

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

April 29, 2007

Colleagues:

Each spring the Annual Conference Council on Laity encourages each local church to designate a **“lay person of the year.”** This service award is then promoted by the Charlotte District Council on Laity. Some of our churches systematically participate in this opportunity to honor individuals, in the Wesleyan spirit, who are moving on toward perfection in their Christian discipleship.

My office will need to receive information regarding your church’s honoree no later than **Friday, May 4th**. We shall invite that person, along with all our designated laity, to the **Charlotte District Laity Service Awards Banquet on May 24th at St. Andrews UMC, 6:30 p.m.** I hope that you have encouraged this program of recognition in your church and will submit a name and biographical information to us this week so that we can be prepared for a truly celebrative experience on May 24th. Many from your church will want to accompany your honoree on that evening and show the full measure of your appreciation.

The most common reason given by churches that refrain from participation in this program is the reticence to elevate any one person among the many who deserve affirmation. Moreover, people who are most deserving prefer avoiding the spotlight of recognition and consider their sacrificial labors to be the natural response of a joyful heart to the grace that is daily received. This is perfectly good reasoning.

So, **I suggest that we re-interpret this program** and see it as an opportunity to choose those persons who are rarely in the spotlight of leadership, whose life pilgrimage continues to be an inspiration to many, and whose story needs to be written and preserved in the memory of the congregation. This person’s story may be registered in the parish newsletter or an appropriate form of communication. With an additional person recognized each year, the church can begin to collect a legacy of faith stories that otherwise may be lost for future generations. Each decade a new edition of a booklet may be printed to tell the accumulated human-interest stories of the saints of the church. What a blessing of illumination and inspiration this will be to bequeath to emerging generations of young pilgrims in your congregation!

If you will promote **this theology of recognition** in your church during the coming year, I believe that there will not be a single church that will exclude itself from the ritual of thanksgiving at the laity banquet in the ensuing years.

Grace and peace,

George