

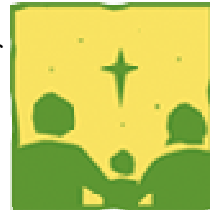


E-Connections

Bethlehem Center Reorganization

In the role of District Superintendent, I am placed as an *ex-officio* member of a plethora of boards and agencies associated with the Charlotte District and our Annual Conference. Each is a significant responsibility and privilege. While it is impossible for me to become familiar with the intricacies of administrative agenda in each of these agencies and service institutions, it is imperative that I stay abreast of the issues related to the business of serving the greater good.

One such agency is the Bethlehem Center, located in the heart of a cluster of vulnerable, fragile neighborhoods in our city. This is a ministry of our church, given birth many decades ago by the Women's Society of Christian Service and sustained by the sacrificial services of our contemporary United Methodist Women. It is a ministry accountable to the Board of Global Ministries.



This year the Board conducted a thorough nation-wide search for a new executive director and chose William McDonald whose impressive record as an executive director in the YMCA attracted the attention of the search committee. It was apparent to the Board of Directors that Bethlehem Center needs a fresh vision that will require some major reorganization. With the encouragement of the Board, the newly selected director began the painful process of structural change early this month.

The reorganization of Bethlehem Center is a painful experience because seven high profile employees of the program were dismissed from the staff during Holy Week. While I and most of the Board were not consulted regarding the specifics of this decision, we all acknowledged the fact that revitalization of vision and expansion of ministries will require a radical change in structure. Cosmetic changes will not accomplish what needs to be done. The painful fact is that some very good and faithful servants, who have touched the lives of several generations of children, were victims of this overhaul in structure.

Why were these changes made? The emerging structure is designed to make Bethlehem Center more efficient and effective. Responding to concerns from churches and contributors, the Board of Directors started the process of change early in 2006. The responsibility to be good stewards required an analysis of organizational structure, the quality of programs, and the effectiveness of services.

Who was involved in the decision making process? The Board Chair, the Vice Chair and the chairs of 3 key committees, in addition to other Board members, a personnel committee member with expertise in human resources, an attorney, the Executive Director and Assistant Executive Director carefully studied the emerging needs of the Center and fashioned this new design.

None of the time-honored programs and ministries of BC will be terminated. They will be carried out with a staff structure that avoids duplication and encourages creativity and greater innovation.

What changes were made within staff structure? Seven positions were eliminated. Their responsibilities were distributed among four new positions and existing staff. Responsibilities were realigned to be more consistent with program areas and to improve program delivery.

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Bethlehem Center Reorganization (continued)

I and other Board members were profoundly concerned about the short notice given the displaced employees and the impersonal manner in which this was handled. It is my opinion that appropriate respect and appreciation for lengthy service was not demonstrated in relationship with several of those whose jobs were terminated. The Board was told by those who administered the decision that they expected, and experienced, volatility and hostility on the part of one of the employees. This one person actually threatened personal harm to staff and a volunteer. Thus, each dismissal was treated in the same manner. William McDonald stated that he was concerned for the safety and welfare of all the staff. He, and those who executed the dismissals, felt a need to treat all involved employees the same or risk being accused of discrimination.

Why were all positions eliminated at the same time? Eliminating positions in phases would have caused additional stress within the remaining staff.

Did the displaced staff receive severance packages? All staff was paid their unused PTO and was offered a severance package based on years of service and position.

Even though I and several other members of the Bethlehem Center Board disagree with the manner in which the dismissals were handled, we are thoroughly convinced that the mission of this institution remains in tact. The administration of the Center is committed to providing the best services possible to as many as possible.

What are the benefits of this reorganization? Program services are now aligned within staffing to provide the most effective delivery of services. Resources will be maximized to improve program quality and participation. Overhead will be reduced, resulting in more money available for additional programs and participants. Hourly staff has received raises to bring pay closer to market level.

Are all the changes in place? No, additional staff is being hired to fill the new positions. The executive director expects to fill all positions by mid-May. In this period before the completion of new staff acquisitions, our church liaisons need to contact Roberta Thompson at 704-371-7400. She will direct all church-related calls and concerns to the appropriate person on staff.

The decision to reorganize Bethlehem Center staff was a long and well thought out process. Several Board members were involved in reviewing the organizational assessment and developing the reorganization plan. The purpose of the reorganization is to realign responsibilities with programs, to provide better services and to improve program quality, content and delivery. Cost savings will allow more money to be spent directly for the program participants and provide for well-deserved raises for hourly staff.

I join with all the other Board of Directors and staff in an uncompromised commitment to the Christ-centered mission of Bethlehem Center. By being good stewards of our resources we will be able to serve more people with a greater degree of effectiveness.

Grace and peace,

George

George Thompson
Charlotte District Superintendent

Church To Host Service Thursday Grieving Virginia Tech Tragedy

An interfaith community service to grieve the loss of life at Virginia Tech is planned for 7:30 p.m. Thursday (April 19) at Charlotte's Myers Park United Methodist Church.

The church, at 1501 Queens Road, Charlotte NC, will host the 30-minute service in the sanctuary, with prayers, sacred music, the lighting of candles and tolling of the tower bells – for each life lost in Blacksburg, Va. Plans are being made to accommodate an overflow crowd that can join in the service via closed-circuit TV in the church fellowship hall.

The Charlotte chapter of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association, with 3,000 members in the area, initiated plans for a service to unite alumni and others in their grief. Association president Jennifer Jones, 26, a member of Myers Park United Methodist and 2002 Virginia Tech graduate, put it this way: “Charlotte area Hokies are deeply saddened by the tragic events that took place. We would like to extend our heartfelt prayers and deepest sympathies to everyone affected. It's very important for us to pull together right now and show our support to the school and community that we all love so much.”

The Charlotte chapter has already posted a ribbon of grief on its Web site, www.charlottehokies.org.



Black History Celebration
Plaza UMC
February 25th



Fellowship follows the Charlotte
District Lay Speakers
Certification Service on
March 11th at Dilworth UMC

Mark Your Calendar

- April 22 Native American Ministries Sunday (special offering)
Announcement of projected clergy appointments in local churches.
- April 26 Golden Agers Fellowship, Aldersgate, 12 noon, Ray Hall Center.
- April 28 Conference Stewardship of Giving Event at Matthews UMC. Registration at 8 a.m., event begins at 9 a.m. Laity and clergy who currently hold leadership positions in the local church are encouraged to attend. Those who may be especially interested are stewardship committee, finance committee, board of trustees, children and/or youth ministry chairs and the lay leader. Register at www.umfoundationwncc.org. This event will also be held on May 19th at Mt. Tabor UMC, Winston-Salem.
- April 28 District Prayer Breakfast, Mt. Zion UMC, 9:00 a.m. Obtain registration form from the District website www.chardist.org.
- May 5 Disciple Bible Training, Providence UMC, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Visit www.disciplebibleoutreach.org. For additional information contact DBOM at: 336-434-8612 or MCHicks@northstate.net.
- May 17 Charlotte District Clergy Farewell Gathering, Cole Memorial UMC. 6:30 p.m. All clergy and their families are invited. Reservation forms will be mailed.
- May 20 Heritage Sunday observance
- May 24 Charlotte District Laity Banquet, St. Andrew's UMC, 7 p.m. Remember to submit your Laity Service Award selections by May 15. Forms can be obtained from the District Office. Banquet reservation information will be mailed.
- May 28 District Office closed in observance of Memorial Day holiday
- June 3 Peace with Justice Sunday observance
- June 7-10 Western NC Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Lake Junaluska
- June 15-16/16-17 UM Women Spiritual Growth Retreats, Lake Junaluska, "Faith, Fears, and Dandelions". Visit www.wnccumw.org for more details.
- June 17 UMAR Sunday (see details on page 6)
- June 26 Clergy Move Day
- July 1 First Sunday in pulpit for incoming clergy
- July 12-15 School of Christian Mission sponsored by the UM Women. Greensboro College, Greensboro. Visit www.wnccumw.org for more details.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

All clergy members of conference are expected to attend the 2007 conference session. Discipline Par. 602.8 says this:

"Any such person unable to attend shall report by letter to the conference secretary, setting forth the reason for the absence. Should any ordained minister in active service be absent from the session of the annual conference without a satisfactory reason for the absence, the matter shall be referred by the conference secretary to the board of ordained ministry."

Conference Secretary Denny White may be reached at dwhite@wnccumc.org or P.O. Box 18005, Charlotte, NC 28218.

REMINDER TO PASTORS

If the principal lay member who was elected by your Charge Conference will not attend the 2007 Annual Conference and will be replaced by someone else, please notify the District Office immediately. Remember: If someone other than the principal or reserve(s) elected by the Charge Conference will attend, you must have a meeting of your Church Council or Administrative Board to elect an alternate person(s). Lay members representing local charges who attend Annual Conference without certification from the District Office to the conference secretary will experience delays in registration while proper certification is researched.

UMAR SUNDAY - COMING SOON! Make plans now for UMAR Sunday, June 17th - Bulletin Inserts, Sermon Starters, Special Offering Envelopes, Children's Activities and more available soon! Mark your calendar now! Order these free supplies and help promote awareness about people with disabilities in your community. For more information, contact Ruby Navarro at 704-875-1328, ext. 205 or RubyN@UMARinfo.com

SCHOOL OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

August 2-7, 2007, Leawood, Kansas - brochures have been mailed. Or go on line to the General Board of Global Ministries for details and registration. Early bird registration in effect until June 1.

2007 RURAL CONVOCATION

Duke Divinity School and The Duke Endowment are pleased to announce the 2007 Rural Convocation for the pastors of TDE eligible rural UM churches. This year's convocation will be at Myrtle Beach, SC, August 13-15. Lodging will be at the Sheraton Hotel. Registration forms and more information about the convocation will be forthcoming. **SAVE THE DATES!**

CLERGY SELF-CARE

The latest edition of Methodist Counseling & Consultation Services online journal *KardiaGram* is up. The theme of this quarter's journal is **clergy self-care**. You can access the journal at: <http://www.mccsvs.org/MCCS/journal.html>

Visit the Western NC Conference website
<http://www.wnccumc.org/min/ministries.htm>
to obtain information about the
various ministries throughout our Conference.

In search of various Conference publications
visit <http://www.wnccumc.org/pub/publications.htm>

E-wnccnews

Subscribe to e-wnccnews, the brief, weekly WNCC e-newsletter, with convenient ministry links. Send your e-mail address to webministry@wnccumc.org with "e-news subscribe" in the subject line. The Conference Center does not share this email list with anyone.

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