

## *Charlotte District E-Pistle*

March 13, 2006

Fellow clergy of the Charlotte District, I encourage you to contact Rev. David Cumbest at Heritage UMC in the Mississippi AC as your congregation puts together a mission work team in response to the Katrina disaster. Mike Collins has requested that the Charlotte District enter into partnership with the United Methodist congregations in this region, receiving instruction and coordination through Rev. Cumbest. If your congregation has already prepared a response team to go to the gulf region by invitation of another parish or district, you will certainly want to keep your commitments. But we are encouraging the other churches of this district to focus attention to this specific area of need in D'Iberville near Biloxi. By assigning our fourteen districts to specific regions, with a master plan developed by the Mississippi Conference, we shall be able to do the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. As we learned yesterday from the DLC's keynote address by Paul Dirdak, Deputy General Secretary for UMCOR, our involvement in disaster response to the Katrina event will continue for many years. This partnership will enable us to be more thorough and comprehensive in our effort to bring the love of Christ to our brothers and sisters in a region wounded by natural disaster. Mike Collins' message is a clarion call to mission and articulates an invitation initiated by the people called Methodist in Mississippi.

I know that you will want to respond in ways that are appropriate to the physical and material resources of your congregation.

Gratefully yours,

*George*

George Thompson

### **Mike Collins' Message**

Colleagues in Ministry:

Grace and peace in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ!

I just returned from spending seven (7) days in the Gulfport/Biloxi area. I was able to spend time with Mr. Ed Blakelee, the Mississippi Conference Katrina Coordinator concerning the direction of the recovery, and with many of the pastors/ coordinators in the area. They are open to partnership situations. Please note that partnerships will be different in each area and are not actually "rebuilding" churches (except in one case). Partnership means the willingness to work through the Mississippi Conference churches active in recovery to rebuild neighborhoods. These churches are housing volunteers, doing case work, assessing damage, and then assigning work teams to help in the rebuilding of the neighborhood--one home at a time.

Our first point of contact in Mississippi was through the Heritage United Methodist Church in D'Iberville, just outside of Biloxi and Keesler Air Force Base. Several teams from Mouzon,

Providence, and Myers Park UMC have gone to this church already. I would like to ask the **Charlotte and Gastonia** Districts to partner with this church's efforts. The Reverend David Cumbest is the contact person. His telephone numbers are 228-392-4288 and 228-990-4880. His email is [biscuitman@bellsouth.net](mailto:biscuitman@bellsouth.net) .

Presently the Heritage UMC is using the church for sleeping and cooking. They have showers and the ability to house several teams at once. The church is working with the Indiana Conference to build a "warehouse/dorm" next to the church for the future housing of teams. The main needs in the area are for roofing, drywall installation, and finish work. Teams would need someone with expertise in these areas on the team. Usually if one person has the expertise, by time the week is finished, everyone has expertise. In many cases the families looking for help are able to buy the materials to fix the homes. In some cases, teams have been asked to help with material costs. According to Elijah Mitchell, the Central Region Disaster Coordinator, the UNMET NEEDS Committees--including all volunteer organizations--are being formed. As these are formed, a better structure for working with those in need will be available.

Thanks for your willingness and flexibility as we attempt to do what is best in our response ministries!

Sincerely,

Mike Collins