

# Charlotte District E-Connections

Electronic Newsletter  
Charlotte District  
of The  
United Methodist Church  
Western NC Conference

October 20, 2010

Volume 35, Issue 9

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## Return to Connectional Strength



D.S. George Thompson

Every church wants to be viable, mission-driven, and radiant with the presence of the living God. The size of the membership does not define the health of a congregation. Even the Charlotte District's smallest member church (Big Spring UMC) reported at Charge Conference palpable expressions of the divine presence at ESL classes, the solemnity of sacred worship, and the transformation of lives within the experience of a new member family. In an eloquent presentation at Purcell UMC (a congregation with an average of less than 60 per Sunday in worship), a grateful member compared the aging membership to the cold miners of Brittain who maintained the industrial capacity of a warring nation from 1939-1945 and, at the insistence of Prime Minister Winston Churchill,

marched with their soot-covered faces in the victory parades with triumphant soldiers at war's end. "We have the persistence of those miners in faithfulness to the God we love," she reported.

Yes, small congregations with aging membership can remain faithful to Kingdom values and relevant to their social context. They can practice radical hospitality and be consistent in their witness to the neighborhood and beyond. My concern as your district superintendent is not the value and spiritual importance of the small church, but the sustainability of these precious congregations.

I am currently reading John Wigger's engaging biography, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists*. Soon after the Christmas Conference of 1784 and the launching of Methodism as new denomination in a country that still had not ratified its Constitution, Bishop Asbury established a congregation in Mecklenburg County at Harrison. He and his circuit riders rapidly consecrated brush arbor gathering places and log cabin churches throughout each of the colonies. Very soon the Methodist Church was the fastest growing religious movement in the emerging United States.

Many of the early Methodists in the Charlotte region were actually (continued on p. 2)

## Now is the Time to Enroll for 2011 *Interpreter* Subscription

*Interpreter* is a publication for lay and clergy leaders in local United Methodist churches across the United States. Articles in the magazine connect you to:

- God;
- Other United Methodist leaders;
- Ideas and Resources to use in your Ministry.

Published six times each year

by United Methodist Communications, each issue includes a cover package of features providing ideas and resources addressing an area of interest or concern to local churches.

You can subscribe as an individual or purchase additional subscriptions for leaders and future leaders in your congregation. Each congregation is eligible to receive 10 complimentary subscriptions

for leaders (five print, five digital). Online enrollment for 2011 is available at [www.umcom.org/subscriptions](http://www.umcom.org/subscriptions). Contact customer service (1-888-346-3862) for assistance.



## Return to Connectional Strength *(continued from cover)*

despised by the surrounding culture, for we were a denomination of the poor. The Methodist movement began as an aggregation of social misfits who had little social prestige or status. We were far too emotional in expressions of religious piety and too overtly evangelical. But we grew with the westward swell of an emerging American frontier. We were constantly on the move and provided advocacy to the powerless. We fearlessly stood for unpopular social causes like humanitarian labor laws, the end of child labor, abstinence from alcoholic beverages, and political policies that make for peace.

During the second half of the Twentieth Century Methodism evolved into something less exuberant. We became much more affluent. Instead of activism through witness and life-style, we just passed meaningless resolutions at annual gatherings. We gradually became less connectional and more congregational. We succumbed to the disease of "stationitis," breaking the bonds of cooperative ministries and charge alignments centered on a shared mission. We substituted cooperation with a destructive spirit of competition.

This tendency toward independent, small congregations will not be sustainable in the Twenty-first Century. Not because God does not bless small congregations; to the contrary: some of our most faithful churches are small membership congregations. But God will not bless a congregation that is devoid of a Christ-centered mission. Instead of serving needs outside the church, some of our congregations have but one mission—survival! But, when all the energy of a church is consumed by an effort to maintain a piece of real estate and to pay an elder's salary, that congregation has forfeited its authentic mission.

This year the Cabinet articulated six essential criteria for a station church with a full-time pastor:

1. A full-time station church must pay at least the minimum salary established by the WNC Conference.
2. The church must average a minimum of 125 in worship per Sunday.
3. Each station church is expected to pay 100% of all its district and Conference apportionments.
4. Travel reimbursement is to be assured the pastor for all church-related business.
5. An annual stewardship campaign and a comprehensive budget should be in place.
6. The District Superintendent shall make a full annual assessment of these guidelines and negotiate realignment if necessary to create a stronger mission.

In 2009 twenty-four of our Charlotte District churches reported fewer than 125 persons in worship on an average Sunday. Only

six of these are linked in a two-point charge. Fourteen of the remaining eighteen are supplied by a full-time elder.

Most of these are loving, faithful congregations; but they struggle to meet basic financial requirements and engage in vibrant outreach ministries. They want to participate in connectional ministries, but are consumed by the cost of the staff salaries and maintenance of an aging facility. These are served by conscientious, mission-minded clergy who have prepared well for meaningful full-time service. But many of these servant leaders are becoming disillusioned and fatigued by obstacles to growth and quality of performance.

Methodism grew as a connectional church. We shall become strong once again through new, creative expressions of connectionalism. Through the efforts of the annual spring seminar and Congregational Development workshops, we have explored the following options:

1. Cooperative Parish or Shared Mission Parish (Jerry Chapman, 2010)
2. Empowering small churches and multi-point parishes (Doug Anderson, 2004 & 2005)
3. Multi-site parish (Charles Kyker)
4. Large, mission-centered churches adopting a smaller congregation through a partnership or covenant (Myers Park and South Tryon Community Mission)
5. An elder requesting location and a less-than-full-time-salary in order to assist a small, struggling congregation (Laurie Knoespel at Zoar).

The definition of insanity is the act of doing the same thing and expecting a different result. Change is difficult and painful. But we shall need to change in order to experience the joy of growth and the return to connectional vitality. Change always goes down better when it is requested and not imposed. So, what connectional activity would likely enhance the mission of your church? How can our larger churches reach out with connectional hospitality in order to foster shared ministries with a small, spiritually healthy congregation?

I welcome your candid, thoughtful feedback; so respond with specific proposals.

Grace and peace,

*George*

George Thompson  
Charlotte District Superintendent

## Belmont Churches Team Up to Host Families



*The children enjoy a spaghetti meal prepared by South Point's young adults and youth.*

South Point United Methodist Youth Group and Young Adult Families recently pooled their resources to feed and spend the evening with three homeless women and their children. Four times a year, South Point teams up with other churches in Belmont to house and feed four or five homeless families who are enrolled in the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) of Gastonia.

IHN helps homeless families get settled back into stable living by helping with job training and placement, childcare, counseling, and temporary housing. The training and counseling go on in an office in downtown Gastonia. The temporary housing is provided by host churches all throughout the county.

The churches in Belmont have teamed up to host families four weeks out of the year. While not every church involved is big enough to provide facilities for housing, all the member churches send volunteers each day of the assigned week to help with setting up, daytime and nighttime hosting, serving meals, and transportation needs.

On a recent Sunday evening in September, South Point's particular assignment was to feed and "entertain" our homeless guests at Park Street UMC. Our young adults and youth delivered and served a simple meal of spaghetti and salad, bread, grapes and dessert. Though we began the evening as strangers, the children helped us all interact pretty quickly. The best part of the meal was watching the young children try to get the noodles into their mouths! Soon we were all laughing and carrying on like one big family.

Following dinner, we herded everyone's children outdoors to the playground. The youth offered to entertain the children while the guests finished moving their things into their rooms and the young adults cleaned up the kitchen. Eventually, we all ended up on the playground outside, sharing stories and laughing at the antics of the children and youth.

We are now in our second year of working with IHN and the churches of Belmont to feed and house the homeless. Joining together with other churches has turned out to be a great way for our small church to participate in a big mission.



*A youth bonds with one of the children.*

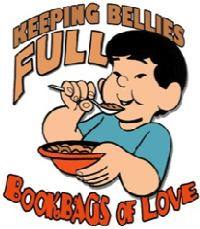


*South Point youth provide fun activities for the children guests.*

## BookBags of Love

"Thank you for helping to make a real difference in the lives of children and by not only filling their stomachs but also their hearts."

*Kelly, a teacher at Lebanon Road Elementary*



*Bookbags of Love* began with a church-wide challenge to our Sunday school classes to reach out to our community. Since the fall of 2009 when we began distributing food to children in one of our local schools, the entire church and many other groups in our community have embraced the project. We began by identifying a local school that had a high percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch. We then began working with teachers at that school to identify children that were not getting enough food to eat over the weekend. *Bookbags of Love* at Blair Road UMC is delivering 35 bags of food to hungry children.

The impact from this program is unimaginable. Children that once had behavioral issues are now attentive, and thriving in their studies. Teachers have commented on how positive an impact the program has had on the school.

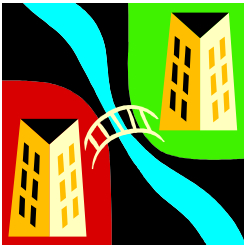
Since our beginning, we have assisted another local church with *Bookbags of Love* that will serve another area school. In addition, churches from around the southeast have called to get information on how we run our program and how they can get started. Our goal is to put food in the hands of hungry kids. But we can't do it alone, we need more churches to begin adopting schools and we need community involvement.

*Bookbags of Love* has become our passion at Blair Road UMC!

If you are interested in learning more, contact Barry Smith at 704-516-5665 or at [bookbagsoflove@gmail.com](mailto:bookbagsoflove@gmail.com)



*Healthy nutritional food items are provided.*



### Bridges Out of Poverty Part II: Building Relationships

Sundays, November 7th and 14th, 3 - 6 p.m.

*Seminar will be offered at St. Andrew's UMC, 1900 Emerywood Drive, Charlotte NC 28211*

**Bridges Out of Poverty** opens up the different world of people in poverty, revealing how the survival-based mentality of poverty impacts learning, work habits, and decision-making. Recent research has provided a deeper understanding of how people in poverty face challenges virtually unknown to those in middle class or wealth – challenges from both obvious and hidden sources. Participants learn the “hidden rules” of poverty, middle class, and wealth – and the assumptions which people in middle class bring to encounters with people in poverty. You discover how grief and trauma keep many people locked in poverty. And you will begin to explore practical yet compassionate strategies for engagement that can have positive impact on people's lives.

The November seminar is designed for those who have already taken "Class Matters". It will deepen the ability to apply the Bridges concepts to real-life situations and give more tools for deeper understanding and more effective relationship building. The seminar will be led by Rev. Paul Hanneman from Urban Ministries Center and Wanda Anderson from The Battered Women's Shelter.

Please sign up by emailing [pbryant@standrewsumc.com](mailto:pbryant@standrewsumc.com) or calling the church office at 704-553-1327.

## Vacation Bible School 2010 – Planting Seeds, Making A Charge Stronger



*Closing night in the sanctuary at Aldersgate.*

When the congregations of Grace and Aldersgate UMC were brought together as a single charge, the leadership began to plan for shared ministries and a unified mission. Thus, the two churches planned Vacation Bible School as a charge – but the churches did it a little differently. They did it at both locations on the charge – thus reaching out to the children in two communities.

It started in February 2010 when Aldersgate's VBS Task Force reported to their Administrative Council that it had decided to use Group's High Seas Expedition VBS curriculum for VBS in 2010. The Task Force pointed out that they had great success with Group in the previous two years; and, since there was no budget for Bible School, they could take advantage of a credit they had with Group to order the Starter Kit. Also the dates were set for August 1-3. They would plan to raise funds to "sponsor a child" during the months of June and July.

After a couple of months passed, the laity of Aldersgate got word from a couple of members at Grace UMC – the other church on the charge – that they would be interested in talking to Aldersgate about the possibility of having VBS together. The idea was interesting, but there were questions about how this would work. Did this mean that one of the church campuses would host Vacation Bible School? And which one? The members from Grace were contacted and various scenarios were discussed. Leaders from each church decided to try a truly cooperative approach. Members from both churches would agree to do the same VBS at both churches one week apart. We'd share the staff and the cost of materials and were, therefore, able to reach both church communities. The plan was then set and members of both churches agreed to participate at both locations. A total of about 25 staff members participated at both church campuses.

The planners provided for several "crew" meetings and made plans of how to organize the different stations at each church and the logistics of packing up a Vacation Bible School and moving it from one church to the next. Members of each congregation supported the united effort by collecting the needed materials for the different stations. The plan was coming together; and, as the time for the first VBS drew near, each church moved into publicity mode.

During the week prior to the first VBS, Aldersgate received word from Harrison UMC that they had just completed the same VBS that Aldersgate/Grace was about to undertake. Harrison had constructed a huge ship to use on the main stage and offered it to Aldersgate/Grace. Their gift was enthusiastically accepted.

The ship made its way to Aldersgate and grateful volunteers put it together to use during the opening and closing each night. It was an impressive sight. The ship, complete with a mast and sails, filled the entire front of the Aldersgate sanctuary. Everyone was most appreciative of the time and talent that the Harrison UMC congregation put into it.

On August 1 the churches began High Seas Expedition at Aldersgate. The attendance was lower than the planners had expected, based on previous years, but the kids in attendance sounded like 36 even if they were half that in number and they had a great time. The following weekend, adult workers packed up and moved everything, including the ship, to Grace to do it all again on August 8-10. Volunteers set up the ship in Grace's fellowship hall, since that would be the center of activities. At Grace, as well, the attendance was less than expected, but the kids that attended were an energetic group, and the staff had a great time! Since this was the second time around, everyone was more relaxed!

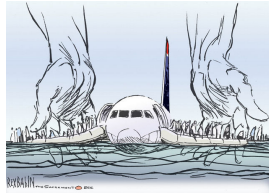
We learned to work together! We made some new friends. We had a great time working together and possibly opened the door to doing more things together in the future. We certainly planted seeds in each community – something you'd expect to do with any successful VBS. But we strengthened the ties between the two churches as well. Our shared mission (a successful VBS) was truly a return to our connectional strength as United Methodists.

*By Rick Lakey, Aldersgate UMC and Irma Ellwanger, Grace UMC*



*Closing night in the Fellowship Hall at Grace, one week later.*

## District Prayer and Praise Service



**Monday, October 25th**

**7:30 pm**

**Sharon United Methodist Church  
4411 Sharon Rd., Charlotte, NC 28211**

Dave Sanderson, survivor of the "landing on the Hudson" will be our guest speaker. Admission is free! This service is sponsored by the Charlotte District Board of Laity. Join us at Sharon UMC. Musical entertainment will be provided by Myers Park Women's Choir.

## The W.I.S.E. "Program"

"Wonderfully In Search of Excellence"

**Workshop at University City UMC,  
Charlotte  
November 4th and November 5th**

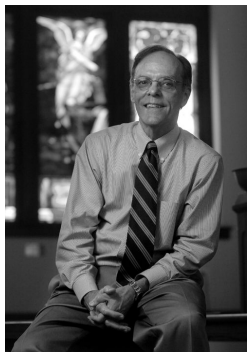
Churches with Weekday Childcare

The Western North Carolina Conference Standing Committee on Children and Weekday Child Care has created a check list for use by churches in Child Care Ministries.

The check list is in response to a need expressed by many churches for challenge, opportunity, and growth in their ministries with children. The W.I.S.E. check list may be used by churches and programs of any size as a tool for self-evaluation of your church's ministry with children.

Registration Deadline: October 30th  
Learn more at

[www.wnccumc.org/cdr/weekdaychildcare.htm](http://www.wnccumc.org/cdr/weekdaychildcare.htm)  
Contact Person: Barbara Jackson  
704-846-2708



## "Renewing God's Vision and Mission For Your Church"

This marvelous experience will be led by Dr. Jim Harnish, Senior Pastor, Hyde Park UMC in Tampa, Florida.

**Nov. 12, 7:00 - 9:00 pm and Nov. 13, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Sanctuary of St. Stephen UMC, 6800 Sardis Road, Charlotte NC

\$10.00 per person includes both sessions, refreshments and materials. Dr. Harnish's books, including *You Only Have To Die*, will be for sale. This event is open to pastors and church leaders from all denominations and communions. Hosted by St. Stephen UMC in partnership with the Charlotte District Academy for Christian Discipleship.

No reservation necessary. Make checks payable to "St. Stephen UMC."  
Child care available upon request - call church in advance to inquire.  
St. Stephen UMC, 704-364-1824

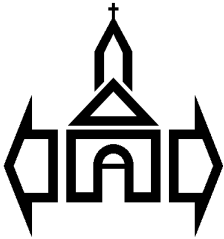


## 2010 WNCNC Journal Available Online

The 2010 Western NC Conference Journal is now online and ready for download. It includes the annual statistical report and the proceedings of the Special Session held in August.

Printed copies will be distributed to those who ordered them as soon as printing is completed.

Visit: <http://www.wnccumc.org/pub/2010Journal.htm>



Charlotte District  
Mission Society

**TO:** Charlotte District Pastors  
District Mission Society Members  
Mission/Outreach Chairpersons  
Lay Leaders

**FROM:** Charlotte District DMS Executive Committee

We are excited about the location of the fall 2010 Charlotte District Mission Society Banquet/Meeting on Thursday, November 18th, 6:30 p.m.; for we shall assemble at the new location of our newest congregation—Sanctuary UMC. The church is celebrating its third anniversary. Its attendance outgrew the South Tryon location and has begun to utilize all available space at its new address—113101 Granite Street, Charlotte 28273, just barely off the intersection of I-77 and Westinghouse Boulevard.

We encourage all pastors to attend, along with a DMS representational team of laity. Fourteen proposals for 2011 grants have been recommended by the Charlotte DMS Committee, and those attending the banquet will be asked to authorize these expenditures for the coming year.

Rev. Percival Reeves will provide an update regarding the growth, outreach, and programs of Sanctuary UMC. Inspirational messages to the church are broadcast by stations Praise 100.9 each Sunday, 7:30 a.m.—8:00 a.m. All Sanctuary members are encouraged to participate in “get connected” conversations via the church’s *Facebook* page. Currently the congregation is engaged in a Sermon and Word series entitled “*Stability 2010: Stability in an Unstable World.*” This fall the church sponsors both a women’s and men’s retreat. Approximately 350 persons attend the 9 a.m. Sunday worship as they are seated at round tables and participate in lively singing. Sanctuary musicians will inspire all who attend the November 18th banquet.

Please use the form below to make your reservations for dinner. The cost is \$9.75 per person. Checks should be made payable to Charlotte District UM Fund. **All reservations must be made in advance to ensure adequate catering and seating arrangements.** Please mail or fax your reservation by November 10th and drop your check in the mail. Hope to see you there.

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**Reservation Deadline: November 10, 2010**  
**2010 DMS Annual Meeting/Banquet Reservations**

Please make \_\_\_ reservation(s) at \$9.75 each. Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check# \_\_\_\_\_  
(Make check payable to Charlotte District UM Fund)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Church: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail to Charlotte District UM Office, 4108 Park Road, Suite 101, Charlotte, NC 28209**

Tel: 704-525-3395

Fax: 704-525-4238

## Travel with Bishop Larry Goodpaster to The Holy Land



You are invited to join Bishop Larry Goodpaster and the Western North Carolina Conference for 10 days of biblical discovery in the Holy Land in February of 2011. This journey of a lifetime begins on February 1, 2011 with your choice of departures from Charlotte, Greensboro, Asheville or Atlanta. Prices begin at \$2,198 (plus taxes, tips, etc.). This biblical journey includes: roundtrip airfare; deluxe motorcoaches; guided sightseeing; entrance fees to sites visited; 1<sup>st</sup> class hotels; buffet breakfast and dinner daily; online Bible study guide; lecture series. Brochures with complete details are available from each district office or from Dr. Thomas R. Sigmon, project coordinator (704.362.2398 or [trsigmon@carolina.rr.com](mailto:trsigmon@carolina.rr.com)). The brochure may also be viewed online at [www.eo.travelwithus.com](http://www.eo.travelwithus.com). Christian travel is an excellent way to bring new excitement to the ministry of both laity and clergy through first-hand discovery of those factors that have shaped both our faith history and our Christian connections. It also provides a unique opportunity for church members to be representatives of Christ in a foreign land.

Clergy or church leaders who are interested in earning credits toward their travel should also contact Dr. Sigmon for details. Educational Opportunities Tours, "changing the church, the ministry and individual lives through Christian travel since 1974," is the promoter of this travel ministry. Come, go with us and experience Biblical renewal through the sites and stories that shaped our faith. For many this will become more than a journey. It will be a pilgrimage.

## Mandatory Clergy Ethics Seminar Dates - Register Now!

The dates and general locations have been set for the upcoming Clergy Ethics Seminars. Participation in one of these seminars is mandatory for all clergy under appointment in WNCC, retired elders and deacons, diaconal ministers and clergy serving in extension ministry/ABLC in WNCC, but are members of other conferences. Attendance will be recorded. There will be times of worship, and training and conversation around issues related primarily to clergy sexual misconduct and the use of technology. Clergy serving outside the bounds of the annual conference are expected to participate in an event but it may be within the conference where they are serving. Documentation of participation within the 2010-2011 conference year is necessary. Retired clergy may be granted an exception only due to significant inability to participate. The exceptions will be granted by the clergyperson's district superintendent. More information will be forthcoming. These events are being supported by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the WNCC Cabinet. The cost is \$7 and lunch is included. All registrations must be received at least 10 days prior to seminar date. The \$7 fee will be collected upon arrival at the seminar.

**You must register by contacting Sandy Hargett in the Conference office at [shargett@wnccumc.org](mailto:shargett@wnccumc.org) or 704-535-2260, ext. 131.**

Mark your calendars (10 am—3 pm):

- Jan. 25, 2011, Mooresville
- Feb. 17, 2011, Charlotte
- Feb. 26, 2011, Hickory
- March 10, 2011, Greensboro

### Election of Laity Members for 2011 Annual Conference



As you prepare for your Fall Charge Conference, please remember the care which should be given to the election of laity who will serve as members of the 2011 Annual Conference (paragraph 601.4, 2008 Book of Discipline). Churches are entitled to one laity member for each clergy appointed to that church. Please be sure these names are *included in the online entry of your Local Church Leadership Contact List*.

### District-at-Large Members to 2011 Annual Conference



Nominations for District-At-Large Members to Annual Conference 2011 are due on November 2, 2010. Please submit a letter which includes the nominee's name, address, phone number and a brief paragraph as to why the person's should be elected. Direct letters to Attn: District Superintendent.

## Charlotte District

Western NC Conference  
4108 Park Road, Suite 101  
Charlotte, NC 28290-2259  
www.chardist.org

Phone: 704-525-3395  
Fax: 704-525-4238  
Email: charlottedistofc@wnccumc.org

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

*Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.*

*John Wesley (1703-1791)*

## Calendar

### OCTOBER 2010

- 25 District Prayer/Praise Service, Sharon UMC, Pg. 6
- 31 CROP Walk, Charlotte

### NOVEMBER 2010

- 7 UM Women Local Officers Training, Belmont: Ebenezer, 2 p.m.
- 12-13 District Clergy Educational Seminar, St. Stephen UMC
- 15-17 Elder's Retreat/Cabinet
- 18 District Mission Society Banquet, Sanctuary UMC, 6:30 pm
- 25-26 Dist. Office Closed/Thanksgiving Observance
- 28 UM Student Day:  
<http://wnccumc.org/stw/gcsundays.htm>

### DECEMBER 2010

- 2 District Clergy Christmas Gathering, Providence UMC, 6:30 pm

### JANUARY 2011

- 9 District Training for Local Church Lay Leaders, 2:30 pm, First Belmont
- 17 District Office Closed, ML King Observance

### FEBRUARY 2011

- 7, 14, 21, 28 District Lay Speaker's Training, 6:30-9 pm, Location TBA
- 12 District Mission Study, Cokesbury UMC, 10 am-2 pm
- 19 District Leadership Conference (DLC), Myers Park UMC