

Charlotte District E-Pistle
The Spring Seminar:
Transforming Congregational Culture
with Dr. Ed White
March 3-5, 2005 - Myers Park UMC

Most of our Charlotte District churches observed Ash Wednesday services this week, using ashes from the burning of last year's palm branches that were preserved after the processional of Palm/Passion Sunday. This is indeed a time for spiritual renewal in all our congregations. Bernard S. Via referred to Lent as "Forty lean days/Crossed by six Sabbaths,/Beginning in ashes,/Ending in life."

An important component of our spiritual pilgrimage this year will be the Charlotte District Spring Seminary, March 3-5, at Myers Park UMC's Jubilee Hall. Our special guest will be Dr. Edward White, Senior Field Consultant with the Alban Institute.

Tomorrow's District Leadership Conference and these annual spring seminars are the most significant educational events designed by the Charlotte District Program Council. The seminar is funded by the apportionments your church supplies. **We earnestly want every single church and all our pastors to participate in this principal event.**

When we delineated time segments of last year's seminars in categories that designated size of worship attendance, many of you applauded this procedure and brought enthusiastic teams to the presentations by Doug Anderson. The format on March 3-5 will, consequently, follow a similar procedure. We want to maximize the relevance of these lectures to your situation.

Our theme, "Transforming Congregational Culture," will offer a different dimension of insight within a similar schedule and form. Thanks to the generosity of the Myers Park congregation, all participating churches will receive a copy of Anthony Robinson's book, *Transforming Congregational Culture*—a resource that will be referenced in the lectures by Dr. White. I encourage you to pick up your advanced copy by dropping by the receptionist desk at Myers Park at your convenience or get one when you visit the District Office. We shall have one for all 78 of our congregations. I encourage you to purchase additional copies for your church's team through our Cokesbury store on Tyvola Road.

By now I hope that each pastor has recruited a leadership team of five (seven for the large church groups). Your team may consist of a mixture of staff and lay leadership. The Friday sessions—with time for teams from large churches (more than 250 in average worship attendance) in the morning and middle-sized churches (worship attendance, 100-250) in the afternoon—will certainly need to have a diverse mixture of staff and lay. Target some key laity whom you know will be available during those hours. The session for small membership churches is on Saturday morning and should not conflict with work schedules of most lay officials from those churches.

Advertise the Thursday and Friday evening sessions for everyone in your church. These 7 p.m. lectures by Dr. White will have a broad appeal and will provide inspiration and information to clergy and the general membership alike.

Toward the end of January each pastor received a packet introducing Dr. White, outlining the three-day schedule, and providing pages for registration of participants.

Our office's registration deadline is Friday, February 24.

We specifically need to have a check for the meal reservations in order to plan for accurate numbers. If you already have the names of your team aligned but are having difficulty in getting persons to commit to the meal schedule, please go ahead and send in the list of your team participation. The meals are merely for everyone's convenience—especially those coming several miles from places of work. The most important aspect of the registration is for us to recruit those persons who will implement what they learn.

A few of our pastors report that they will regrettably miss a portion of this event due to a variety of circumstances. I am telling each of these that **each pastor is still responsible for recruiting a team.**

Why am I giving such strong emphasis to our spring seminar experience?

Last fall at the Charge Conference sessions most of you were able to link what your team learned from Doug Anderson with the evangelistic outreach program of your congregation. Denny White told me last week that the Western North Carolina Conference's net gain in membership in 2004 was about 1,100. Approximately 1,000 of this net gain figure represent the faithful evangelistic work within the Charlotte District churches!

I am not naive enough to think that this is the result of the seminars or any other educational event within the district. But I do know that we have just begun to transform our stale congregational culture and allow God's Holy Spirit to move in revolutionary ways among the people called United Methodists in Charlotte. The seminars of March are an impetus for spiritual change, and each of us was born to be faithful to God's promptings in this reformational era.

Grace and peace,

George

Schedule for March 3-5:

Thursday, 9 a.m. -- 4:00 p.m. (A Day Apart with the Pastors of the District)

7-9 p.m. Presentation for general membership of all our churches.

Friday, 9:00 a.m. – Noon (Pastors and teams from Large Churches);

1-4 p.m. (Pastors and teams from Middle Sized Churches);

7-9 p.m. General lecture for all pastors and church members.

Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon (Pastors of Small Churches and their Teams)