

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

October 4, 2004

The service of installation in which we shall celebrate the appointment of Bishop Lawrence McCleskey is not a casual come-or-go affair. On this Sunday, October 10th, at 4 p.m., Myers Park UMC sanctuary, we shall gather enthusiastically to greet our new Episcopal leader. Bishop McCleskey has shared with the Cabinet the first draft of his vision for the future of the Conference, asked for our feed-back, and carefully crafted a sermon that will be a proleptic insight into the corporate mission we shall take as God's faithful people. On this Sunday afternoon he will outline seven priorities that will become the theological emphases guiding the administration of each of our fourteen districts.

I encourage all pastors, therefore, to demonstrate the significance of this event through your attendance. Please continue to emphasize the importance of each church having some lay representation at this service. We want to fill the sanctuary for this historic occasion.

Bishop McCleskey and his wife Margaret are products of the Western North Carolina Conference. Lawrence is a native of Florida who came to Duke Divinity School for his theological education, completing his degree in 1966. Through his summer work at Lake Junaluska, he met Margaret Lucile Fowler whose father was the general superintendent of the assembly.

He served New London, near Pfeiffer, when Margaret was an undergraduate student. He then pastored South Point, Bethel in Midland, and Boger's Chapel before moving to Greensboro's Irving Park UMC in 1973. After serving in the mountain town of North Wilkesboro, he was appointed by Bishop Allen to the superintendency of Winston-Salem. Before being elected a bishop in the SEJ, he served as senior pastor at First Gastonia and Myers Park. For the past eight years, Lawrence has creatively and effectively guided the South Carolina Conference.

Bishop McCleskey makes it clear that he has only four years of leadership to render before he is required by the rules of our denomination to retire; so, he plans to make the most of every moment he carries this great privilege and responsibility.

I first met Lawrence when he was dating Margaret and I was a student at Pfeiffer College. We had at least one class together in my first year at Duke. I know him to be a visionary leader, an able scholar, an effective administrator, and a compassionate friend.

Through his leadership, we shall gain a clear understanding of where Christ wants us to go, and we shall experience a high level of administrative expertise that will enable us to pursue effectively the vision of God's exalted calling.

I look forward to a great celebration with you on this Sunday afternoon as we welcome Lawrence and Margaret to Charlotte and begin together an adventurous spiritual pilgrimage through the visionary guidance of this able ecclesiastical leader.

Grace and peace,

George