

June 21, 2006

Electronic
Newsletter



Charlotte District

E-Connections

A Pastor's Reflection on the Business of Annual Conference

Every year, I feel, say and hear from others the same thing at Annual Conference: "These sessions get in the way of our visiting!" The gatherings by the doorways, under the trees, on the porches of Annual Conference all attest to the joy of the fellowship of United Methodism in the Western North Carolina Annual Conference. How easy it is to get caught up in the fellowship and worship aspects of conference!

And, yet, in this 50 Year Celebration of Full Clergy Rights for Women, I am keenly aware that it was action in a business session of the General Conference that made full clergy rights a reality. Of course the relationships mattered. Of course the worship experiences mattered. But it was only through legislation that the change was made and doors were opened—doors that directly affected my own ability to serve the church in ordained ministry. That piece of history gave me a new perspective through the sometimes tedious, tiring and contentious deliberations of the business sessions. The business is important!

The 50 Year Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women, celebrated through the Board of Ordained Ministry Report and the Report of the Commission on Archives and History was thrilling to me. 2006 is the 30th year from my ordination as a deacon (which, then, was the first step to elder's orders). So this history is my own personal history. And, when I transferred to the Western North Carolina Conference 22 years ago, the situation for women was very different. Ministers in Mississippi who had done everything they could to block my ordination begged me not to transfer my membership to this conference because, in their observation (which seemed quite ironic to me) "that WNC conference really mistreats women". Their observations were not unfair to the reality. It was really tough for women—still is for many.

The change has been breathtaking. Although I loved making the Board of Ordained Ministry presentation, the most moving time of all – for me—was when Jim Pyatt, head of Archives and History, asked all the clergywomen to stand, then all lay delegates who had been served by a clergywoman, then all pastors and laity who had served under a women district superintendent and finally all who had served under a woman bishop – until we were, literally, all standing. That was a sight – and a reality—that we could never have envisioned 20 years ago. What a thrill to see!

Full clergy rights for women has not yet meant equal clergy rights for women, as our Commission on Status and Role of Women has comprehensively documented. But the amount of progress has been remarkable and brought a spirit of joy and celebration to every other aspect of conference business.

Every year, I come home from Annual Conference wishing that every United Methodist could see the scope of the work that we do in this conference and throughout the world.



In this issue...

- [Page 1-2 A Pastor's Reflection...](#)
- [Page 3 Annual Conference Highlights](#)
- [Page 4 Things to Come](#)

A Pastor's Reflection... (continued)

If lay and clergy delegates could only convey to local churches the truly inspiring scope of the work of United Methodism, we would not ever have to make a decision about whether or not to pay conference or general church apportionments. We would gladly pay our full apportionments. We have so much to be proud of!

Bishop McCleskey was clear in challenging the delegates about the two way street of connectionalism. The message is intended for every single local church. I hope that all delegates received his straight-talking admonitions as a personal call to bring the importance of the connection to every Finance Committee, Administrative Council and Ministry Team in the conference. The work we do for Christ is invaluable! Every United Methodist can be proud of what we do for Christ as a church. And every United Methodist Church needs to be a full partner in the work of the whole church: full partner in prayer, full partner in financial support through the apportionment and full partner through participation. The recently implemented choice empowerment approach has brought unprecedented decline in giving; and our conference business sessions became the place where honest evaluation, challenge and constructive action steps were placed before us.

One of United Methodism's greatest characteristics – our openness to differences of opinions-- was also poignantly obvious in the business sessions. As in other arenas of life, good traits have shadow sides. In the case of United Methodism, as with our democracy, our openness to all perspectives can become an forum for misinformation, false accusations and personal vendettas. Although our open legislative process and forum groups provide a channel through which petitions can be affirmed, rejected or perfected, this year's ten petitions submitted by one person brought false information, exaggerations and inflammatory accusations to the attention of every delegate. In the forum group setting and in the general sessions, the tension was palpable. Although petitions 21 – 30 were rejected or ruled out of order or radically changed, the language of the petitions was profoundly troubling to me. What a vivid experience of the body language Paul describes in I Corinthians 12. When one person is troubled, hurting or unrelenting, the whole body is affected. With next year's Annual Conference being predictably full of petitions to the General Conference, I will be praying every day for the tenor of the debate. I am praying that our conversation be honest and respectful. No matter what side of an issue we are on, I believe all Christians are honor-bound to be truthful—and that the attitude of our discussion needs to reflect our common bond in Christ.

The Annual Conference is a call to prayer, an inspiration to greater faithfulness and a source of strength for challenges ahead. May this year's experience bless and inspire us in unfolding ways as we serve Christ in United Methodism.

~Reverend Mary John Dye, Senior Pastor, Hantborne UMC, Charlotte, NC~



Reverend Mary John Dye is seen here with D.S. George Thompson and her son-in-law, Reverend Mark Conforti, upon the occasion of Mark's ordination as an Elder.

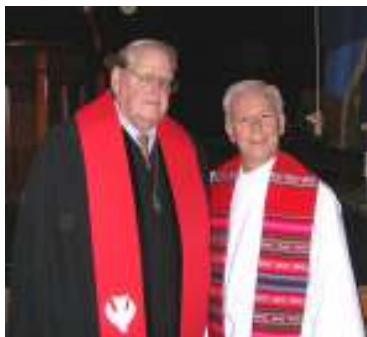
More Annual Conference highlights...

Seven of the 32 persons commissioned as probationary deacons and elders were clergy from the Charlotte District. Here commissioned deacon Joshua Morgan Noblitt is talking with Pat Thompson who was Josh's sixth grade elementary Sunday school teacher when he was confirmed at Boone UMC. Others who were commissioned at Lake Junaluska from the district are the following: Lucille Kauffman Blizzard, Brian Eugene Combs, Dawn Maria Hand, Abigail Williford Kocher, Friday MBA Okocha, and Timothy Allen Reimer.



The two ordinations of United Methodism were celebrated in the one service of Saturday evening. Here ordained elder Jim Parsons is enjoying the fellowship during the moments before the service with Amy Wyn Burton who was ordained a full-connection deacon. Four of the five deacons who were ordained are clergy in the Charlotte District. In addition to Amy, Monica Lane Humpal, Cynthia Weber Sloan, and Sherry Ward Jackson were ordained deacon. Congratulations to each of these ministers of word, order, and service.

A highlight of Annual Conference came on Thursday morning with the opening communion service. Charlotte District's own Nancy Miller Campbell was a liturgist (second from left). She is seen here with the preacher for the service, Angela Pleasants of Wingate UMC, and the other liturgists: Susan Heafner-Heun and Sonia Zuniga. This service utilized several from the Charlotte District who served the Eucharist to a packed Stuart Auditorium.

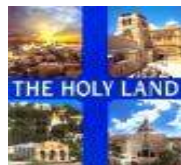


Six of the twenty-four clergy who were ordained Elder at the Annual Conference are from the Charlotte District. Here our District Superintendent celebrates this sacred occasion with Charles Ronald Riley, Associate Pastor at Memorial UMC. Ron was joined by the following who received their ordination at the hands of Bishop McCleskey: Mark David Conforti (associate at Davidson), Lillie Madison Jones (entering our district on the Conference staff), Kathryn Andrews McElveen (coming from North Georgia where she has been on loan), James Carl Parsons (associate at Hawthorne Lane), and Charlie Dexter Rivens (pastor of South Tryon Community Mission).

Things to come...

A Western NC Conference-wide (for pastors and office staff) Workshop will be held on Thursday, August 24, 2006, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at Myers Park UMC, Charlotte. The cost for this workshop will be \$10.00 (registration and lunch). The workshop will cover Charge Conference Reports and Year-End Reports. Additional registration information will be sent to each pastor at a later date. Please place this important date on your calendars.

McCLESKEYS LEAD HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE



January 16 and 17, 2007 are the departure dates for an exciting journey to the land and sites so vital to our faith history. Bishop and Mrs. Lawrence McCleskey will be our hosts for these unique and transformational experiences. There are two options, "Holy Land 2007", leaving on January 16 and "Jesus and the Galilee 2007", leaving on January 17. Each trip will include shared times with the other and the McCleskeys will also spend time with both. Persons, regardless of prior experiences in Holy Land travel, may register for either. Clergy, you can earn your trip by recruiting and hosting members of your church, friends and family as you give them the wonderful opportunity to travel to places that connect us more fully to the life of Jesus—the Galilee, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, etc. What an opportunity to expand your Disciple Bible ministry and to provide Sunday School teachers a deeper background for leadership through direct contact with the land of the Bible.

More information is available by contacting the Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Sigmon. Tom is serving as Charlotte District Coordinator. Tom will be glad to provide information and assistance to you as you make your plans for participation. Please do so soon. January 2007 is not far away! You may contact him at 5518 Dunedin Lane, Charlotte, NC 28270-6500, 704-362-2398 or trsigmon@carolina.rr.com.

Calendar of Events/Activities

June 27	Clergy Move Day
July 2	First Sunday in pulpit for Incoming Clergy
July 10-14	Ministers' Week, Lake Junaluska
July 11	UMC Youth Night at Lowe's Motor Speedway
July 13-16	UM School of Christian Mission, Greensboro College
July 30	Splash! Emerald Pointe, Greensboro
July 25	Charlotte District Clergy Family Welcome Gathering, Simpson-Gillespie UMC, 6:30 p.m.
August 18-20	A Gathering of the Laity, Lake Junaluska & SpiritUs (Part 1) Oak Island
August 21-22	Beginning Pastors Seminar (Part 2), Terrace Hotel, Lake Junaluska
August 25-27	SpiritUs (Part 2) Oak Island
August 26	UMW District Annual Meeting, Davidson UMC, 9:00 a.m.

George E. Thompson, District Superintendent
DeEtta Rivens, Administrative Assistant

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