

December 11, 2008

Electronic
Newsletter



Charlotte District

E-Connections

Advent-Christmas Greetings from the Charlotte District



The picture here was taken on the evening of Thanksgiving Day on Main Street in my hometown of Forest City. A band of musicians—mostly percussionists and horns—played Christmas carols for a choir of little cherubs. The mayor offered a few friendly, anticipated remarks; and a child chosen from the local elementary school pulled the switch for the seasonal lights to illuminate and mystify this business corridor of highway seventy-four. This is one of the few remaining rituals in our culture in which the hundreds who assemble burst into a sudden *Ahaaaaaa!* at the sight of such anticipated beauty. With a burst of ecstatic applause, the season of uncommon hope begins in a tiny town in western North Carolina. Pat and I return here each year, like players in one of the opening scenes of the movie *Groundhog Day*. This *terra firma* is still our home. We met in the nearby high school. Our ancestors are buried beneath the red clay and soft sod of nearby cemeteries. With a simple e-mail announcement, we were joined at midtown by at least twenty-five of my Rutherford County relatives who had not seen us since the death of my brother. When Christmas draws near, we find our solace in a place called home.

But where is home for an itinerate clergy? The author of the book of Hebrews must have traveled to his place of origin in order to write the names of his heroes of faith. Then he surmised, “These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.” (Hebrews 11:13-14).

In his solstice reflections entitled, *The Longing for Home*, Frederick Buechner observes that “Time, like the receding waters of the ocean, bear all of us who are time’s children farther and farther away from the near shore and closer and closer to those mysterious depths where we will come finally to our time’s end.” We clergy recognize this especially with each time of transition to a new parish. We seek for a home analogous to our place of origin or some idyllic concept of home that is never fully realized in the new appointment. Perhaps Buechner’s hunch is true when he writes, “The first home foreshadows the final home, and the final home hallows and fulfills what was most precious in the first.”

The inadvertent reason for my annual trek back to my place of childhood and adolescence is in search of the home that once was and will never again be a reality. But the Christmas lights remind us each year that our only home is with the homeless child born in a cave/stable at a nowhere village that hardly appeared on any Roman map. At the place where the Child of Bethlehem was born homeless is our eternal home.

We wish for all our itinerate colleagues and friends in the Charlotte District the assurance of a home not made with hands or decorated with tinsel or artificial lights, but a haven of blessing and a place of a peace that cannot be taken away by the movement of time nor a transfer to a new appointment.

Grace and peace,

George & Pat

In this issue...

Page 2 *Healing of the Nation Prayer Banquet*

Page 3 *Upcoming January and February Events*

Page 4 *District Leadership Conference*

Page 5 *UMW Mission Study, WNCC Laity Address*

Page 6 *Mission to Ministers*

Page 7 *2009 Spring Seminar*

Page 11 *Things to Remember*

Healing of the Nation Prayer Banquet

We are including the following flyer in the December edition of your E-Connection. We recently e-mailed this flyer to our Charlotte District E-Group and asked that it be placed at strategic places around the church.

Healing of the Nation will be the theme of the Charlotte District Prayer Banquet at Myers Park UMC's Jubilee Hall on Monday, January 26, 2009, 6:30 p.m. The inspirational speaker for this significant occasion will be Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster. Prayers will be offered that reflect our earnest desire for unity instead of separation, a common vision rather than political polarization, and hope amidst the temptation to despair in a time of economic uncertainty. The banquet is sponsored by the Charlotte District Council on Laity and was planned prior to the general election in the hopes that the United Methodist Church in Charlotte will contribute to the healing of the nation. We encourage members of the churches to invite friends with conflicting political ideologies to be their guest at this banquet as an act of reconciliation and healing.

~ George Thompson, District Superintendent

"Healing of the Nation" **Prayer Banquet**

Monday, January 26, 2009 ▪ 6:30 PM

Myers Park United Methodist Church
Jubilee Hall
1501 Queens Road, Charlotte, NC 28207

Guest Speaker
Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster
Western NC Conference of the

*Join us for prayers, an inspirational message,
and meaningful music for ourselves, and our
country as we move...*

From separation to unity

From judgment to compassion

From problems to solutions

From disillusion to inspiration

From fear to faith

**Reservations
Required
Deadline
January 16**

Cost:

\$10 Adults

\$5 Children

**Child care available:
Advance registration**

Sponsored by the Charlotte District Laity Council of the United Methodist

**Registration Form for the Charlotte District Healing the Nation Prayer Banquet
Monday, January 26, 2009 - 6:30 PM – Myers Park United Methodist Church
Cost: Adults - \$10.00 ▪ Children (12 and under) - \$5.00**

Name: _____ **Church:** _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ **Home Phone:** _____

Child Care-Children's

Names: _____ **Ages:** _____

(Children must be pre-registered)

**Make check payable to Charlotte District UMC Office - mark for District Prayer Banquet
Absolute reservation deadline: January 16**

**Mail to: Charlotte District Office, The United Methodist Church
4108 Park Road, Suite 101, Charlotte, NC 28209-2259**

Ask your Pastor, Lay Leader or consult our website: www.chardist.org for details and directions.

Upcoming Events/Opportunities

Clergy Fellowship Gathering, January 13, 2009, at Sanctuary UMC

The calendar year's first colleague gathering will feature both an act of worship and a time for support and discovery. We shall assemble at the ministry center and temporary location of Sanctuary UMC—our most recent church start in the Annual Conference and Charlotte District. Dr. Percival T. "Percy" Reeves will be our host and lead us in the act of worship at the church's location in a commercial center mall. After a morning brunch, Percy and a team of musicians from the church will conduct worship, featuring a sermon by Dr. Reeves. Following these sacred moments of proclamation and prayer, Percy will provide insights into why this congregation was formed, its vision for the future, its form and format for making disciples, benchmark expectations, and other such insights. This time together at the first part of a new calendar year will provide all clergy an opportunity to learn more about the challenges and opportunities for launching a new congregation; and this will likewise be a time for our collective fellowship to offer our enthusiastic support to Percy, his assistant pastor Vincent A. Harris, and the lay leadership of Sanctuary. Please make this fellowship and worship event a priority in your January schedule.



Sanctuary's address is 13331-D York Center Drive; Charlotte, NC 28273. Drive south on I-77 and take the Westinghouse Boulevard exit and drive west to Tryon Street. Then take a left. The York Center is about a mile's distance from Westinghouse on the right side of South Tryon Street, just one mile north of Good Shepherd UMC.



Lay Speaker's Training in February

The annual school for training and certifying lay speakers for ministry in the church is recognition that every baptized Christian is indeed a minister in chosen fields of service. This training is not designed to be a preface for the ministry of ordination. The training on the consecutive Mondays of February (at 6:30 p.m.) is developed to equip the participant for a more profound expression of discipleship in the vast range of service opportunities in the life of the church. Those who are first-time participants or who have not sought recertification within the past three years will want to take the introductory, basic course with a curriculum written by John Gilbert and Nancy Zoller. This year's advanced course will feature the theme, *Discover Spiritual Gifts*, with study materials authored by William J. Carter. During the fall's Charge Conference reports, the Charlotte District office received the application of a considerable number of participants. But it is not too late for us to receive additional names. Please secure the registration form from the District website (www.chardist.org, downloads), complete the information, and return to DeEtta Rivens. We want to have a full dozen in each of the classes.



The following instructors will give class leadership to the Basic Course for lay speaking: Betty Warner, Elizabeth Puckett, Dr. Robert McLawhorn, and Rev. Laurie Knoespel. The Advanced Course that focuses upon spiritual gifts will be led by Rev. Sheila Bishop, Rev. Barbara Barden, and Rev. Gail Montgomery. All participating churches will be enhanced in the quality of discipleship by the experiences of those who will be trained and motivated.

District Leadership Conference (DLC)



What constitutes the essential qualities of a healthy congregation? How can a strong, healthy church move to a higher plateau of effectiveness and spiritual fervor? What can be done by lay and clergy leadership to bring healing and hope to a struggling, declining congregation?

This past year all our Charlotte District churches applied the *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Bishop Robert Schnase in order to assess the current state of the parish. Our own Bishop Larry Goodpaster outlines ten corollary factors that contribute toward the healthy and well-being of our churches. The international research project led by Christian Schwarz, through a study of over 1,000 churches in 32 countries, discovered that every truly healthy church will have eight quality characteristics.

The 2008 Charlotte District DLC provided on **Saturday, February 28th, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., at St. Stephen UMC** (6800 Sardis Road, Charlotte) will capitalize upon the wisdom of these excellent resources in workshops with both a general and specific appeal.

The following classes will be offered during one of the hours for this splendid morning:

1. ***Facilitating with Ease*** - Chairs of any committee are encouraged to attend, but any leader who wishes to improve their skills will benefit.
2. ***Building Blocks*** - Participants will learn much about church property. Trustees are especially encouraged to come to this class.
3. ***Staff and Lay Relations*** - SPRC and PPRC members will especially benefit.
4. ***Methodism 101*** – A general topic for any member. Lay leaders are asked to attend this class.
5. ***Building a Generous Church*** – In this economic climate, this topic will have a general appeal, but the stewardship committees are especially targeted here.
6. ***From Wall Street to Church Street*** – Our facilitator will deal with the budget as a spiritual document that expresses the missional priorities of the congregation.
7. ***The World Is Our Parish*** – Participants will seek to re-capture John Wesley's passion for mission, servant leadership and evangelism. Mission and evangelism committees will find this class helpful.
8. ***Energizing Children's Ministry*** for workers with children.
9. ***High Impact Ministry*** – Facilitators of small groups, Sunday school or any other expressions of intentional faith development will benefit.
10. ***Irresistible Youth Ministry*** is for workers with youth and youth.
11. ***Senior Adult Ministry That Works*** is designed for our retirement age members and those who minister with them.
12. ***Pastor's Non-Anxious Presence in Time of Anxiety*** will be a great source of inspiration and encouragement for each pastor.

This year we have added a new training element for all DLC participants. We will have designated classes that explore the characteristics of a healthy church. We encourage each church to bring clergy and laity in order to explore these characteristics of a healthy church, to be able to take back to your respective parishes to evaluate, and implement new strategies for ministry.

We have received commitments from some very exciting instructors and church leaders. A promotional brochure will be made available in early January with a delineation of leadership.

Upcoming Events/Opportunities



CHARLOTTE DISTRICT MISSION STUDY
Giving Our Hearts Away: Native American Survival
Saturday, January 24th
Blair Road UMC, 9135 Blair Rd., Mint Hill, NC 28227
Registration form available at
http://www.wnccumw.org/District%20News/CHA_200804.pdf
or contact your local church UMW President. Deadline to register is January 16th.



The Western North Carolina Conference Council on Laity

Seeks potential speakers for

The LAITY ADDRESS

at the 2009 Annual Conference and Gathering of the Laity 2009.

Theme: "Summoned to be a Disciple"

United Methodists are invited to submit an address for consideration to be presented in the theme "**Summoned to be a Disciple**" at the 2009 Annual Conference at Lake Junaluska in June 2009 or the Gathering of the Laity in August 2009. Separate Laity Addresses will be selected for each event and some additional speakers may be selected as Lay Witnesses at the Gathering.

Requirements:

1. Submissions must be based on the theme or a closely related one.
2. Submission must be no more than twelve minutes in length.
3. Submissions must have a cover page with the following information: name of submitter, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address if available, local church, and District.
4. Manuscripts must be typewritten and pages must be numbered.
5. Manuscripts must be received by January 31, 2009.
6. The actual presentation must be as submitted in the manuscript.
7. The invitation is open to all United Methodist Laity in the Western North Carolina Conference, excluding members of the Council on Laity.

Send submissions to: Mitchell Matthews, Conference Director of Lay Speaking Ministries, 110 Auden Drive, Greensboro, NC 27406 by **January 31, 2009**.

Phone (336) 674-3073, or e-mail MitchMatthews1@aol.com with questions.

Please share with pastors, District and Local Lay Leaders, Presidents of UMW & UMM, and any others as appropriate.

MISSION TO MINISTERS

Finch-Hunt Lectures on Preaching

Tuesday, February 3, 2009



Schedule

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

10:30 a.m.	Gathering
11:00 a.m.	First Lectures: Brian McLaren
12:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	Second Lectures: Brian McLaren
2:45 p.m.	Questions & Answers Panel Discussion
3:30 p.m.	Bishop's Dialogue
4:30 p.m.	Worship: Bishop Larry Goodpaster
5:45 p.m.	Trustees Dinner with Bishop

Register Today!

Please email your reservation to Nancy Pryor at nancyp@mpumc.org or call 704-295-4812. Include your name, church and conference in your communication.

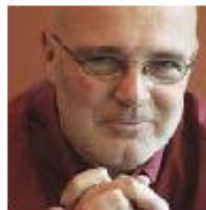
Event Cost

the cost for the event is \$15 and includes lunch. Please pay upon arrival.

A Time of Preparation and Inspiration

Join us Tuesday, February 3, 2009 for a wonderful day filled with worship, inspiration, challenge and fellowship. This day is designed especially for those who preach in the pulpits of the Western North Carolina Conference. The 2009 Mission to Ministers event will be held at Myers Park United Methodist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. We are excited to welcome Brian McLaren and Bishop Larry Goodpaster, both of whom are widely recognized as leaders in the church and are in great demand as preachers and teachers. In addition to the lectures, there will also be a panel discussion and time for questions and answers. A highlight of the day remains the time set aside for the Bishop's dialogue.

About the Speakers



Brian McLaren is an author, speaker, pastor and networker among innovative Christian leaders, thinkers and activists. He has appeared on many television broadcasts including Larry King Live and Nightline. His work has also been covered in Time (where he was listed as one of America's 25 most influential evangelicals), Christianity Today, Christian Century, the Washington Post and many other print media. Brian's books have been translated into many languages. He is also a musician and songwriter. You can read some of his articles at www.brianmclaren.net.



Larry M. Goodpaster is resident bishop of the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, with headquarters in Charlotte. In 2000, Bishop Goodpaster was elected to the episcopacy during the SEJ Conference, at which time he was assigned to serve as Episcopal leader for the Alabama-West Florida Conference until 2008, when he was assigned to the Western North Carolina Conference. In April, he was elected to a two-year term as president of The United Methodist Church's Council of Bishops, which includes United Methodist bishops from around the world. He will take office in 2010. These duties are in addition to those as episcopal leader in the Western North Carolina Conference.

Directions to the Event

Myers Park United Methodist Church is located at 1501 Queens Road in Charlotte, North Carolina 28207. For directions please visit www.mpumc.org, click "Who We Are" then "Location Information" for a printable map and directions.

The Charlotte District Spring Seminar: March 8-9, 2009



Nearly a year and half ago we scheduled Dr. Gil Rendle to be our inspirational leader for the 2009 Spring Seminar. He fits well into a consistent stream of nationally recognized leaders in the field of congregational development, evangelism and church renewal. Doug Anderson, Ed White, Kennon Callahan, and Robert Blackburn have challenged and transformed many laity and clergy throughout the Charlotte District.

Over two years ago, upon the recommendation of several at the Duke Convocation, I placed the name of Gil Rendle at the top of my list of potential participants in this significant educational occasion, sponsored by the Charlotte District School of Christian Discipleship. When the Council of Bishops met at Lake Junaluska in November of 2007, I discovered that Gil had been working with that body as a major consultant. Before joining the staff of the Alban Institute, Gil Rendle served as senior pastor of two urban congregations in Pennsylvania for sixteen years and as a denominational consultant for the United Methodist Church for nine years. Gil has an extensive background in organizational development, group and systems theory, and leadership development. He has worked with congregations, national and regional denominational bodies, schools, and nonprofits. He has authored four books, contributed to two others books, and published numerous articles.

Dr. Rendle firmly believes that congregations change both people and communities. While an individual can have faith, it is in community that our faith flourishes. Gil, therefore, teaches that healthy congregations are amazingly powerful forces of good in people's lives. Congregations have everything they need to live out their missions. He insists that they are not resource poor. Yet congregations are also among the most challenging of organizations, since they are essentially volunteer associations where people leave as they come and where authority to lead is given by consensus. Gil looks at each congregation as a unique system formed of many interdependent parts in a web of relationships. His role is to help us understand how our congregation works and how to adapt to change.

Dr. Rendle has worked extensively with national denominations and their middle judicatories (i.e., synods, sessions, presbyteries, diocese, and districts) around the country on issues of change and leadership. He observes that denominations are reinventing themselves. As the old model of top-down bureaucracy fades, congregations assert their independence, and denominational resources dwindle. These developments are now past the tipping point—particularly among smaller denominations—and there is no going back. In the last several years Dr. Rendle has guided denominational leaders toward understanding the cultural and demographic shifts behind these changes. Through personal coaching, public speaking, and training events like our Spring Seminar, Gil has focused upon the opportunity for middle judicatories to act as leverage points for guiding change.

Dr. Rendle has worked with many large congregations. He has discovered that many of these have a distinctive set of issues that relate to their size. These issues include planning, staffing, leadership development, and clergy transitions. Because large congregations are complex systems, they usually need to start thinking about issues well in advance. Boards of larger congregations find that a discernment model of decision making often works better than democracy. Larger congregations find it easier to be more independent from denominations, yet they risk not being held accountable to a tradition and theology that flows from being in covenant.

In his book *Leading Change in the Congregation* Dr. Rendle has helped congregational leaders understand how changes in the wider culture have affected change within congregations. He has discovered that strong Church Councils approach their work in terms of the congregation's vision and mission. They follow a discernment model rather than make every decision by democracy.

Dr. Rendle's educational background:

- B.A., Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
- Th.M., Boston University School of Theology, Massachusetts
- Ph.D., Psychoeducational Processes (Organizational Development and Small Group Development) Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Spring Seminar 2009 (continued)

Dr. Rendle has published the following significant works:

- *Holy Conversations: A Handbook for Strategic Planning in Congregations*, 2003, Alban Institute
- *The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge*, 2002, Alban Institute
- *Behavioral Covenants in the Congregation*, 1999, Alban Institute
- *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, 1998, Alban Institute

In early January we shall be mailing to each church registration forms for choosing a team of laity who will participate in the Sunday, March 8th portion of the seminar—afternoon, dinner, and evening sessions at Myers Park’s Jubilee Hall. A pastor from each church will lead the team of laity and prepare the participants for the sessions.

On Monday, March 9th, all pastors will be expected to attend the sessions (morning, lunch and afternoon). If unanticipated circumstances prevent your participation, please contact the Charlotte District office.

The purpose of the seminar is not to achieve maximum attendance or demonstrate our faithfulness to a denominational event. The goal of this occasion is to transform our church culture into communities of faithful, life-transforming discipleship.

~George Thompson, Charlotte District Superintendent

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

**Western NC Conference UMC
2009 Celebration**
*Re-Membering the Body of Christ:
in memory of the*
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Coburn Memorial United Methodist Church
The Rev. Annalee Allen, Pastor | 901 South Church St., Salisbury
A collaboration of the WNCC Committees on Religion/Race and Church/Society

January 17, 2009 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

For ALL United Methodists

Essay Contest
7th, 8th, 9th graders
10th, 11th, 12th graders
Details on Flier

Bishop Larry Goodpaster will lead worship and communion during the 2009 Western NC Conference celebration in memory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 17, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at Coburn Memorial UMC, 901 S. Church St., Salisbury. Dr. Reginald Broadnax, dean of academic affairs at Hood Theological Seminary, is keynote speaker.

In a twist on leaders asking questions and young people responding, the youth participants of the essay contest will present questions for the panel discussion, “Immigration and Welcoming the Strangers Among Us.” Panelists are Dr. Samuel Danshokho, Lisa Hughes, Patricia Pegram and a young person.

The event is a collaboration of the WNCC Committee on Religion and Race and Committee on Church and Society. Lunch is by donation.

Flier with details and essay contest rules: <http://wnccumc.org/eth/pdf/mlk2009.pdf>

Around the District



Cokesbury UMC

On the first Sunday of Advent, Rev. John Moore, pastor of Cokesbury UMC, preached an inspirational sermon on the Gospel text, Mark 13:24-37, in which he challenged the congregation to be alert to the signs of Christ's appearance through the seemingly ordinary events of our daily existence.



George Ragsdale, Myers Park Associate, leading the city in prayer at the start of the 30th Annual CROP Walk on October 12th.



Calvary UMC was proudly represented by Christen Hunter and Gwen Butler, pictured here. Each year these two UMAR residents walk on behalf of the hungry and set an example for all of us.



Pat Thompson is pictured here seated in Memorial Stadium as the walkers gathered from all denominations and faiths to participate in the 30th Annual CROP Walk. Pat has raised money for CROP by participating in the walk for the past 30 years in the various towns where the Thompsons have been assigned--from Greensboro to Charlotte.



UM Women District Annual Meeting theme reflected upon environmental education "Live Green-Stay Green". The event was held at Simpson-Gillespie UMC on August 23, 2008.



Western NC Mission/Outreach reaches out at home and abroad through efforts focused on need.

Learn more about WNCC Mission Objectives and Goals through 2011.

Visit: <http://wnccumc.org/mis/mission-outreach.htm>

Mission/Outreach links:
<http://wnccumc.org/mis/morelinks.htm>

Year-End Deadlines

- **District and Conference Apportionments Remittance** The final day for 2008 is Friday, January 9th at 3:00 pm. Payments must be posted in WNCC Treasury Services books by then and not just in the mail.
- **Year-End Statistical Reports** are due in the district office on Thursday, **January 22nd at 12 noon.** Please mail or hand-deliver your report so that it will arrive on time.

2009 IRS Mileage

Beginning January 1, 2009, the standard rate will be 55 cents per mile for business miles driven.

Calendar

December 2008

- 11 District Committee on Ordained Ministry—8:30 am Providence UMC
- 22-26 Christmas Holiday Observed—District Office closed

January 2009

- 1 New Year's Observance—District Office closed
- 9 District and Conference Apportionment payments due at WNC Treasury Services by 3 p.m.
- 13 District Clergy Fellowship—9:30 am, Sanctuary UMC, Charlotte
- 17 WNC Conference ML King, Jr. Celebration, Coburn Memorial UMC, Salisbury, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 19 Martin Luther King Holiday Observed—District Office closed
- 22 Year-End Statistical Reports due in District Office by 12 noon
- 24 District Mission Study: Native American Survival—Blair Rd. UMC
- 26 District Healing of Nation Prayer Banquet—Myers Park UMC, Jubilee Hall, 6:30 p.m.

February 2009

- 2, 9, 16, 23 District Lay Speaking Training—Dilworth UMC, 6:30 p.m.—9 p.m.
- 3 Mission to Ministers, Myers Park UMC
- 28 Charlotte District Dist. Leadership Conference, St. Stephen UMC, 9 a.m.— 1 p.m.

March 2009

- 8-9 District's Annual Spring Seminar, Facilitator Gil Rendle, Myers Park UMC, Jubilee Hall

April 2009

- 21 District Clergy Fellowship—9:30 a.m., Location TBA

Visit the Western NC Conference Calendar at <http://wnccumc.org/Cal/calendar-events.htm>

Web Connections

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. E-news can be viewed at <http://wnccumc.org/nws/WNCCe-News.htm>.

George E. Thompson, District Superintendent
DeEtta Rivens, Administrative Assistant
Joelle Leboa, Secretary
Website: www.chardist.org
E-mail: chardist@bellsouth.net

Charlotte District
Western NC Conference
4108 Park Road, Suite 101
Charlotte, NC 28209-2259
Ofc: 704-525-3395 · Fax: 704-525-4238