

August 31, 2006

Electronic
Newsletter



Charlotte District

E-Connections

AFRICA UNIVERSITY

How is your congregation doing in the promotion of Africa University? This emphasis is one of our Conference's seven visionary priorities. You may want to share this letter received from a theological student at the university about the time of our meeting at Lake Junaluska this summer:

A Word from Itela, A Student at Africa University

June 20, 2006

Itela Laurant is a student at Africa University. He has written this letter to United Methodists in the Western North Carolina Conference to give insight into the impact of the United Methodist Church and Africa University on his life and culture. He is married, but there is no married student dormitory, so his wife and child cannot live on campus.

The Bishop's appeal for Africa University supports married student housing and scholarships. If you would like to make a donation, please write a check to your local church and put in the memo line "Africa University". Thank you!



My grandma used to gather my family at night in a very small village near Lubudi, "Luteng", in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I remember when we would sit around fire, on a full moon sometimes, burning some maize and potatoes on the firewood, singing emotionally a song in Tshokwe "ami thsikola soni yeyeye ...".

This song enabled my grandmother to tell us nicely the Christian story because she could think of Kolwezi, a place from where the United Methodist missionaries came to Katanga to spread the gospel of this man born about 2000 years ago, "Jesus of Nazareth".

Traditions venerating ancestors in Africa were very strong and widespread. Not everyone was considered an ancestor. Only those who showed exemplary qualities in life qualified as ancestors. It was important to distinguish those who were remembered and those who were not. Africa had traditions for the living dead, the biologically deceased who were not really dead but considered alive as long as they were remembered.

In Africa communication was considered possible with ancestors. People had to pray and made offerings to them. There were also festivals honoring them. Those ancestors who lived exemplary lives were the model leaders in their communities. Further, an ancestor who was once living a natural life was then living a quasi-supernatural or supersensible mediatory status. An ancestor played an important role in the life of the people as an intermediary between God and people. He channeled the vital force within the community and impacted the vitality and life of the community, though not in an ordinary earthly sense, and became a living member of the same community.

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African University (continued from cover story)

Grandma said that missionaries came to teach Matt 28:19-20 by responding to the ancestors' cult with John 14:6. There Jesus portrays himself as “the way, the truth and the life; none comes to my father without passing by me”. That is how they became converted, and were baptized and became Christians. She was asking us to know that Americans are the people who brought the United Methodist tradition into the continent of Africa. She told me, “If you want to achieve any of your dreams in the church, please cooperate with those people, ask them to teach you the word of God ...follow them, ... work hard with them because they work hard... show them your dreams, they will guide you...”

To cut a long story short, that is why I went to the University of Lubumbashi in 1998 up to 2003 to major in English Literature, and received a Bachelor of Arts. I have a good knowledge of English. I worked as an English teacher and Youth Leader in Lubudi.

The United Methodist Bishop Ntambo Nkulu of the North Katanga Conference baptized me when he was still a pastor in Lubudi in 1977. He has recommended me to come to Africa University for the studies of the Bachelor of Divinity, through which I expect to be ordained as a minister in the United Methodist church.

Visit www.wnccumc.org/vsn/au2.htm for more material related to this Conference emphasis and the local church commitment form.

Clergy Gathering ■ “Resurrecting Excellence” ■ September 6th

“When people discover and experience the beauty of an excellent Christian congregation, they are drawn to reorder their lives to become part of it.” (p. 21) That’s our charge as members and leaders of Christ’s church, says Greg Jones: to be “excellent.” In his newest book, *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* (co-authored with Kevin Armstrong), Jones reminds us that “excellence” has different meanings to many people. But for those who claim the name of Jesus Christ, “there is no one standard or criterion for measuring excellence, other than fidelity to the crucified and risen Christ.” (p. 7)

As many of us begin new appointments in the Charlotte District, and all of us begin a new conference year, we are surrounded (perhaps even pressured) by the expectations and anticipated achievements placed upon us by various groups: conference, district, congregations, and colleagues. We are all called to be “excellent” pastors of “excellent” churches. But what exactly does that mean?

Jones, Dean and Theology Professor at Duke Divinity School, helps us to understand that true Christian excellence goes far beyond typical cultural, or even ecclesial, expectations of “bodies, budgets, and buildings.” It means developing “dispositions and habits of feeling, thinking, and acting that faithfully reflect and represent the beauty and excellence of God in diverse settings, circumstances, and lives” (p. 50). As leaders in the church, we are called to model for our congregations lives of excellence, gauged only by the standard of excellence provided by our resurrecting God.

We are blessed to have Greg Jones join us for our first Charlotte District Clergy gathering of this conference year, at 9:30 a.m. on September 6, at Dilworth UMC. Greg will be talking about his book and sharing his thoughts about what it means for us to be “resurrecting excellence” in the local church and in our personal lives. Please put this wonderful opportunity for fellowship and education on your calendar, and read *Resurrecting Excellence* in preparation for Greg’s arrival. Come prepared to listen, discuss, and share your own thoughts. You can pick up your copy of *Resurrecting Excellence* at the Cokesbury bookstore. I hope to see you on September 6th.

Remain following the gathering and enjoy lunch with Greg and fellow clergy. The cost is \$6 per person. Please call the District Office (704-525-3395) no later than Friday, September 1st to make lunch reservations.

~Reverend Jim Humphries, President, Charlotte District Clergy



Organizing Healthcare Resources

Theresa Lopez Campbell has volunteered to be our Charlotte District Latino Ministries Health Coordinator. She is a licensed Nurse Practitioner and attends St. Mark's UMC. Theresa is getting off to a quick start by organizing our internet health resources pages, generating a new web page for Spanish translators to help with translating health issue information for Spanish speakers and translators in English speaking clinics, doctor's offices and hospitals. She is also looking into the possibilities of offering training for medical translators, organizing a pool of much needed translators, and checking into resources and coordinating Health Fairs and screening with existing clinics and services. Theresa will be working closely with the Charlotte District Latino/Hispanic Committee, with the leadership of Alex and Ann Smythers of Blair Road UMC. We are grateful for the enthusiasm and expertise that Theresa will bring to the outreach ministry of our district ministry among our Latino brothers and sisters.

Judy Durham of the Givens Estates is the Conference Chairperson for the HealthCare Committee. She is in the process of updating the list of actively practicing Parish Nurses and Health Ministers in our WNC Annual Conference churches. Health Ministers include laypersons that have had training and are the chairperson of a lay health ministry. There may be nurses serving in the role of a **Parish Nurse** who has not attended the approved curriculum training that is designated for the certification of a Parish Nurse. Some Parish Nurses are paid and some are volunteers. Some are contracted from area hospitals and others are employed independently by the church. Parish Nursing, now called **Faith Community Nursing (FCN)**, is a specialty practice of nursing and is governed by Standards of Practice through the American Nurses Association. The American Nurses Association sets the standards for the general practice of nursing. There is no standardized certification for Parish Nurses or FCN at this time, but to be recognized as a Parish Nurse or FCN one must have attended the appropriate training.

Please inform Judy Durham (email below) if your church has hired a Parish Nurse or is engaged in Health Ministries. Send the name, address, contact numbers, and other pertinent information about the person designated for this important role in your church. Judy Durham is working with our Conference staff in compiling an official roster of names and information related to the ministry of parish nursing. The list will be made available through the website of the Annual Conference, thanks to the efficient work of Mary Robinson.

The WNC Conference's HealthCare Committee will be promoting two basic objectives in its ministry of wholeness and health. The first of these objectives is to promote awareness and educational offerings within the Conference in 2006-2007 in order to improve cardiovascular wellness. This first initiative will provide a promotion with the intention to "Stomp out Strokes." This simple program will enable people within the congregations to gain a better understanding of how God has given us such wonderful bodies, and we are to care for our bodies in order to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord. The second initiative is to "Help Older Adults Age Faithfully." Both of these initiatives serve as wonderful outreach opportunities to connect with folks outside the church and share the Good News and compassion of Jesus Christ.

There is a summary of the New Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan on the Givens Estates website under Outreach and LifeMinistries. Judy Durham of Givens Estates can be reached at 828-230-1071 and by email: jdurham@givensstates.org.

Around the District...

St. Paul Sends a Team to Carolina Cross Connection

Fourteen youth and adults from St. Paul United Methodist Church in Charlotte attended Carolina Cross Connection this year. They were stationed at Camp Elk Shoals near West Jefferson, North Carolina. The small three-sided cabins crowded with bunk beds, contrasted with the open airy wonder of the mountain scenery. The week was full of hard work, spiritual awakening, love, laughter and tears. This year's theme was "Faith in Action, Love in Person."



Kelly Little holds down a board.



"My wish has been granted."

Six Methodist churches were divided into teams and sent out to worksites at homes in the area. Every team had endless stories to share. On Tuesday, one group worked for a family in which everyone was handicapped. The mother had recently gone blind and had trouble walking. Her two grown children were both mentally and physically handicapped. Neither were able to walk. The father is currently living in a nursing home with only one leg. The team worked for three days building a wheelchair ramp. They will never forget the daughter's reaction when they told her they were finished. She looked at them with a smile and said "my wish has been granted." It is amazing to watch a family that has nothing be so grateful for everything.

WNCC UMW Annual Meeting

"Rise! Shine! Glorify God!"

September 8, 9, 10 – Lake Junaluska

Contact your local UMW President or www.gbgm-umc.org/wncumw.

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### Local UMW Officers Training

November 4<sup>th</sup> (Simpson-Gillespie, 9:30 a.m.) and November 5<sup>th</sup> (Matthews UMC, 2:30 p.m.)

Identical training on both days

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### Charlotte District Mission Society Grant

Application deadline is September 15, 2006.

The form is available at the District website [www.chardist.org](http://www.chardist.org) at "downloads".

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Bev Copley, Associate Pastor at University City UMC and our Charlotte District Coordinator of the School of Christian Discipleship, has written a marvelous review of Mike Slaughter's new book, *Momentum for Life*. You can read this online from the Circuit Rider's book reviews through this link:

[http://www.umph.org/resources/publications/review.asp?review\\_id=160](http://www.umph.org/resources/publications/review.asp?review_id=160)

This is an excellent resource for discussing our need to Shepherd the Shepherds.

## Upcoming Events

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### **Charlotte District Laity Council Hosts Prayer Breakfast**

Saturday, October 14, 2006 – 9:00 a.m.

Guest Speaker: Reverend Angela A. Pleasants, pastor of Wingate UMC

Salem United Methodist Church, 378 Pilot Knob Road, Denver, NC 28037

All clergy and laity are invited to attend.

Registration information will be mailed to pastors and lay leaders in early September.

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### **Cluster Clergy Fall 2006 Workshop**

*“Stewardship of Giving”*

*Encouraging the Joy of Generous Giving: A Call to Financial Discipleship*

*Charlotte/Gastonia cluster on October 26th at University City UMC, Charlotte*

*9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.*

This clergy event, with recommended participation by Bishop McCleskey, will be held throughout the Western NC Conference. Reverend David Bell, Director of the Center for Christian Stewardship will serve as workshop leader.

Online registration: [www.umfoundationwncc.org/workshopregistrationform.cfm](http://www.umfoundationwncc.org/workshopregistrationform.cfm)

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Western NC Conference 2006 Elder's Retreat

November 13-15, 2006 • Kanuga Conference Center near Hendersonville, NC

“Our Story in God's Story”

Dr. Laren Winner, visiting professor at Duke Divinity, will be the retreat leader.

The registration period is July 27, 2006 - October 13, 2006 at www.divinity.duke.edu/eventregistration/elders.

NEW WNCC Journal is Online

The 2006 Western North Carolina Conference Journal is now available online, except for the photographs in the memoirs, which will be added shortly. To access the online version, follow the journal links which are clearly shown at <http://www.wnccadmin.org>. We are grateful to our programmer, Kenneth Perry, for making this resource available in a timely way. Also, we can accept a few more orders for the printed journal or the journal on compact disc. To order, mail a check for \$20 (printed book) or \$10 (CD), made payable to WNCC Treasurer, along with appropriate contact information (name, address, local church, etc.), to Sandra Hargett, PO Box 18005, Charlotte NC 28218.

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