

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

March 25, 2005

Flood Relief Continues in Western North Carolina

The Charlotte District has just received this update about our ministry in the Western NC Conference in response to the tragic floods last year. Even though much of our recent attention has rightfully been directed toward victims of the tsunami, our Disaster Response Teams, through the direction of Michael Collins, have been carrying on a remarkably effective ministry. Mike offers this update concerning the conscientious labors offered by many who maintain a consciousness of the needs in our own state:

We have tried to keep people informed through the web-page with our Fast Facts (updated monthly), bi-monthly mailings (this month through *Missions' Alive*).

All local churches should have received three (3) copies of the pamphlet, "Your Church's Disaster Response Plan" and there is a copy in the *Missions' Alive* publication just released. The work in the mountains is a continuing effort and will be on-going for the next 18-24 months. We have worked on well over 60 homes in different states of disrepair. We have completely finished 4 homes, from gutting them to refinishing them. We are presently working on 12 homes in Clyde/Canton and surrounding areas.

We are also doing case work with over 40 different families at this time -- some we will be rebuilding with, others we are representing in the UMET Needs Committee. We have received **over \$110,000** in aid through the UMET Needs Committee to date and have a request in for close to \$400,000 for our clients (and also the clients of other faith organizations not sitting at the UMET needs committee table).

The UMC has been the number 1 agent in establishing a Western North Carolina Interfaith group. I am chairing this group and presently the Salvation Army, Lutherans, Presbyterians, CWS, United Way, United Methodists, Free-will Baptists and local faith help organizations have been working with us. We will meet this Monday with State authorities to discuss the recently passed law concerning funding for the Floods.

We have 128 teams on our list at this time with approximately 50 have already been in the mountains. Teams are between 7 and 60 persons! Lake Junaluska is still housing persons for us and providing housing for persons coming to the area for meetings, etc. free of charge.

We are presently working out housing for the summer months. It looks very likely we can use the Dellwood UMC facilities and should have a good idea about this by April 5. We have most of the time, during the spring and summer months, covered by teams (a couple of days, here and there still available, however, I suggested the workers in Clyde/Canton to take these days off).

Jackie Bolden, our Caseworker/Volunteer Coordinator, is presently working on teams for September and October dates. With October being leaf season, we expect it to fill up fast! **She may be contacted through 828-627-2510 or jbalden@pobox.com** Churches that want to send a team should communicate with her.

The Conference Disaster Response Committee has released over \$318,000 to the Waynesville District Disaster Response Board to date. They have done a great job on the use of their funds and still have much of this left. They are working hard to reserve our funds until other funds are exhausted. The first audit of the funds went through without significant problems or concerns.

We have received grants through the Salvation Army of **\$20,500** for furnishings and another faith organization has a grant of **\$25,000** in the pipeline for us (as soon as I have permission, I will release this name). We received an initial grant from **UMCOR** of \$20,000 and have been informed that our request for grants will go before their board on 12 April. **The amount going to the Board of Directors for our work is \$190,000 over the next two years (when I receive this word, I will let you know).**

We had a very positive meeting with **Duke Endowment** this past week and a three-year request will probably be honored (when we receive this word, I will let you know).

Rural Affordable Housing met with several potential clients in the Macon County area. We are presently looking for lots to build a home in Macon co. and one in Haywood County. RAH is also working with another organization (cannot mention the name at this time due to a grant request they have in) on a land purchase in Clyde. Should the other organization receive their grant, RAH will receive some of the property to build 12-15 homes upon. At that time, many volunteers will be called on to do new construction. We had hoped this would be ready by Conference, but it seems doubtful at this time.

The **Conference Disaster Response Committee** has released its DRAFT of the new **Conference Disaster Response Manual**. Bishop McCleskey and Jim Trollinger have copies of it. It is subject to the Cabinet approval and we hope to distribute the Local Church Edition at Annual Conference.

We are putting together a new **Early Response Trailer** and three teams. We hope to have these in place by Hurricane Season.

Please inform your churches of the following needs:

1. Our present trucks are old and used up. They will need to be replaced soon. We need two (2) 3/4 ton trucks (2001 or newer) for Disaster Response work. We are not looking for Diesel trucks or 4-wheel drives. We need to begin a Disaster Response Equipment Capital Campaign or have some good equipment donated to us.
2. We need to train persons as Early Responders. People want to respond to Disasters but we need to train them. I invite the districts to set a time with me to train persons in Early Disaster Response.

3. We welcome churches to adopt families in the midst of the disaster. This is especially for refurbishing homes. Churches may contact **Jackie Bolden at 828-627-2510**. We are not looking for donation of articles, but a partnership with churches to allow us to provide "Store Certificates" to persons who have gone through Case Work and we can certify as needing assistance. We cannot legally provide names of the persons, but can give some basic family information to churches.

4. Teams will be needed over the next 18-24 months. Contact Jackie to schedule teams.

5. We need land or lots in the Haywood and Macon County areas, especially land near the cities of Clyde, Canton and Franklin. We can provide legal assistance so that donations, or partial donations, may be tax-write-offs.

--Michael Collins

Please reflect upon Michael's report and share it with the leaders of your congregation. Perhaps your church will want to organize a team and communicate with Jackie Bolden. The damage has been enormous; but the response by the people called Methodists has been tremendous and gratifying. Through the witness of the many who have served on one of these teams, many lives have been touched with the spiritual presence of our Lord.

Let us celebrate our resurrection faith through such faithful responses to the anguish and need of others.

Have a glorious Eastertide season!

Grace and peace,

George