

Charlotte District E-Pistle

April 14, 2007

Colleagues:

According to numerous studies of Mecklenburg County and Metropolitan Charlotte, the number one issue facing our community is racial trust. In fact a study of 40 major metro areas across the nation revealed that Charlotte is number two in attendance at houses of worship and thirty-ninth in ranking related to trust among the races. This is an intolerable circumstance.

In response to this revelation, some of our community religious leaders have initiated a program called "Friday Friends." This ministry was launched on March 30th, 2007, with a goal of involving 500 people in partnership, sharing lunch on the last Friday of the month. This movement is mounting each week in momentum. The commitment of each participant is to have lunch with someone of another race, religion or culture on the last Friday of each month for a six month period in order to build a strong, enduring friendship. It is not too late to bring this emphasis to the attention of your members and for you to provide exemplary leadership. Our colleague James Howell, Senior Pastor of Myers Park UMC is one of the community co-chairs.

You and members of your church can be paired with a Friday Friend by visiting the website, www.FridayFriends.org

The mission of this project is to identify people through the faith community and cultural community who are unlike us: African American, Caucasian, Latino, Asian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, etc., and pair them as lunch partners.

Share the attached information with key leaders in your church or introduce this ministry opportunity through a sermon or at the Administrative Council. Volunteers can engage in this delightfully challenging activity at any time, even though the project is well underway. It has been thoroughly publicized by helpful articles in the Charlotte Observer.

We who are United Methodist clergy have a ready access to this project by merely contacting one of our ethnic pastor colleagues and propose that the two congregations work on friendship matches.

Conditions tend to remain the same until people of faith begin to practice their creeds. "We believe that this faith should manifest itself in the service of love as set forth in the example of our blessed Lord, to the end that the kingdom of God may come upon the earth."

So we believe. So we shall practice.

Grace and peace,

George