

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

July 26, 2005

Theme: *Shepherding the Shepherds*

Before **Bishop Lawrence McCleskey** arrived as our new Episcopal leader, a task force of lay and clergy leaders, representing small and large congregations, met over a period of several months. A visionary process began, data was accumulated, and analysis was offered in the form of a proposition statement entitled, “**From Maintenance to Mission.**” After Bishop McCleskey met with the task force and spent significant time with the Cabinet, he articulated seven visionary priorities that will contribute toward our becoming a more faithful mission-motivated, evangelical Annual Conference.

His first draft did not include the seventh emphasis, “**We shall initiate efforts, supported by the laity, to shepherd the shepherds.**” Our bishop explained that he was not opposed to our tending to the spiritual and personal concerns of the clergy, but he was reluctant to project any emphasis upon that which may be interpreted as self-serving. Our bishop, consequently, agreed to include this visionary emphasis as long as we placed it in context with the other six visionary goals. Clergy shepherds will indeed be nurtured and affirmed in order to provide servant leadership for congregations that are being changed from static institutions of maintenance into dynamic communities that embody the mission of Jesus Christ to transform the world.

I have established a task force that will explore how the Charlotte District will more faithfully and intentionally shepherd its clergy. The following persons will be serving in this creative and affirming task: John Arey, Shirley Canty, Hubert Clinard, Elinor Heermans, Jimmy Howard, Michelene Mathews, Barbara Mayo, Rick Moore, and Jody Seymour.

I consider all our planned activities for the gathered fellowship of clergy to be, directly or indirectly, an effort to minister to some facet of clergy need. The task force will expand and diversify this ministry; but each of our scheduled events is designed to strengthen our covenant relationship with one another and enhance our sense of solidarity of purpose.

August 2: Our Clergy Welcome at University City UMC is planned in the spirit of hospitality. Yesterday I sent you an e-mail reminder concerning this gathering next Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., for an evening of greeting those who have recently moved into our district. Please come if you are in town and available. This will be an evening of relaxation and fun.

September 1: After public school schedules resume and our churches return to a full menu of activity, our clergy fellowship will meet every-other month on a first Thursday, beginning on this date. We shall gather at Dilworth UMC in the new entrance for fellowship at 9:30 a.m. Then we shall go to the Dilworth Chapel for a service of communion developed by our Clergy Fellowship’s Vice President, Laurie Hale. Let

our office know if you would like to remain after worship for a lunch served by the Dilworth food service staff.

October 18-19: Clergy Retreat at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory. Our theme will be "The Pastor and Self-Definition." Our resource leader will be Dr. Bill Mitcham, Director of the MMC Consultation and Training Institute and Director of the Marriage Maintenance Center of Charlotte and Davidson. Bill is the former Director of Counseling and Education for Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas. The Charlotte District Clergy Fellowship officers have suggested that we provide a retreat for pastors and other clergy of our district on alternated years and not conflicting with the semi-annual Order of Elder's Retreat. The cost of the event (including lodging, meals, resource leader, etc.) is \$120 per participant. We encourage you to share this invitation with your PPR Committees and ask if your church will provide funding for you to go through the continuing education line item of your annual budget. DeEtta Rivens will receive your registration through the District Office. I am here attaching a schedule for the two-day event. We shall soon mail you a registration form and additional information regarding the theme, "Self-Definition."

November 3: On alternate occasions our clergy fellowship will provide some form of didactic experience to challenge our minds and spirits. On this date, we shall gather at 9:30 a.m., with the hospitality of Dilworth UMC. Dr. Ed Trimmer, Professor at Pfeiffer University, will be our invited guest. Pfeiffer University is doing one of the finest jobs among all our United Methodist schools of higher education in training servant students who will become servant leaders specializing in Youth Ministry. Some of those who major in this field are going from Pfeiffer to seminary and are among us as deacons and elders specializing in youth ministry. Ed Trimmer is a servant of the church who has developed and expanded this program at Pfeiffer. He will challenge us with a lecture and will interact with us as he speaks about our Wesleyan heritage through Christian education.

December 6: This year we shall celebrate the Advent season by gathering at Myers Park UMC's Jubilee Hall. The room will be decorated with splendor and the program will be joyous. Please place this on your calendar and establish this now as a priority in your active seasonal schedule.

January 5, 2006: We shall gather at the conclusion of Christmastide at Bethlehem Center for a service of Holy Eucharist as we reflect upon our blessings at the start of a new calendar year.

March 2, 2006: Doug Anderson will return for our **Annual Spring Seminar**. The first day of this district-wide educational event (March 2-4) will be devoted primarily to the clergy, and many of you have requested our bringing back this consultant who is the Executive Director of the Bishop Reuben Job Center for Leadership Development. Several of our pastors have referred to the seminar of 2004, led by Doug, as an experience that has fostered vision and renewal in their Charlotte District parish.

May 18, 2006: Clergy Farewell Dinner. You may place this date on your calendar as a time for honoring those who will be departing from our district and receiving a new pastoral appointment starting in late June, 2006.

When **John Wesley** first began organizing the clergy in the Methodist movement of England, those original conference gatherings were quite spiritual and theological. All clergy in attendance entered into covenant. They agreed never to talk or think ill of one another. They made covenant to pray for one another on a regular basis. They covenanted to meet together in small clusters of support and accountability (usually on Mondays). When we clergy began to work in isolation from one another, moving from cooperation to competition, we lost the power and purpose of the spiritual movement that swept over Eighteenth Century England and the American Continent. In this new era, we shall learn to appropriate the wisdom of our ancestors in forms and expressions that are appropriate for the living of these days.

Grace and peace,

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