

February 1, 2008

Electronic
Newsletter



Charlotte District

E-Connections

Annual Conference Reorganization: A Superintendent's Reflection

Special sessions of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference are as rare as hen's teeth. Early in my ministry we gathered to consider the establishment of Givens Estate and Arbor Acres—two additional retirement communities. This was highly controversial at the time, and many thoughtful United Methodists in leadership thought that this expansion would produce an unnecessary economic burden for the conference. They were short-sighted and dead wrong.



On February 2nd, we shall gather again to discuss and act upon the report of a special Task Force on Annual Conference Reorganization. The location is geographically central: Hickory's Metro Convention Center. All clergy and local church delegates elected for the 2007 Annual Conference are eligible to vote on this comprehensive proposal. Booklets containing the report have been mailed to the delegates. If you have received one and cannot attend, make sure your reserve delegate receives your copy. The full report is also available on the conference website: www.wnccumc.org

Throughout the district, people have asked me to critique the proposal. This is an appropriate request; after all, the special session is largely a reaction to the enormous population growth in Metropolitan Charlotte. The geographical boundaries of this district have not substantially changed during my adult life-time even though a few new people now inhabit this turf. At a time when the maximum opportunity for congregational development is occurring in the Charlotte region, we continue to administer this district as if nothing has happened. Thus, we have approximately three times the membership and twice the number of clergy, three times the number of ministerial candidates, and far more ethnic diversity than the average district in Western North Carolina. Efficiency is sacrificed. Visionary planning and bold initiatives for growing the church are buried under piles of obligatory maintenance agenda.

This task force discovered that we are far from a declining, economically-deprived annual conference. Thanks to some prudent investments and our willingness to address the long-term liability, a Restricted Fund for retiree benefits will be established using available money. Earnings from this Fund will be used to supplement the cost of the Retiree Medicare Supplement Plan. This will save enough from the Annual Conference Budget to enable us to create and sustain a much-needed Lake Norman District. Even though new church starts and re-missioned congregations will occur in other districts, the concentration of those efforts will happen in the Charlotte, Lake Norman and Albemarle Districts.

If the special session adopts the idea of a fifteenth district, the report will require some significant tweaking. Ebenezer UMC, for example, will likely go to the Lake Norman District

and others listed on page 8 of the report may remain in the Charlotte District. Bishop McCleskey will have the responsibility of making that delineation subsequent to AC approval. But a considerable number of congregations will no longer relate to this district office.

I would recommend our *evolving* into this structure. Lake Norman cannot instantaneously create a life of its own. Opportunities to train leaders and
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strengthen disciples through the Charlotte District School of Christian Discipleship may be shared with the new district at the start.

I envy the fortunate circumstances of beginning pastors who will likely enter a culture of peer covenant groups. We may be returning to the exciting days of father Wesley in which there was cooperation and not competition among the clergy. I endorse this crucial portion of the report.

I am less enthusiastic about the proposed agency re-structuring. The conference agencies, committees, boards and commissions need to be streamlined for greater effectiveness. But I would like to see attention given to spiritual gifts rather than mere quota formulas in the selection of these administrative and program ministry groups. We keep re-cycling the same ole names into different committees. Can we not evoke gifts and recruit from among the many professional young Christians who may breathe a fresh breath into our tired structure?

The crucial piece related to Congregational Development is the identity of effective consultation that will assist the superintendents in growing the church. Raising new money through a new staff position for funding may be wise and expedient. But it takes much more than money to be successful in starting new churches and revitalizing congregations. We cannot afford to fail in planning and planting. Choosing effective consultants is crucial.

Most of my life I have operated by this household principle: namely, *never allow ignorance to stand in your way of having an opinion*. This axiom has gotten me into much trouble through the years. But once again I have rendered judgments that invite your thoughtful reflection, cogent arguments, and respectful disagreement.

I look forward to seeing you on Saturday, February 2nd, in Hickory.

Grace and peace,

George

George Thompson
Charlotte District Superintendent

**TASK FORCE ON
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
REORGANIZATION**



Report to Special Session
Western North Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church
February 2, 2008 ▪ 9:30 a.m.
Hickory Metro Convention Center
Hickory, NC

Visit <http://www.wnccumc.org> to print the report. Be sure to bring a copy to the session.

Charlotte District Spring Seminar, March 9-10, 2008



The Charlotte District School of Christian Discipleship has planned this year's Spring Seminar as a two-day event, Sunday and Monday, March 9-10 in Jubilee Hall at Myers Park UMC. This year's theme, "Leadership and Anxiety in the Church," will be addressed by Dr. Richard Blackburn, Executive Director of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center in Lombard, Illinois. Richard, who is an ordained minister in the Mennonite Church, comes with enthusiastic endorsement from those who have attended his workshops elsewhere. He is known throughout this country and abroad as an authority in conflict transformation and mediation skills.

The workshop on Sunday will be designed for teams of laity from each church, 2:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Dr. Blackburn will present three lectures, interspersed between a 4 p.m. break and the 5:30-7 p.m. for dinner and fellowship in Jubilee Hall. All pastors will be encouraged to recruit their church's leadership team and to attend these sessions. We shall soon mail to you packets of information regarding registration. The Monday sessions will be for clergy only. Attendance is required. Dr. Blackburn will provide three lectures, beginning at 9 a.m. We shall have a fellowship lunch and conclude by 3:30 p.m. The theme of the seminar has universal appeal and will address healthy churches, those in conflict, and congregations of all sizes.

Dr. Blackburn has broad experience as a mediator and consultant, working primarily with conflicted churches, both at the congregational and judicatory level. He has worked with Christians groups as far away as Serbia and (since 1996) has led an annual *Mediation Skills training Institute* in London and other parts of Great Britain.

The Mennonite Peace Center receives its theological impetus from II Corinthians 5:18—"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." The peacemaking of the Center is thus grounded in a biblical understanding of salvation and Christian discipleship. This focus superbly reflects the educational objective of our School of Christian Discipleship to strengthen the quality of leadership in the churches of this district.

A Summit on Poverty and Suffering

An insert for *A Summit on Poverty and Suffering* is now accessible for downloading (www.wnccumc.org/chs/summit.htm) and copying to use in local church bulletins. This summit reminds us of the call of Jesus and Wesleyan heritage to reach out to the poor, suffering and/or marginalized, offers models of ministry at work to the poor and suffering in various locales across North Carolina and beckons local churches to covenant to be in ministry to the poor and suffering. The event takes place **Saturday, Feb. 23, 9:30 a.m., Rocky Mount UMC, Mooresville.**



Beyond Christmas

What happens...
...after the presents are opened, the tree is discarded and life returns to normal for those who live in poverty whom we helped during the holidays?

Nothing happens...
...unless we work to eliminate poverty and suffering throughout the year

Do it. Go Beyond Christmas...
...participate in the WNCU-sponsored three-part series *Reconnecting Our Village, Transforming Our World*, to develop ministries with the poor and suffering in local communities. Join us at...

A Summit on Poverty and Suffering
Feb. 23, 2008 | Rocky Mount UMC | Mooresville

"And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" -Matthew 25:40

“Storehouse Ministry” Victory Native American UMC’s Mission to Oklahoma



Victory Native American United Methodist Church has been involved for the past three years in a mission to the Marble City Community pantry and Youth Services Center in Marble City, Oklahoma—a sister Native American faith community.

Two of our congregation’s members, Brother Paul Cook and Sister Delores Parker, have been the eyes and ears of God and for this congregation as we minister to the needs of these precious children of God in Marble City, Oklahoma. These folks now live in Oklahoma and keep us updated on the needs of the precious people. This mission serves a four county area around Marble City, Oklahoma, meeting community needs as best as they are able. There is no industry, the only grocery store and gasoline filling station in the town closed up before Christmas. They must now drive 45 minutes one way to buy groceries and 10 miles to obtain fuel for their automobiles.

Victory Native American UMC of the Charlotte District has begun a “Storehouse Ministry” in Marble City. This ministry is patterned after a combination of Goodwill, Salvation Army, Loaves and Fishes, and Second Harvest Food Bank. We collect food, clothing, appliances, old cars that can be repaired and given away to whomever has a need, toys, baby items, and cash to be used to meet the needs of those who have fallen on hard times or maybe just need assistance for a short period of time. This type of ministry follows the path of Victory UMC’s ancestors who walked with generous hearts and practiced giving aid to those less fortunate than themselves in the tribal villages.

Marble City, Oklahoma, is the first beneficiary from the blessings of the work done in this ministry. Our church by the grace of God was able to meet the food needs of this disadvantaged community at Christmas 2007. We tried to get turkeys; but, due to the price of the items, our small congregation could not do so. Working with local food brokers, we were able to get **618 four pound roasting chickens** and all the trimmings needed **to feed over 350 families twice**, and to allow the pantry to honor their volunteers with an appreciation dinner. **350 Gift bags** were also sent in order that the children in the area had a gift for Christmas. Two little boys from Victory, ages 4 and 11, assisted in the delivery of these gift bags. This was *their idea and their ministry*. We adults helped these boys realize their mission and were amazed by their love and compassion for people they had never known. The 4 year old was the initiator, his 11 year-old brother became the driving force behind the effort in our congregation.

Victory was able to deliver **4,000 pounds of food** to these folks at Christmas time. We also sent **a truckload and trailer load of furniture, clothing, shoes, other foodstuffs and office items including printers, computers and desks**. God has blessed the efforts of Victory; and, because the Lord is so gracious to us, we have gotten fired up and are gathering up items to help Marble City and our own community on an ongoing basis.

We are asking the United Methodist Churches in the Charlotte and Albemarle Districts to partner with us in gathering items to be distributed locally and to our new friends in Marble City. We children of God and United Methodists have a responsibility to feed and clothe God’s children, both near and far away. We must see to their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs. Victory Native American is a small congregation of **35 members**. God has blessed us to send **2 tons of food** and probably **4 times that amount in household items, furniture, shoes, and clothing**. Two members of our congregation actually drove the truck to Marble City. The church was able to take care of that bill as well—\$2,000.00.

We, who are few, challenge and ask for partnership with our United Methodist brethren to meet the continued needs of those in our own community who desperately need assistance and for communities we serve across Native America. Stallings United Methodist Church, Pastor Stephen Pillsbury, Stallings United Methodist Men and the congregation of Stallings United Methodist Church have joined us already in this ministry. We call on others now to join with us as we do God’s will and help those of His children who cannot help themselves.

Thank you and May God richly bless you in 2008,
Victory Native American United Methodist Church

Victory Native American UMC is located at 316 South Fork Road, Indian Trail, NC 28079. Reverend Greg Collins serves as pastor (Tel: 704-201-9009).



Mission to Ministers features Rutledge, Howell

International preacher, the Rev. Fleming Rutledge and the Rev. Dr. James Howell, senior pastor, Myers Park UMC, Charlotte, will deliver the Finch-Hunt Lectures on Preaching at this year's Mission to Ministers, Tuesday, February 5th, 10:30 a.m., Myers Park UMC, Charlotte. Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey will lead the annual bishop's dialogue. Reservations should be made with Nancy Seals Pryor at 704.376.8584. Cost for the luncheon is \$15 and payable at the door.



Rev. Fleming Rutledge

Myers Park United Methodist Church is located at the intersection of Providence Road and Queens Road in the Myers Park neighborhood. There are three parking lots that offer convenient access to the church. The first is located directly behind the church on Queens Road. The second is located across Queens Road at the intersection of Queens and Pembroke. The third is located across Providence Road from the church in the Myers Park Shopping Center, and is available during non-business hours.

Charlotte District Clergy Fellowship: *Preaching After Easter*



Rev. Dr. James C. Howell
Senior Pastor, Myers Park UMC

“Preaching After Easter.” This will be the theme when the clergy fellowship will have a special optional opportunity to share in the task of preparing plans for preaching in this wonderful season after the most important Christians festival of the year—Eastertide. The Executive Committee of our Charlotte District Clergy Fellowship requested James Howell to lead in a workshop/discussion of this theme. We shall gather at Myers Park on Tuesday, February 12th, beginning at 9:30 a.m. Check in at the receptionist desk in Jubilee Hall. Contact the district office by February 5th to make lunch reservations. Dr. Howell teaches a fall class in homiletics at Duke Divinity School and has graciously responded to our request. Easter Sunday can indeed be a time to announce that a very special series of sermons begins on that day! Come and let us plan together.

Jim Humphries, President
Charlotte District Clergy Fellowship

Emerging Worship at Harrison UMC



A missional faith community called **Arborvitae** (which means “Tree of Life” in Latin) is emerging within Harrison Church in Ballantyne. Our mission is to help people in an increasingly post-modern world become kingdom-minded disciples of Jesus. Together, we’re going to add to the beauty of God’s plan and original intent for creation by striving to live with “Hearts Upward & Lives Outward.” Come experience the heartbeat and vision behind this community, and discover how you can become part of the story! Invitational Gathering on Tuesday, February 12th, 7 p.m. at Harrison United Methodist Church. For more information, contact Mike Beachy, Minister of Emerging Worship at HUMC, mike.beachy@harrisonumc.org, or 704-541-3486 ext 214.

Great News for Churches with Latino Ministries and Citizenship Concerns

Under the sponsorship of the community action group H.E.L.P (Help Empower Local People), Representative Sue Myrick, and Representative Robin Hayes, we will be participating in "Citizenship Day" on **Saturday, February 9th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, 4207 Shamrock Dr, Charlotte, NC 28215.**

This is a very positive high profile event to encourage immigrants from all countries who are legally qualified to apply for US Citizenship. The application alone normally costs \$1,500, but on this day, with the help of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, this entire service from start to finish will be provided for free.

As participants in this event, we will be showing our support for immigrants, and we will have a unique opportunity to promote our English classes, Citizenship classes, Spanish Worship Services, etc to this special group of permanent legal residents.

The event is already very close. Please start thinking and planning.

1. How can YOU contact and screen eligible immigrants that your church can contact?

Basic requirements to apply for citizenship are:

Possession of a permanent legal residence card (the famous "green card" which is now actually red)

PLUS:

3 years of subsequent residence if married to a US citizen, OR

5 years of subsequent residence if not married to a US citizen.

Ability to speak (or willingness to learn) English.

Willingness to learn information for the "citizenship test."

Completion of application forms (which will be provided at the event).

2. What services are you providing for immigrants which you would like for us to promote at the event?
3. Do you have brochures we can distribute for you at the event?
4. Would you be able to volunteer to staff a UMC information booth for an hour or more at the event?
5. Do you have people in your church who might be interested in joining our task force to receive training to provide more services as part of a Charlotte UMC Immigration Legal Clinic?

Don't delay. Let me know of your interests by writing me at asmythers@carolina.rr.com

Dios le bendice (God bless you),

Alex Smythers

Co-Chair, Charlotte District Latino Ministries Committee

Member, Blair Road UMC

Iglesia Metodista Unida
Conferencia Oeste-Carolina del Norte



"Como en el primer Pentecostés,
todos(as) pueden oír las maravillas
de Dios en su propio idioma"
[Hechos 2:8]

Upcoming Events/Activities in the Charlotte District

Moore's Chapel UMC: Host Church for "Get Hooked" Event



Carolina Cross Connection (CCC) is hosting an event at Moore's Chapel UMC in Charlotte on **February 10**, called **"Get Hooked."** This will be a time for youth groups in and around Charlotte to gather for an evening of worship, games, testimonies, and a brief presentation about our ministry. We have sent out postcards to churches within the district to invite any and all groups to attend. Put us in touch with your Director of Youth Ministries or lay volunteers in youth ministry. You can find out more about CCC at <http://www.carolinacrossconnection.org> and

about this particular Get Hooked event at <http://carolinacrossconnection.org/news/?p=18>. If you have any other questions or require any further info, please let me know. Thank you so much for your consideration, and God bless!

Adam Cline, Administrator, Carolina Cross Connection Tel: 704-735-4257
adam@carolinacrossconnection.org; www.carolinacrossconnection.org

Lay Speakers' Training—Each Monday night in February (February 4, 11, 18, 25), 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Locations: Pleasant Grove UMC and St. Stephens UMC. Both basic (new) and advanced (renewal) classes will be offered at both locations. If you have missed the registration deadline contact Irma Ellwanger, Lay School Director at 704-544-3190.

Mission to Ministers 2008, Tuesday, February 5th (see page 5 for details)

UM Women District Mission Study-Israel Palestine by Stephen Goldstein, study guide by Sandra Olewine, February 9th

Saturday, February 9th at Hickory Grove UMC beginning with registration at 9:30 a.m. The cost is \$7.50 per person and includes lunch only. (Rain/snow date is February 23rd). Contact your local UMW President of visit www.wncumw.org and print the October 2007 newsletter to obtain the registration form. Deadline to register is January 26th.

District Clergy Fellowship-Tuesday, February 12th, 9:30 a.m. to Noon, Myers Park UMC (see page 5 for details)

Please contact the district office (704-525-3395 or chardist@bellsouth.net) no later than February 5th regarding your plans for attendance and lunch fellowship.

Lay Speakers' Graduation Service—Sunday, March 2nd, 4 p.m., Grace UMC, 737 Woodlawn Road, Charlotte, NC

This service will celebrate the completed requirements of the 2008 Lay Speaker training participants. Pastors with participants are asked to be present.

UMW Prayer Breakfast "Pure Hearts"-Saturday, March 8th, 9:00 a.m. to Noon, Pineville UMC

Speaker is Reverend Susan Pillsbury-Taylor. Cost is \$7.50 per person, registration deadline is February 1. Visit http://www.wncumw.org/District%20News/CHA_200801.pdf to obtain a registration form or contact your local UMW President.

Charlotte District Annual Spring Seminar-Sunday, March 9th and Monday, March 10th, Myers Park UMC

"Leadership and Anxiety the Local Church." Richard Blackburn will be the facilitator. Sunday, March 9th, Clergy and Laity, 3:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday, March 10th, Clergy and Church staffs, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

March 21st and 24th, District Office Closed in Observance of Easter Holiday

Charlotte District Prayer Breakfast, March 29th, 9:00 a.m., Plaza UMC

It is our goal for all laity to attend at least one prayer breakfast during the conference year for fellowship, prayer, inspiration, and renewal. Please advertise this event in your church. All clergy and laity are welcome to attend. Reverend Talbot Davis (Good Shepherd UMC) will be the speaker. Additional information will be mailed to the pastors, lay leaders, and churches. Contact Mary Lou Roller, District Lay Leader (704-545-2430).

Around the Charlotte District



New Hope UMC, Iron Station NC



New Hope worshippers Don and Katherine Fisher fellowship with Pat Thompson .



South Tryon's liturgical dancers minister to the hearts of others through dance.



A Sunday school class at Hill's Chapel.



Rev. Val Rosenquist with Hill's Chapel leaders.



2008 VBS Preview Event Invitation

Tuesday, February 5, 2008
10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Charlotte Cokesbury Bookstore
726 Tyvola Road Charlotte, NC 28217
Tel: 704-525-4543



Brochure and registration form at
www.wnccumc.org/yth/pdf/confirmation2008.pdf



In recognition and honor of pastors, lay persons, or groups who are doing the vital work of responsible evangelism in ways that are in keeping with history and tradition. Nomination deadline is March 15th. Nomination forms available at www.wnccumc.org/dnl/downloadableforms.htm

Western NC Conference The United Methodist Church
Application for Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2007 Award | *Note: Application for 2006 Award is different*



5 Star Church of Excellence

Application deadline is March 31, 2008.
www.wnccumc.org/dnl/pdf/ChurchExcellence.pdf

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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Submit articles to e-mail address
by the 15th of the preceding publish month.

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