

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

Thursday, October 27, 2005

Our Charlotte District Clergy fellowship officially gathers on alternate months, the first Thursdays of the month. Our focus for gathering on these occasions is worship and continuing education, alternating these twin emphases. Thus, in September we celebrated the Eucharist and will come to the Lord's Table once more during our gathering in January at the Bethlehem Center, January 5th. We shall assemble next week in the spacious and beautiful setting of **Dilworth** UMC's recently renovated fellowship hall—that is, **Thursday, November 3, 9:30 a.m.** Our special guest will be **Dr. Ed Trimmer**, a renowned professor of Christian education and a specialist in training persons in ministry with youth. Our speaker for this event spent 16 years directing graduate programs and teaching in theological education before coming to Pfeiffer University to head the School of Religion. Ordained in the West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church, Ed has extensive parish experience and is well known as a leader in youth ministries. He helped found the Youth Ministry Educator's Forum (YME), a professional organization for persons who teach youth ministries at the undergraduate and graduate level. Ed's *Youth Ministry Handbook* (Abingdon, 1994) is considered one of the best introductions to youth ministry available. Dr. Trimmer has a passion for Wesleyan studies and will bring a relevant message related to his most recent research and contemplation. I encourage all our pastors and clergy in appointments beyond the local church to take advantage of this opportunity.

We have another remarkable opportunity within the next few days. **Prof. Richard Hays** of Duke Divinity School, will be coming to **Myers Park UMC** this week-end., October 30th. He will be the Luther Snyder Bible Series speaker for 2005. Dr. Hays will lead a fascinating exploration called *Reading the Bible through Matthew's Eyes* during the morning; but he will be available to all persons in our district on Sunday evening at **7 p.m.**, in Jubilee Hall when he presents a lecture entitled, *I Desire Mercy*, looking at the way Jesus in Matthew regards Israel's law and what it means for us to be holy and fulfill what God wants for us. Dr. Hays is one of the best-selling authors in New Testament scholarship. His book, The Moral Vision of the New Testament, was counted as one of the 50 most significant books of the Twentieth Century. Much in demand as a lecturer, Dr. Hays is a favorite of students who clamor to get into his classes. Let your people know of this opportunity and attend the evening lecture if it does not conflict with a ministry in your parish.

A third splendid opportunity that I am pleased to advocate is **a workshop on Preaching during Advent** led by James Howell. This practical and stimulating experience will be offered for any interested pastor in our district. I have always thought Advent to be one of the most challenging times of the year for the preacher. Last year at this time, James Howell led a workshop for the North Carolina Conference on how and what we preach during Advent, with lots of ideas to use, and discussion of the special challenges of preaching in this holy season. You are invited to come to Myers Park UMC on **Thursday, November 17, at 10:30 a.m.**, for this same (and updated!) workshop. Let

James know if you are coming, and the church will provide a lunch. Now that's quite a deal! The session and lunch will be completed by 12:30 p.m. All that is required is to call James' administrative assistant, Nancy Pryor, at 704-295-4812 to make a lunch reservation.

I am personally grateful to you for your intense devotion to ministry, as is reflected in the many thorough and creative Charge Conference reports. I am reading each of them prior to the cluster gatherings and delight in the great variety throughout the district. I am especially pleased at the ones among us who have done such a faithful job at interpreting the apportionments and advocating for the Fair Share items. All our churches are significant and each pastor is integral to the whole. You are making a positive difference in the lives of the people you are serving so faithfully. May you experience the 2005 Charge Conference as a celebration of our corporate life in a ministry of hope and compassion within a hurting and needful world.

Grace and peace,

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