local churches.

I attended last week the New Mexico annual conference and listened to Bishop Bledsoe outline their vision for NM for this year and coming years. He used the verses in Ephesians 4:11-12. I read: “(11) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. (12) to prepare God’s people for works of service, so the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Song of God and become mature, attaining to the whole means of the fullness of Christ.” You all have special gifts. Know them and use them to strengthen and encourage the church! Always work toward unity!

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Unity in our churches is hard to achieve, but, as leaders of our churches, we must make this our mission. We must pray for our clergy everyday. We must support them and their role as leaders in the church. Note: At this point laity stood as Murray led the Conference in prayer for all the clergy of NWTX.

So I come to the end of my role as you Conference Lay Leader. God has blessed me richly in this role and I have learned so much more from you all than I have given. I thank you all for your friendship and love over these years. I ask God to richly bless your lives and I ask God to continue to bless your churches.

A note of Personal Privilege – The one person who has been with me these many years and miles is my wife, Diane. I thank her for being my partner in this work. Thank God, she is my love and life. God bless you all! God bless the NWTX Conference! God bless The United Methodist Church!

Rev. Steve Brooks, Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry, introduced the Retiree Videos and then the Conference moved into the Retirement Recognition portion of the Conference. He recognized those clergy and their spouses who were retiring: Robert “Rob” Glen Blum, Cynthia; Billie “Bill” John Couch, Margaret; James Kevin “Kevin” Deckard, Becky; Richard Wayne Edwards, Jo Beth; Derrel Keith Evins, Brenda; Cecil Marvin “Marv” Gregory, Diane; Jerry Ross Lane, Mary Lou; and John Michael Westman, Kaye. Rev. Brooks presented the retirees with their certificates. He also presented certificates to the spouses. The Passing of Mantle was also held. Those assisting in the service were: Rev. Steve Brooks, Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry; Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, Resident Bishop; Rev. Derrel Evins Newly Retired; Rev. Marvin Gregory, Newly Retired; and Rev. Kirk Watson who will be ordained.

Rev. Richard Edwards, Lubbock District Superintendent, presented the resolution for the closure of Roaring Springs UMC. The resolution was approved. Rev. Tom Carter prayed for this church and their members.

Rev. Dr. Randall Partain, Provost of New Mexico Conference, and Rev. Dr. Eddie Rivera, new District Superintendent of the El Paso District, were welcomed by Bishop Bledsoe.

Rev. Blossom Matthews closed the Session with prayer.

The Conference was in recess for lunch.

### **Friday Afternoon, June 10, 2016**

The Memorial Service was held in in Sunset Ballroom of the Overton Hotel and Convention Center. Those clergy memorialized were: Thomas “Tommie Troy Beck, Russell “Russ” Clinton Byard, William “Bill” Robert Fleming, James B. “J. B.” Fowler, Robert “Bob” Plais Green, James “Jim” Alexander Hawthorne, Douglas “Doug” Ray Kirk, Gene Boyd Louder, and Charles David Whittle. Surviving Spouses memorialized were: Ella Mae Baker, Diane Alicia Burton, Emma Jeanne Crowder Butler, Margilee Cooley, Betty Garrett, Alexia “Lexie” Jo Keith, Peggy Whitson Lindley, Darryl James Nelson, Sarah Thompson Hardt Queen, Wynona Kathleen “Boots” Watson, Beuna V. Wolfe, and Wilma L. Wyatt. Assisting with the service were: Members of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits: Ms. Natalie Hermes, Chairperson; Mr. Michael Hall, St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Midland; Ms. Leticia Goodrich, Polk Street United Methodist Church, Amarillo; Ms. Janie Davis, Accountant and Assistant Conference Benefits Officer; Rev. Tom Carter, Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Olton; Rev. George Price, Abilene District Superintendent; Rev. Steve Chappell, Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Gruver; Rev. Pam Lehman, Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Borger; and Rev. David W. Andersen, Chief Financial Officer and Conference Benefits Officer. Music was provided by Mrs. Sandy Patterson.

After the service the Conference was in recess for fellowship time.

After the break, Bishop Bledsoe called the Session to Order.

Our Conference Teacher, Rev. Olu Brown, was introduced by Bishop Bledsoe and Rev. Brown then led the Session in a time of learning.

Bishop Bledsoe recognized Rev. James Large, Albuquerque District Superintendent.

Rev. Jimmy Nunn gave announcements.

Mr. Wendell Smith gave the closing prayer.

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Friday Evening, June 10, 2016

The Service of Licensing of New Local pastors, Commissioning of Provisional Elders in Full Connection, and the Ordination of Elders in Full Connection was held in the Sanctuary of First United Methodist Church, Lubbock. During the service new local pastors were presented with their certificates. Matthew “Matt” Sheldon Gary, John B. Faulkenberry Miller, Joshua “Josh” Glenn Stueve, Matthew “Matt” Scott Wolfington, and Karan Ann Young. Jay Brent Gage and Kirk Warren Watson were elected as Elder in Full Connection. Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe brought the message. Assisting in the Service were Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe; Members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry: Rev. Steve Brooks, Chairperson of the Board of Ministry, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Abilene; Mrs. Betsy Bellah, First United Methodist Church, Throckmorton; Rev. Don Kinder, St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Lubbock; Rev. Blossom Matthews, LakeRidge United Methodist Church, Lubbock; Mr. Pat Mouser, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Abilene; Rev. Felicia Hopkins, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Abilene; Mrs. Kerry Kay Cook, First United Methodist Church, Midland; Rev. Amy Wilson Feltz, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Abilene; Rev. Curtis Borden, First United Methodist Church, Midland; Rev. Jorge Ochoa, NWTX Director of Hispanic/Latino Movement; Rev. Mindy McLanahan, First United Methodist Church, Muleshoe; Rev. Les Hall, Means Memorial United Methodist Church, Andrews; Rev. Lane Boyd, Retired Elder, NWTX Conference; Rev. Kathryn Boren, St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Midland; Rev. Burt Palmer, Polk Street United Methodist Church, Amarillo; and Rev. Bailey Barkley, First United Methodist Church, Lubbock. District Superintendents: Rev. Richard Edwards, Lubbock District Superintendent; Rev. George Price, Abilene District Superintendent; Rev. Paul Bauernfeind, Amarillo District Superintendent; and Rev. Derrell Patterson, Big Spring District Superintendent. Rev. Jay Gage, Newly Ordained Elder and Rev. Karan Young, Newly Commissioned Provisional. Combine Choir from Churches within the Lubbock District, directed by Dr. Stephanie Council, St. John’s UMC, Lubbock. The Organist was Dr. Jacob Miller, Christ the King Catholic Church, Lubbock. Instrumentalists were Auggie Aguilera, Guitar and Amy Anderson, Oboe. Ushers were Members of First United Methodist Church, Lubbock, coordinated by Mr. Jeff Fisher, Lubbock District Lay Leader. A Reception was held in the Christian Life Center.



**††† NORTHWEST TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**Saturday Morning, June 11, 2016**

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe call the Session to Order and Rev. Dustin McEwen gave the devotional.

The Conference Theme video “Journey of a Disciple” was shown.

Dr. Sandra Harper, President of McMurry University, gave the McMurry Report. She announced that in 2020 McMurry will be 100 years old.

Rev. Richard Edwards, Dean of the Cabinet and Lubbock District Superintendent, gave Nominations Report Number 2. Richard read again the changes on the nominations report and the report was presented and accepted.

Dr. Craig Curry, Clergy Member of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, presented CF&A Report Number 2. He celebrated the ministry that we have mentioned at Annual Conference and presented the budget that allows us to continue these ministries in 2017. He reported that the budget was \$1.3 million less than 2012, 18% reduction in expense. The report was adopted as presented in the Pre-Conference Reports. Craig also moved that Rev. Dave Andersen be elected as the Conference Treasurer. He was elected.

Mr. Ron Enns, Chairperson of the Committee on Bylaws, Resolutions, and Rules gave Report Number 2. Rev. Ross Whiteaker, Pastor of The Branch UMC, presented the “Resolution to Work Toward the Repeal of the Death Penalty in Texas.” The resolution was revised from what was printed in the Pre Conference Reports with copies having been distributed to the body of the Session, and the resolution was submitted for adoption as revised. Jim Cowser, Munday UMC, spoke against the resolution. Rev. Whiteaker, The Branch UMC, spoke for the resolution. Mr. Brice Tabor, FUMC Hereford, spoke again the resolution. Mrs. Mary Vines, St. John’s Lubbock, spoke for the resolution. Mrs. Sharon Bruns, Trinity, Snyder, spoke against the resolution. Rev. Daniel Echols, St. John’s Lubbock, spoke for the resolution. The vote was 123 for and 81 against. The resolution was adopted as revised.

Rev. Paul Bauernfeind, Amarillo District Superintendent, presented the resolution for the closure of Tenth Avenue UMC in Amarillo. He also reported on the charter of a new church, Faith Southwest in the Amarillo District. He gave thanks that Saint Stephen UMC gave birth to the new church. Rev. Lane Boyd offered a prayer for the congregation and ministry of Tenth Ave UMC. The resolution passed.

Rev. Richard Edwards, Lubbock District Superintendent, presented the resolution for the closure of Wesley UMC in Hereford. He changed the names of two groups to receive the assets from Hereford Boys and Girls Club to Big Brothers and Big Sisters. He also changed the name of parsonage committee member from Ms. Lesbia Blanco to Daniella Espinosa. Rev. Kevin Young, St. John’s Lubbock offered the prayer for congregation and ministry of Wesley UMC. The resolution passed.

Rev. George Price, Abilene District Superintendent, presented the resolution for the closure of Leuders UMC. Rev. Kathryn Boren, offered the prayer for the congregation and ministries of Leuders. The resolution passed.

Bishop Bledsoe introduced a video showing the work of the African church that is meeting at Saint Stephen UMC, Amarillo.

Rev. Paul Bauernfeind, Amarillo District Superintendent, brought a recommendation from the Ministry Cabinet concerning the meeting place for Annual Conference.

The Northwest Texas Annual Conference has had a long tradition of being held in four of the great cities in each of the four districts within the bounds of the annual conference as we have met together each year. In recent years, a new tradition has been emerging in that we have enjoyed the hospitality and the facilities of the Overton Hotel and FUMC in Lubbock as we have gathered in this part of God's Kingdom in our Conference for the past two years, with the Big Spring District last year and this year the Lubbock District "hosting" us here in Lubbock. Part of the reason for this change has been the non-availability and expense of hotel space in Midland two years ago during the then oil boom and the desire of Conference Leadership to plan two, three, even four years in advance for annual conference themes and logistics, especially for the reservation of space here at the Overton Hotel, as well as the desire by many to hold annual conference in a more central location within the bounds of the annual conference. In dialogue with the Conference Leadership Team, who has expressed a desire to seriously consider holding annual conference in Lubbock each year with each of the districts "hosting" us on a rotating basis here in Lubbock and the Ministry Cabinet's feeling that each district hosting annual conference within its bounds allows for that district to give witness to its life and ministry more fully than is possible here in Lubbock, the following recommendation is made to the annual conference for your consideration:

The Ministry Cabinet recommends that Annual Conference be held in Lubbock at the Overton Hotel each year, hosted by one of the four Districts on a rotating basis, and then approximately every fourth or fifth year, annual conference would be hosted within the bounds of one of the Districts in the cities of Abilene, Amarillo or Midland. With this recommendation, annual conference would be held in Lubbock next year in 2017 hosted by the Abilene District and in Amarillo in 2018, and then possibly in Abilene in 2023, coinciding with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of McMurry University. We also recommend some flexibility in this guide for the hosting and location of annual conference to provide for other possibilities, such as having a joint annual conference with our sister annual conference, the New Mexico Annual Conference, as we continue to share an episcopal leader, which we have been blessed in doing in the past.

He moved that the annual conference affirm this recommendation for the hosting and location of annual conference in the coming years. The recommendation passed.

Rev. George Price issued the invitation to Annual Conference 2017 to be hosted by the Abilene District at the Overton Hotel in Lubbock. The invitation was accepted.

Mr. Mikey Littau, Member of the Invite Ministry Team and director of the WTA&M Wesley Foundation, gave a report on the gathering of young adults at Sugar Browns Coffee Shop. There were 28 present. He issued a challenge to the churches to find those persons between the ages of 28-30 who would represent their churches at Annual Conference. If they come, he will make a place for them to have other activities in the evening at Annual Conference so that they can become a part of Annual Conference.

Rev. Richard Edwards, Lubbock District Superintendent, made the motion to adopt all resolutions and reports not previously adopted. The motion passed.

Rev. Jimmy Nunn, Conference Director of Mission and Administration, recognized and gave thanks for the work of Rosemary Prumer, Conference Center Staff Person, who would be retiring before the next Annual Conference. Bishop Bledsoe recognized Mr. Jeff Fisher, New Conference Lay Leader, who recognized the entire staff of the Conference Center for all of their work in setting up everything for Annual Conference.

Mr. Ron Enns, Chairperson of the Committee on Bylaws, Resolutions, and Rules gave the Closing Resolution.

Courtesies and Announcements were made by Ms. Kay Hanna and Rev. Wendell Horn. Wendell reported that Megan Woodard Gillispie, Daughter of Rev. Tom Woodward, Retired, had passed away and her funeral would be in Amarillo. Kay announced that Spirit Wind would be at St. John's UMC in Lubbock on Sunday evening at 7:00 p.m. Rev. Jimmy Nunn reported that the Conference had built 400 kits for UMCOR. He also reported that Ms. Leia Williams had to leave due the death of her aunt and her memorial service in California.

Rev. Arturo Nunez offered the closing prayer.

The Session was dismissed for the Organization of Officers for the 2016 – 2020 Quadrennium. This included the Board of Ordained Ministry, Commission on Equitable Compensation, and The Conference Board of Trustees.

The Session was in recess in preparation for the Closing Worship Service.

## ††† NORTHWEST TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Closing Worship Service was held in the Sunset Ballroom of the Overton Hotel and Convention Center with Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe preaching. Assisting with the Service was Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, Resident Bishop; Rev. Don Boren, New Lubbock District Superintendent; Mr. Randy Stutes, New Lubbock District Lay Leader; Rev. Nick Matthews, Shallowater United Methodist Church; and Ms. Ruth Matthews, Shallowater United Methodist Church; Visionary Hollowell Community United Methodist Church Choir, Midland, Texas and the Wolfforth United Methodist Church Praise Team provided the music. Ushers were Members of Various Churches in the Lubbock District

The Conference was adjourned.

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### NOTE FROM CONFERENCE JOURNAL EDITOR

On Friday morning, July 15, 2016, the Northwest Texas Annual Conference Delegates elected in 2015 for General and Jurisdictional Conferences made history. They helped elect the first episcopal candidate serving the Northwest Texas Conference since The United Methodist Church was established in 1968. They helped elect Bishop James “Jimmy” Gregg Nunn. Bishop Nunn was assigned to the Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences.



Bishop Bledsoe, Bishop Nunn, Bishop Whitfield, and Mary Nunn



Bishop Schnase, Bishop Nunn, and Mary Nunn

