

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

September 9, 2005

On Wednesday and Thursday of this week the Bishop and Cabinet met in session at Lake Junaluska. One of our first matters of business was a consideration of the relief work in response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. I have no idea how Mike Collins has the stamina to travel to the mountains in order to brief the bishop and superintendents, but he gave the matter of direct communication a top priority so that we shall all be on the same page in the *plan book* for United Methodists.

Mike encourages the churches to send checks to the WNC Conference Treasurer marked, “**WNC Conference Disaster Response, Katrina Relief 2005.**” This designation will go directly (and very rapidly) for ministries of relief in the areas of critical need affected by Katrina. Checks may also be sent to the Conference office marked, “UMCOR 982523,” but funds designated in this way may be used in disaster responses anywhere in the world, including the Gulf region.

Most of the questions that are coming into our district office can be answered by reading daily our WNC website—KARE. Here’s how to keep informed and render accurate guidance to your people in planning effective responses: call up www.wnccumc.org/ Then click on the logo for KARE—Katrina Assistance Resettlement Endeavors. There you will have a broad selection of materials, some of which we have shared with you from this office via e-mail. Click on the selection that applies to your need for information: Katrina Resettlement, WNCC UMC Respond to help survivors of hurricane Katrina, Council of Bishop’ Statement, Disaster Response Coordinators, Early Response Teams, Early Response Training, Mike Collins’ Diary, Supplies, Telephone numbers, etc.

Many phone this office to ask what our Conference is doing, what coordinated efforts are being made in the Charlotte District, and how their church may assist in these efforts. Just now, as I have returned to my office in Charlotte, Mike Collins has sent the following message that I hope you will duplicate and send to all your members who have e-mail addresses. (You may want to make hard copies available for members attending worship this Sunday.) This is Mike’s summary of the United Methodist response this week:

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From: Mike Collins, Director of Volunteer Response Ministries

Grace and peace:

You can be proud of the United Methodist Church. Our churches came through in great fashion on the special drop-offs. The Districts, churches and individuals of the Western North Carolina Conference are to be commended for the efforts put in to send shipments to Louisiana and Mississippi over the past week. We not only sent one shipment to Louisiana on a 53' trailer, but also sent an 18' trailer to Mississippi.

In addition, we have collected enough water, hygiene kits, and layette kits for an additional trip to Sager Brown this month. We may be able to send a third shipment prior to mid-October carrying flood buckets.

The following was sent this week (Sept 5-9) to the Hurricane Recovery Centers in Mississippi and Louisiana (including Sager Brown):

Mississippi

**30 boxes of 6 mil plastic (20' wide) \$ 1,500.00
1,334 Hygiene Kits \$16,008.00
Bedding \$ 850.00
16 Flood Buckets \$ 720.00
71 cases of water \$ 426.00
6 Layette Kits \$ 210.00
2 Box Fans \$ 30.00
8 Gas Cans/Gas \$ 144.00
28 Propane Cylinders \$ 56.00
4 boxes of food/tissue, paper products \$425.00
Clorox \$ 9.00
Total value of the amount sent to Mississippi: \$20,378.00**

This shipment came out of the Waynesville and Asheville Districts in appreciation for the help given to them after Frances and Ivan in 2004. The new F350 Ford 4x4 purchased by the districts of the United Methodist Church pulled the 18' trailer with these supplies.

Louisiana

**10,431 Health Kits \$125,172.00
2 liter bottles of Water \$ 534.00
16 oz bottles of Water \$2,880.00
Total value of the amount sent to Louisiana \$128,586.00**

A very special and heart-felt "thank you" is sent out to Don and Helen Cranfill, members of the Union Chapel United Methodist Church in Mocksville, NC for their willingness to drive this load to Sager Brown.

Other Western North Carolina United Methodist-related shipments:

Sent by the WeCare Ministry of Hickory Grove United Methodist Church in Charlotte:

20,000 bottles of water, clothing, 3 generators, chain saws, and a pallet of other items.

The Denver United Methodist Church and surrounding community churches have made a connection to a United Methodist Church in Mississippi and will be sending several tractors and trailers in that direction.

In addition, monetary giving is just beginning to roll into the Western North Carolina Treasurer's office and being posted. As of Friday, September 09, 2005, we had received \$65,227.13 in cash from the churches. (I do not have a break-down on specific designations, and this does not include the considerable amount designated for UMCOR).

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I am grateful to Mike Collins for this update. Follow his diary for on-going news concerning the relief effort.

Many of our churches desire to assist with housing needs for the homeless. If any of your members own vacant apartments or houses that are designated for rental purposes but are currently available on a temporary basis for homeless families brought to Charlotte, have your member fill out the form that you received from me earlier this week. Send this to Mike Collins. His office will work closely with the Red Cross and FEMA in locating such sources of assistance. We do not recommend that families share space with evacuee families whom they do not know. Cash donations (as discussed above) are far more effective so that funding for appropriate housing during an extended period can be made available. It is essential that all evacuees register with FEMA and all settlements be coordinated through proper government and authorized volunteer agencies. FEMA, Red Cross, Salvation Army, and all churches must work in concert.

Bishop McCleskey is in conversation with the bishops of the disaster areas, asking about appropriate partnering of churches. Discuss with your leaders the possibility of paying partial salary for a pastor in Mississippi or Louisiana. When we left the Cabinet meeting, 16 pastors had not been located in Louisiana alone. Nearly all the United Methodist church buildings in New Orleans have been rendered unusable. The pastors will have no source of income until an organized response is designed. Think about these needs in the context of partnerships with specific congregations that we may well devise in future months.

Mike is investigating the possibility of our using our WNC Conference camp facilities in this first phase of relief and settlement of evacuees. First we shall need to get

the permission of groups with reservations to cancel or postpone their camp retreats or other scheduled event.

All participants in early response teams from the UMC must go through our training program. Moreover, no group will be allowed to enter a disaster area without proper government approval and local invitation. Groups from well-meaning churches that rush into these contaminated areas immediately become part of the problem.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you pastors personally for your strong leadership in rendering such effective responses throughout the district. When Pat and I delivered our health kits at Myers Park and realized that, when we arrived, the goal of 5,000 kits had already been reached, we were touched emotionally with feelings of gratitude. I know that this is only the beginning of your outward and visible sacrifices that emerge from your inward and spiritual commitment to the servant Christ.

Grace and peace,

*George*