

July 7, 2008

Electronic
Newsletter
Charlotte District
of the United
Methodist Church



Charlotte District

E-Connections



A Superintendent's Reflection upon Politics and the Church

Most political pundits predict that the fall election on every level (local, state, and national) will be one of the most contentious and divisive contests in American history. The Presidential primary season seemed to be interminable, exhausting the patience of many. We live in a politically charged atmosphere, analogous to the violent thunderstorms of summer. Amidst this polarized atmosphere we clergy are often pulled into awkward conversation with our parishioners. Members want to know where we stand in relationship to candidates and issues. It is not terribly helpful for clergy to remain above the fray, pretending that vital public issues do not really matter and that our minds transcend the worldly atmosphere of politics. John Howard Yoder reminded us poignantly a few decades ago that we can never comprehend the gospel message unless we explore *The Politics of Jesus*. Moreover, I cannot think of a single Hebrew prophet who did not courageously address the political context of their time in history. How can we remain faithful both to our prophetic tradition and our pastoral responsibility to care for the whole parish?

First, we need to remind our members that it is OK to discuss the great social and political issues of our day in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect. The church may be the only place in our culture in which people who disagree on solutions to complex problems can lovingly disagree and attentively listen to another's point of view. Two specific books have particularly been part of my spiritual exploration during these days of recovery. I recommend that both books be studied among small groups or adventurous Sunday school classes. Adam Hamilton, an occasional visitor to our WNC Conference and pastor of the 14,000 member United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, has recently published a volume titled, *Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White*. Hamilton has addressed many of the most politically divisive issues confronting our culture in these chapters that emerge from his preaching. This author's thesis is that followers of Christ are compelled by the Gospel message to address the moral and ethical issues that are politically sensitive. When we listen to one another and are guided by scriptural authority that is informed by reason, tradition, and experience; we often reject absolutes and discover a measure of truth within the arguments of our political opponents. A similar theme is developed by Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners*, in his latest book, *The Great Awakening*. Wallis announces that the religious right has lost its powerful influence upon evangelicals. The rising tide of moral leadership is coming from evangelicals who are profoundly committed to biblical authority but who proclaim that Jesus had a political proclivity toward the poor and disenfranchised. He was a proponent of peace in all circumstances, and our Lord was inclusive in his love for those who were condemned by the political powers of his day.

I recommend that you challenge various groups in your church to study one (or both) of these volumes in preparation for the responsibility of voting this fall. Moreover, I encourage you to make these part of your summer reading. When our clergy meet at Providence (continued on page 2)

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A Superintendent's Reflection upon Politics and the Church *(continued)*

UMC on the morning of October 7th, Ken Carter and I will lead our colleagues in a discussion of the content of these books and our pastoral role in this political season.

Second, let us remind our members that our nation has often been polarized and plagued by despicable, unethical attacks upon political opponents. This fall is likely to be contentious, but not unique. David McCullough, in his classic biography, *John Adams*, reminds us that "in the summer and fall of 1800 the question of who was to lead the nation rapidly became a contest of personal vilification surpassing any presidential election in American history." We should remember this when we visit the Jefferson Memorial in Washington.

Third, even though it is likely irresponsible to endorse political candidates from the pulpit, it is equally irresponsible to imply that Christians who love and respect one another are to avoid intelligent and informed discussion of the central issues that will be the content of fierce debate in the political arena.

Let us acknowledge that we can learn from those with whom we disagree. Let us avoid political absolutes and perceive the gray in a world of black and white. Let us permeate the atmosphere of our congregations with a spirit of prayer and civility of debate, rejecting the cynicism and arrogance of a polarized culture.

Grace and peace,

George

George E. Thompson, Charlotte District Superintendent

Gratitude



I am truly a blessed man and grateful to our Divine Physician for the process of recovery I am experiencing. On the Sunday after Annual Conference I attended my first worship service and have begun visiting the churches that have received a new pastoral appointment. Pat and I have visited most of Charlotte District's new clergy and will soon personally greet the others. In these weeks since April 21st you have covered me with prayers, encouraged me through letters and cards, and communicated with Pat through compassionate phone messages. I apologize for my inattentiveness to e-mails. Perhaps at a later time I shall plow through some of the 2,200-plus that are now in my box. At present I get terribly nervous when I attempt to pluck out the "important" ones. I am reading for inspiration, developing a pattern of exercise at rehab, and taking naps during the day. I am a recovering workaholic and slowly learning the meaning of God's extraordinary grace. God is in control of the Charlotte District and God will continue to bless the work of ministry here long after my brief interval in this post. When we meet in the days ahead, you will grasp the hand of a thankful man and embrace a colleague who continues to be sustained by the abundance of your prayers.

~George E. Thompson ~

Order Your 2008 Western NC Annual Conference Journal

It is time to order the 2008 Western North Carolina Annual Conference Journal! The Journal is available in a one volume printed book or on compact disc. The cost for the book is \$20 and the cost of the disc is \$10. Order forms were mailed to churches and delegates last week.

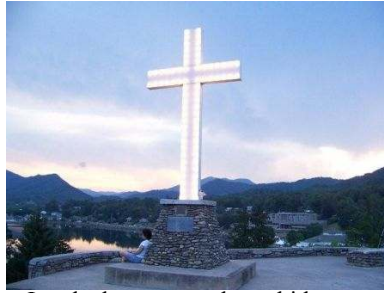
If you did not receive an order form and are interested in ordering a journal, please contact Sandy Hargett at shargett@wncumc.org or 800-562-7929 x 133. The **deadline to receive orders is August 1st.**



Reflections from 2008 Western NC Annual Conference—June 5-8, 2008



Panoramic view of Lake Junaluska.



Junaluska cross and amphitheatre.



Laity and clergy gather for sessions in Stuart Auditorium.



Bishop McCleskey licenses Marcia Conston (Providence Assistant) as a Local Pastor.



Denny White retires after 25 years as Conference Secretary.



The McCleskeys are honored for 45 years of ministry as they enter retirement.



Ice cream from the Edgewater Cafe is always refreshing.



A commemorative courtyard was displayed honoring soldiers.



Musical entertainment during an event at the Nanci Weldon Gym.



Campus ministry provides refreshments along with a display of its life-transforming ministry to students.



Everyone was represented including the Red Hat Society.



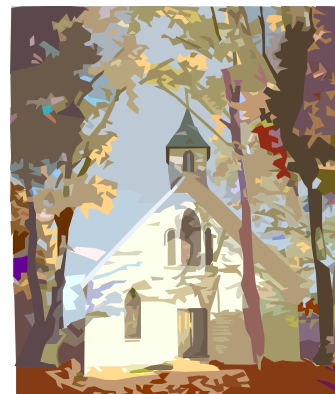
A family enjoys delicious watermelon provided by Pfeiffer University.

Visit Annual Conference business highlights at <http://wnccumc.org/ac8/ac8-digest.htm> .

New Appointments

Join us in welcoming the following pastors who have new appointments in the Charlotte District:

Anita W. Sain (Brian), Aldersgate
Nancy Burgin Rankin (Terry), Blair Road
Andrew D. Brown (Jami), Hawthorne Lane
Michael L. Harris (Carroll), Kilgo
Timothy S. Killian (Jo), Morningstar Mission
Robert T. McLawhorn (Barbara) , Mouzon
Stephanie M. Hand (Walter, Jr.), Mouzon Min. of Education
George I. Ragsdale (Courtney), Myers Park Min. of Discipleship
C. Shane Page (Christi), Myers Park Min. of Evangelism/Involvement
Teresa B. Dunn (David), Providence Min. of Youth and College Students
Marcia L. Conston (Clidell), Providence Assistant
Thomas H. Schnitzlein (Cristy), St. Stephen Associate
H. Jae Lee (Kim), Wesley
Laurie A. Knoespel (Jack), Zoar



Appointments beyond the local church:

Rosa M. Caldera (Augusto), Adjunct Staff Chaplain, Carolinas Medical Center, Charlotte
Kimberly T. Ingram (Eddie), Conference Secretary-Statistician/Ordained Ministry Registrar
Stephen D. James, Conference Director of Connectional Ministries
Patricia G. Pegram, Regional Attorney, Methodist Peace and Justice Clinic, Charlotte
Cynthia W. Sloan, Program Associate/Field Coordinator, General Bd. of Global Ministries

We extend open arms to the following churches that join the Charlotte District from the Belmont– Mt. Holly area:

<u>Church</u>		<u>Pastor/Spouse</u>
Belmont: Ebenezer	704-827-3366 (ofc)	Angela Hollar (Mark)
Belmont: First	704-825-2106 (ofc)	Mark Andrews (Denise)
Belmont: Park Street	704-825-8480 (ofc)	Harold Schwantes (Darlene)
Belmont: St. Mark's	704-825-8175 (ofc)	Caren Bigelow Morgan
Belmont: South Point	704-825-4019 (ofc)	Barbara Mayo
Mt. Holly: First	704-827-4855 (ofc)	Larry Kimel (Diane)

Clergy Dinner Welcomes New Pastors and their Families to the Charlotte District



Thursday, September 18th, 6:30 p.m. at Simpson-Gillespie UMC
3545 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, NC 28216

The Executive Committee of the Charlotte District Clergy Fellowship is planning a gathering to welcome the pastors and their families that are new to the district (incoming and Belmont-Mt. Holly churches). All clergy families are invited to attend to help roll out the red carpet to colleagues and their families. Additional details will be mailed to you soon.

The Oberammergau Passion Play

“2010 Performance”

One of the most exciting and valued pilgrimages available today is focused in a tiny Bavarian village in one of the most picturesque regions of Germany. Once every ten years the people of this small town make a centuries-old thank offering to God for what they believe to be a miraculous sparing of their village in 1633 during the time when the Black Plague was ravaging throughout Europe. Praying to God for the salvation of their town, they vowed to re-enact the passion of Christ if God would see fit to honor their prayer. The deaths stopped and, since that day, the villagers have performed the passion play once every ten years. In 1634 the first play was performed in the choir loft of the church. Due to its popularity, the play was moved to the church yard and then to a nearby field where, in 1930, the modern theater was built. Renovated several times since that date and now seating 5,000 people for each performance, the theater has an open stage and a natural backdrop of blue sky and mountains. The audience sits in a covered area for protection from inclement weather. The music and costumes are magnificent, reflecting centuries-old traditions in costumes, casting and staging. Only natives or those who've lived in the town for 20 years are eligible for audition. To add to the play's authenticity, no wigs or make-up are allowed. Cast members grow their hair and beards to match their Biblical roles.



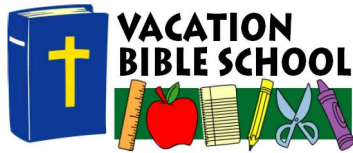
In 2010, our hosts for the journey of a life time will be Educational Opportunities Tours (EO), a Christian oriented company with which many of you have traveled. We are encouraging United Methodists across the Western North Carolina Conference to plan now to participate in this transformational journey. Many other sites of beauty and interest will be included. Pastors and churches from both the Charlotte District and the new Lake Norman District are encouraged to contact Dr. Thomas R. Sigmon for full information. Tom and LaVon will be serving as coordinators for this important trip in these two districts. The recommended date for departure for persons in these and adjoining districts is Tuesday, July 13, 2010. Other dates are available for any who cannot schedule this date. EO was the largest distributor of Passion Play tickets in 1980, 1984 (special performance), 1990 and 2000. EO's guarantee, unlike some travel companies, is that all ticket purchasers will see the entire Passion Play.

Tom & LaVon are well versed in information about the Oberammergau Passion Play. They attended it in 1990 and 2000 and are planning to participate again in 2010. Again, please contact them for full information, including brochures with registration material.

Their contact information is: Dr. & Mrs. Thomas R. Sigmon
5518 Dunedin Lane
Charlotte, NC 28270-6500
Telephone: 704.362.2398
E-mail: trsigmon@carolina.rr.com

They will be glad to speak about this pilgrimage to groups in your church and to assist you, as a tour host, in recruiting your own group of travelers. Call today for information and scheduling.

The Western NC Conference sponsors the Good Samaritan Clinic outside Barahona, Dominican Republic in Batey 7. It serves approximately 18,000 persons, including members of Batey 7 and the other nearby Bateys.



VBS GOOD SAMARITAN KITS NEEDED

A Batey is a settlement of Haitian workers who presently live in the Dominican Republic. They originally went to Dominican Republic to work in the sugar cane fields and have settled in small, poor, settlements in the Barahona area. The children are able to go to school, but many cannot afford supplies. Last year you supplied 3,500 kits. Please help again to give a child a good start for the school year. Visit the link below for a list of the kit items.

Thank you to all the churches working on the Vacation Bible School project – VBS Good Samaritan Kits <http://www.wnccumc.org/mis/pdf/VBSflier.pdf>. With the new persons coming into the offices as Mission Representatives, the best ways to pick up these kits are as follows:

- They may be taken to the Mission Response Center in Terrell, NC by individual Churches <http://www.wnccumc.org/mis/pdf/mrcpackingguide.pdf>; or
- They may be taken to the AGAPE/UMCOR drop-off locations during the week of Oct. 6-11, 2008 <http://www.wnccumc.org/mis/pdf/mrcpackingguide.pdf>

We ask churches to please inspect the kits to make sure all money is removed and placed together, or a check is written for the full amount of funds and sent to “WNCC Treasurer,” Conference Mission/Outreach Office, P.O. Box 18005, Charlotte, NC 28218. *Mike Collins, Conference Mission/Outreach, 704-535-2260, ext 142*

IMMEDIATE DIASTER RESPONSE NEEDED!

On June 24th, Bishop McCleskey wrote pastors and missions chairpersons regarding the rising flood waters on the Mississippi River which have flooded many towns and cities. Our Conference Disaster Response Committee will be responding to this disaster as directed by the United Methodist Committee on Relief. Our response should be to receive a special offering to sustain the work of volunteer teams, to provide needed materials, and to help maintain the long-term rebuilding efforts.



Please send offerings to the Volunteer Response Ministries office payable to: Treasurer, WNC Conference, using the Conference Remittance Form designating your offering to “Disaster Response,” or you may memo the check for UMCOR Advance #901670. Please send your donations to PO Box 18005, Charlotte, NC 28218. Additional updates at www.wnccumc.org/mis/disasterresponse.htm.

Disaster response training information at www.wnccumc.org/mis/mis-events.htm.



The Special Sunday Offering Envelopes for **Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries** have been delivered to the district office. Please stop by to obtain your package of envelopes.

The DBOM Special Offering will take place on August 24th. A promotional letter from Bishops Gwinn and McCleskey will be mailed to each pastor on August 1st. Promotional DVDs will also be available after August 1st at the district office. Additional information: www.disciplebibleoutreach.org or *Mark Hicks, Executive Director, mhicks@northstate.net, Tel: 336-434-8612*

Around the District



Veterans are gathered outside St. Paul UMC, Charlotte, after the worship service on Memorial Day, May 25th. Chaplain Ralph Gore, Jr. (dressed in full uniform on the right) was the guest speaker and delivered a message concerning commitment in the armed services and the church. He is the Training Command Chaplain for the 108th Training Command (iet) Initial Entry Training Reserve Center of Charlotte.



Sarah Yarbrough celebrated her 94th birthday on May 25th at a reception following worship on the front lawn of St. Paul UMC, Charlotte.

Greater Vision Celebrates A New Facility

On Sunday, June 29th Greater Vision celebrated the opening of its new facility at 11901 Eastfield Road in Huntersville with brimming attendance. We extend congratulations to this congregation. Greater Vision is now in the Lake Norman District.



Greater Vision praise dancer Niiya Thomas.



The new facility is surrounded by 11 acres.



Rev. Anthony preaches a profound message "We've Come this far by Faith."



Terry Creech shares a poem he wrote about the pilgrimage to this place.



The music ministry of Fred and Belinda Alexander led the choir in inspiring music and song.



Attendance at the event included (L to R) WNCC Foundation: Lauralee Bailey, David Snipes, and Alleine McLean; D.S. George Thompson; D.S. Lillie Jones, her spouse Frederick; Steve James, WNCC Director Connectional Ministries.

The Charlotte District has been restructured for the first time in several generations. We are a newly composed district and welcome our colleagues from Belmont and Mt. Holly. Approximately thirty churches from our historic alignment are now integral to the Lake Norman Distr. It is essential that we spend time in clarifying our new identity and knowing those with whom we shall share in the ministry of Methodism in this district. To this end, the clergy executive committee wisely planned a district retreat for the benefit and orientation of clergy. Thus, you are encouraged to participate in the September 9th retreat in Statesville with the superb leadership of Ann Starrette-an experienced facilitator and layperson from Davidson UMC.

We shall need at least twenty participants in order to provide a qualitative experience; so I encourage you to join hands and hearts with your colleagues-both new and old Charlotte District clergy. Watch your mail and email for registration information.

A Day Apart for

Thirsty Water-Givers

In a hobbling life, where can you glide?



Charlotte District Clergy Retreat

Tuesday, September 9, 2008 - Arrival 9:30 am - Depart 3:30 pm

**Starrette Farmhouse Retreat, Statesville, NC
Ann Starrette, Facilitator**

Do you find yourself giving and giving to others only to find you have no time or energy to answer your own soul's deepest longings? Does it feel like something is dying inside of you for lack of water? Or perhaps you wonder why, even though you are successful at what you do, you feel a growing emptiness inside. Or perhaps none of these apply and you simply want to feed your already healthy relationship with God. In any case, this retreat is for you!

As a "Water Giver," we're often so busy doing the work we often fail to drink from the well ourselves. If you yearn for an un-rushed drink to quench your thirst and refresh your soul; if you long to re-connect who you are with what you do, you're invited to come for a day of not doing but deep drinking to re-energized your soul and role. The more passionate we are about our work, the more vital it is to reconnect with the deep, life giving wellspring of our soul ... for we cannot give what we do not have.

In this retreat, facilitator Ann Starrette will help us create a quiet, focused and disciplined space in which the noise within us can subside and we can begin to hear our own inner voice and the voice of our Creator. In large group, small group, and solitary settings, the retreat approach invites us to explore and strengthen the vital relationship between the inner life and Spirit and the outer life of work and service.

*If Watered . . . "What shape waits in the seed of you to grow
and spread its branches against a future sky."
-- David Whyte, Poet*

Because this is a private retreat space, directions will be provided (via email) to registered attendees prior to retreat. Visit the site at www.TheLydiaGroup.com to learn about the facilitator and facility.

Upcoming Events/Activities

July

- 4 District Office closed in observance of Independence Day
- 6-10 Lake Junaluska Ministry Summit (formerly Ministers Conference). Register at www.lakejunaluska.com
- 16-19 SEJ Conference, Lake Junaluska—Election of Bishops
- 24-27 2008 School of Christian Mission, “Living the Sacred”, Greensboro, (www.wnccumw.org)

August

- 9-11 SpiritUs 2008 #1, Oak Island, Rising 7th graders through rising 12th graders and counselors, details: 704-535-2260, ext. 117 or 199
- 15-17 SpiritUs 2008 #2, Oak Island, Rising 7th graders through rising 12th graders and counselors, details: 704-535-2260, ext. 117 or 199
- 15-17 A Gathering of the Laity, “Laity Transforming the World”, Lake Junaluska, brochures available at the District Office (704-525-3395)

September

- 1 District Office closed in observance of Labor Day
- 5-7 Annual Meeting of the UM Women, “Called by Name:”, Lake Junaluska, (www.wnccumw.org)
- 8-11 Cabinet Meeting
- 9 District Clergy Retreat, Statesville, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm
- 15 Deadline to submit District Mission Society Grant applications. Form available at www.chardist.org, downloads.
- 18 Clergy Welcome Gathering, 6:30 pm, Simpson-Gillespie UMC, 3545 Beatties Ford Rd., Charlotte

October

- 3-5 PAUMCS (Prof. Assoc. of UMC Secretaries), Fall Retreat, Lake Hickory (contact district office for brochure)
- 5 World Communion Sunday
- 7 District Clergy Fellowship, Providence UMC, 9:30 am
- 12 Charlotte area CROP Walk, Gastonia date TBA
- 13-15 Duke Convocation/Pastor’s School (www.divinity.duke.edu/eventregistration/cps/divinityevent_view)
- 20-22 Cabinet Meeting
- 24-26 World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church women, Norcross, GA (www.wnccumw.org)

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 www.wnccumc.org/nws/news.htm

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