

March 30, 2007

Electronic
Newsletter



Charlotte District

E-Connections

Spring Seminar Assessment

I am truly grateful to all of you who entered into the various facets of the Spring Seminar with such enthusiasm and eager expectation. Kennon Callahan was very complimentary in his assessment of the quality of questions and the hospitality of our people. We were indeed receptive to his many new, innovative ideas. As I have insisted on many occasions, the purpose of this annual event is not merely to provide a provocative, elucidating workshop. That result will surely be a bi-product of our efforts if our primary purpose is to transform the culture of our churches from maintenance to mission, from an attitude of scarcity and fear to a posture of abundance and joy. I now encourage the teams from your church to take what they have learned and to begin the process of practical application. I shall want to know during the season of our fall Charge Conferences how your parish is progressing in this endeavor. My office can make available audio CD recordings of the major lectures by Dr. Callahan. Contact DeEtta if you can use this resource in your creative planning and selective application.



George Thompson, D.S.

One of our colleagues confessed, “George, I would have brought far more laity if I had known that the subject was something more than *stewardship*.” While I respect the wisdom and effectiveness of my pastoral friend, I think that his statement reveals our problem as United Methodists. Stewardship has almost nothing to do with fund-raising. Callahan’s “twelve keys for an effective church” places the money issue as a last priority. **If we have a climate in our churches that is Christ-centered, mission-driven, and biblically-based; there will always be abundant funding for the bold, corporate vision of the people. Money truly follows mission. You can take that to the bank!** It happens every time.

At least two great things occur during the month of March that greatly impact the Charlotte District—the Seminar and the appointive process. The March madness of college basketball is great fun except for those of us who take the game too seriously. So far I have refrained from throwing a hostile elbow at any graduate of that school from Chapel Hill. But few of us appreciate the madness of this season for appointing pastors. As your district superintendent, I consider this role to be my most important task. Each appointment is important to me. I realize that all of us do our best work when our spiritual gifts are properly matched with the needs and mission of a given church. No alignment is perfect because none of our churches is perfect. Neither are we who are appointed to churches. Sometimes we are given problematic congregations, not because we deserve to be treated harshly, but because we have demonstrated to our peers the gift of healing. In the United Methodist Church, every church receives a pastor and every pastor a church. Even toxic churches receive a shepherd.

I am at least one district superintendent who truly believes that the very best pastors in our Conference may never serve a large, prestigious church. They are the women and men who effectively love the unlovable and unlovely, preach comfort to the bereaved and proclaim unpopular truth to the comfortable.

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Spring Seminar Assessment (continued)

I once wrote a bishop and asked how the appointments would be done if we applied the theology of Jesus' parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16. The bishop wisely did not answer my inquiry. Now that I sit at the table where such decisions are made I take comfort in this parable because Jesus hereby looks upon Kingdom labor not from the perspective of fairness but from the perspective of grace. In British Methodism all pastors are paid the same wage, as in this perplexing parable. Is the British system unfair to the hardworking, productive Wesleyan preacher in an obscure village an afternoon's journey from Liverpool? Or is our system of an ecclesiastical food-chain more representative of a just environment? Both questions miss the point. The essential issue for Jesus is the attitude of the laborer.

At the risk of sounding Churchillian, I hereby assert that the United Methodist appointive process is the worst ecclesiastical system in Christendom, except for all the rest.

This is because every appointment in our system is an act of grace by which we receive the privilege of laboring in God's vineyard.

Pray for your cabinet this week in the spirit of ...

Grace and peace,

George

George Thompson
Charlotte District Superintendent

Around the Charlotte District



Reverend Ted Troutman greeting worshipers after service at Blair Road in March.



Worshippers at Victory Native American UMC following a Lent service.



March 18, 2007 worshipers at Hill's Chapel UMC.



Welcome address by Jean Hunter, UMW President at St. Andrew's UMC, host church for UMW Prayer Breakfast on March 17, 2007.



New Covenant UMC in the springtime.

Disaster Response Ministries

On March 1st storms ravaged parts of the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Alabama and Georgia were hit hard in several cities with resulting death and injury. Fortunately only minor damage has been reported within the WNC Conference – mostly accidents due to the storms and minor flooding of streams and creeks.

Under our new Early Response System with UMCOR and the Jurisdictions, I will be in contact with the SEJ-UMVIM to let them know we will make Early Response Teams available, if needed. There are closer Early Response Teams to be called, thus I doubt we will be called – but we will offer our assistance.

In addition, we had earlier set up a “Storms 2007” account in our Disaster Response books. We urge churches and individuals to please give to this account – please designate the March 1 storm. If preferred, churches may give to “UMCOR” – Domestic Disasters. Again, designate the storm for proper designation. All funds may be given through the WNCC Treasurer, P.O. Box 18005, Charlotte, NC 28218.”

Michael W. Collins, Ministries' Team Coordinator, Coordinator of Mission/Outreach, Director of Volunteer Response Ministries, Coordinator of Disaster Response Ministries

Western North Carolina Conference, UMC

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Child Care Consultant

We are pleased to announce that child care expert Margaret Anne Biddle is offering her consulting services to any rural church starting a child care program or wanting to improve an existing program. She can be reached at either 919.971.1034 or 919.878.5428. The services of Margaret Anne Biddle are provided through a grant to the North Carolina Conference from The Duke Endowment.

UMAR

Remember...UMAR Sunday is June 17th - make your plans now...Bulletin Inserts will be available soon...

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