

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

October 1, 2005

The most significant visionary priority among the seven emphases of our Annual Conference is our mandate “intentionally to relate unchurched persons to Jesus Christ. An inordinate number of our congregations in the Charlotte District reported **no new professions of faith** last year. Yet, the Great Commission of our Lord is central to our mission as God’s faithful people.

One of the most effective resources for introducing the Christian faith to those who are seekers in our midst is the marvelous curriculum, ***Beginnings***. This resource has rapidly become a practical and reliable curriculum for doing evangelism throughout the nation and beyond. *Beginnings* was the concept of this Conference’s own Andy Langford. He and Mark Ralls wrote the script and secured Rob Weber to produce an accompanying video. This combination of a well-crafted script and a compelling video (in a style comparable to Disciple Bible) is meeting the need within churches across the country for introducing seekers to Christ.

On Saturday, **October 15, 9:30-NOON, Providence UMC** will host a great event--a “*Beginnings Conference*.” Churches of the Charlotte District are encouraged to send a delegation to taste and see. Rob Weber, one of the nation’s most effective story-tellers, will be our special guest. Mark Ralls, a favorite son and former Associate Pastor at Providence UMC, will be present to provide insights into the theological basis of *Beginnings*; and Andy Langford will offer an overview of the project. This is a unique opportunity for the churches of our district and is part of our Charlotte District’s ministry through the Center for Christian Discipleship. I suggest that each church send a team of 3-5 persons who will return with invaluable insights into how this resource can make a difference in the way we intentionally relate the unchurched to Jesus Christ.

The gathering will be in the Atrium on the Providence Road entrance side of the church. **Ken Carter** will be our gracious host and will have a vivacious team of laity to meet our needs during the morning. During this week I shall send you additional biographical information regarding Rob Weber, Mark, and Andy. The reason we have not publicized this event earlier is that Rob is a clergy from Louisiana and is deeply involved in the recovery effort in his home state. He is making some sacrifice to maintain this commitment, despite his acutely altered schedule.

I look forward to the many activities of the month of October. Cluster Conferences are as new to me as they will be to some of you; but I think that this year we shall gain great momentum in accomplishing our seven visionary goals if we envision our strength through connectional ministry. Individual churches of the Charlotte District need never speak from the context of scarcity of resources when we think connectionally rather than congregationally. Together we are truly the vitalized Body of Christ, eager to bring the message of salvation to all.

Grace and peace,

George