

## Charlotte District E-Pistle

December 29, 2006

I pray that all our Charlotte District pastors, as well as those engaged in specialized ministries through appointments beyond the local church, are reflecting peacefully in the glow of Christmastide. Luke's depiction of Mary in the aftermath of nativity invites us to a time of introspection in these days following the ecstasy of Christmas: "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." I encourage every clergy to observe the twelve days of Christmas; for, unlike many laity in our parishes, we have precious little time with our families until after December 25<sup>th</sup>.

With the secular calendar's celebration of New Year's Eve on this Sunday, it will be easy for us to overlook those significant events that burst into being next week. **The annual clergy fellowship gathering at Bethlehem Center will occur on this coming Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, beginning with a time of casual conversation at 9:30 a.m.** We shall all have the opportunity to meet the new Executive Director of BC—**William McDonald**. I know that you will share my excitement related to his vision for this ministry and his eagerness to work closely with the churches of this region. At 10:00 a.m. we shall celebrate an Epiphany/New Year Eucharist by focusing upon the mission theme of *our ministry with the poor*. **Alisa Lasater**, who works closely with **Charlie Rivens** and the various facets of the ministry with South Tryon Community Mission, will deliver the sermon. This will be a great way of beginning a year of connectional strength and supportive fellowship. Phone the Charlotte District Office (704-525-3395) and leave a voice message, reserving a place at the lunch table. Our friends at Bethlehem Center will prepare a more-than-adequate meal for those in attendance; but we shall observe courtesy by offering an accurate headcount for expectation in attendance. (Note that a previously announced time for early morning communion at St. Mark's UMC on January 2<sup>nd</sup> has been cancelled, due to its proximity to the Eucharist on Thursday.)

There are a few other significant dates looming on the horizon. At high noon on **Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007**, the financial books at the Conference office will be closed. Any checks, guilt offerings, burnt offerings, or other expressions of anguish will be credited to the 2007 account of our churches if they arrive at 12:01 p.m. I keep getting messages from our colleagues that are very promising as we scramble to reach apportionment goals. I have discovered little, if any, attitudinal resistance. United Methodists of the Charlotte District earnestly want to participate fully in the connectional mission of a dynamic, global church.

There is great news for the Charlotte District: the annual **Mission to Ministers** sponsored by our Conference will be held at **Providence UMC on February 6<sup>th</sup>**.

Our Charlotte **District Leadership Conference will be held on Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2-5 p.m.** Our Keynote speaker will be **Rev. Bruce Stanley**, Executive Director of the Methodist Home in the North Carolina Conference who will also lead a class on evangelism. Other participants will include your **district superintendent** (class for SPRC/PPR Committees), **Bill Wyman** (Finance Committees), **Charlie Brown** (Youth in Leadership), **Beverly Parker-Reece** (Sub-Districting Youth), **Teresa Dunn** ("Click Busting": Youth Ministry in Bigger and Middle Sized Churches), **Kathleen Kilbourne** (Deacons: What is this?), **Jacob Golden** (The Way of the Child), **Bart Millison** (How do we affirm diversity in the local church), **Alex and Ann Smythers** (Latino Ministry), **Barbara Barden** (Spiritual Formation), **Sydnor Thompson** (Churches Uniting In Christ), **Jim Wollin** (Stewardship: "First Fruits"), **Mike Collins** (Missions), **Mark Larson** (Shepherd to the Sheep), **Bill Jeffries** (Local Church Trustees), and a class on our **ministry with the deaf**. Please go ahead and advertise, through e-mail communication or parish newsletter, this abbreviated listing of classes. We shall provide a more thorough printed brochure by mid-January for a more specific description of the course offerings.

**March 1-3, 2007** is the date for our annual Spring Seminar. Nearly two years ago we scheduled **Kennon Callahan** for this event, knowing that our theme would be on the Conference visionary priority, "Explore and Practice the Spiritual Dimensions of Stewardship." You may start now recruiting a team from your church to participate in this exceptional opportunity. Next week we shall be sending you promotional materials and forms for registering the names of those planning to attend from your church.

Thank you for giving priority to these matters upon your return to the office next week. You have prepared well for the exciting ministries that meet us from the horizon of God's future.

Grace and peace,

*George*