

# Report of the Lay Delegates to the Thirty-sixth Session of the 2007 South Carolina Annual Conference Sunday, June 3 – Thursday, June 7, 2007 Florence Civic Center

This year the Annual Conference was at the Civic Center in Florence, SC. This was a change from previous years where it had been held in one of the Methodist Colleges in the SC conference. The conference will be held in Florence again next year from June 1 – June 4. Overall attendees seemed to be pleased with this venue because it offered a more spacious facility with excellent capabilities and was handicap accessible. However facility rental, meals & lodging were more costly than in the college venue.

The theme of the conference was “**To Serve the Present Age**”. There were 900 laity, 838 clergy and 75 visitors registered for the conference.

## Highlights of the conference:

- **Bible studies** by Dr Carl Evans on Luke 4, 6, 7 & 8 challenging us to understand that Luke put things in the context of the times and therefore his accounts differ from that of Mathew & Mark who wrote over 50 years prior to him.
- **Communion services** punctuated our meeting each morning
- **Afternoon worship services** tested our Christian resolve – “Worth the Feast” (Rev. Eugene L. Curry), “When we Believe” (Rev. Ken Timmerman), “Larry – A Homeless Man” (Rev. Tiffany Knowlin) and “A Pattern Laid Down” (Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor).
- **Evening services** anchored our day with “Healing Hearts in a Broken World” – narrated by John Wesley (actor), “Ordination & Commissioning”, “Great Day of Service”, “Responding with Hope” and the “Sending Forth & Fixing of Appointments” were held on consecutive evenings.
- The **Laity luncheon** with speaker Ms. Lyn Powell preached on the “Role of Laity in the Church” – a dynamic lay speaker who will address the United Methodist Church’s General Conference next year challenged us to “Reach out to Everybody” and encourage “One Person One Ministry” in the local church.
- The “**Great Day of Sharing**” where we - launched ourselves into the community by helping others, distributing food to the needy, sending letters to our servicemen and many other community projects.
- The **election of general and jurisdictional representatives**, held every four years, was one of the reasons the conference was planned for five days vs. four this year. There were over 60 lay and a comparable number of clergy candidates for the 20 delegates and 5 alternates who were to be elected from each group. Election required a candidate receive a minimum of one half the total votes cast which required many voting sessions over the five days.
- Collections were taken for three very important projects that can save lives- **African University Water Project in Zimbabwe (\$1,000)** where its estimated that 50% of diseases can be eliminated by providing clean water, **Nothing But Nets (\$29,000)** where malaria can virtually be eliminated in Africa by providing

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mosquito nets at the cost of \$10 per net and the **Global HIV/AIDS Fund (\$21,300)**.

- **Music** provided by the Clergy Choir, Wesley Chancel Choir from Myrtle Beach, 100 voice Horry County United Methodist Consortium Choir with soloists and orchestra and the praise band from Christ UMC, Myrtle Beach.

## Report Highlights:

- **Council On Finance & Administration** – the overall recommended budget for 2008 is \$16, 995,194 a 2.8% increase over last year.
- The loan for Renovations to the **United Methodist Conference Center** has not been paid off. Individual churches were asked to contribute over a five year period beginning in 2002. The campaign will continue into 2008 since the loan is still outstanding. Those churches who have not yet contributed will be notified on their monthly apportionment statement, with the line item “asking” added to the bottom.
- The South Carolina Conference is the only conference using **Congregational Specialists** six of which have been deployed since Oct. 2, 2006. They have received training in **Natural Church Development** and coaching. We are blessed to have these persons and should take full advantage of this resource.
- The administrative assistant for **Congregational Development** has in a shared mission with **Connectional Ministries** processed 131 **Natural Church Development** surveys from churches across the conference. This summer 24 persons are to be certified coaches through Coachnet. These 24 will then offer Coachnet certification for others. Natural Church Development encourages “All by Itself Growth” that occurs in healthy churches.
- It was resolved that the UMCSC conference would **start 10 new churches** by 2010
- The “**Methodist Oaks Inc.**” is re-branding itself using the name “**The Oakes, a United Methodist Community**” which better reflects its mission. The Oakes is no longer just a continuing care retirement community but serves the whole area with faith based programs as well as a wellness center, campus life center, special needs programs, nature trails open to schools and special groups and the residents of the community. Over 50% of its residents are not Methodists but come from a Christian background.
- Presentations were made by the four **Methodist colleges** in SC – Claflin University, Wofford College, Spartanburg Methodist College and Columbia College.
- The **Lait Convocation** this year will be held at Lake Junaluska, NC July 13-15 - with its focus on “The Family of Christ”. It is “A Weekend of Personal Spiritual Growth for Local Church Leaders and Practical Ideas for Your Church”. A task group is supporting Natural Church Development, with special emphasis on the

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areas of “**Passionate Spirituality**” and is working on a 5-day “**Academy for Spiritual Formation**” in SC for 2008.

- The **Board of Pension & Health Benefits** reported that after running comparisons there would be no change in the insurance plan “Health Flex” for 2008. It also indicated that its program of health incentives was working well. Annuity payments to retired ministers were fixed at \$614 per service year. Cokesbury presented a check to the Board of Pensions for \$50,603.
- **The Committee on Congregational Development** reported that two new church planters have been assigned this year, one to Clemson Road in the Columbia District and one in Bluffton. The Bluffton planter is **Lloyd Earl White** and the Church is named “**Grace Point** (I spoke to Lloyd briefly and he and his family have already moved into the area). Compensation for pastors for new church starts is split between Equitable Compensation and New Church Starts in the budget.
- The **United Methodist Men** are convening at Lake Junaleska on Aug 10, 11 & 12. Registration of \$40 is due by June 10<sup>th</sup> after which the fee will go up.

## General Impressions:

- An **intense** five day event which interwove bible study, worship, service and business into a meaningful adventure in faith.
- A chance to meet other Methodists and to see what they are doing and what the Methodist Church in SC does to provide support to the churches in its charge, the community and to world hunger and despair.
- A great opportunity is before us to **reach out** now to our community and spread the “**Good News**”. We need to look at our Hispanic population as well as all minority and un-churched in our community. The area’s explosive growth gives us the opportunity of a lifetime. People need to be invited. Our church needs to go through the Natural Church Development process as soon as possible.
- Our Church needs to consider signing-on to the **NCD** process as soon as possible.
- Especially impressed by the **Great Day of Service** where we wore our yellow shirts out in the community and were noticed everywhere.
- If each of us would take on just one project, no matter how small, think of how the word would spread and the burden would be lifted from the few to do the tasks of many.