

B. CONFERENCE MINISTRIES ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Conference Ministries Advisory Council (CMAC) has been focused on the conference vision—"Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform the World"—for the past two years. The conference's new "funding paradigm" has resulted in less funding for connectional ministries, but this focus has allowed us to invest remaining Ministries First and benevolence funds under our stewardship in a strategic manner. We are blessed with outstanding staff leadership in connectional ministries; and—working with our director, James T. Trollinger; Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey; and the Conference Staff Relations Committee—we have downsized connectional ministries staff to be more efficient and effective in the ministries for which we are accountable. We are proud of our restructured and streamlined team and believe they are change agents, leading our conference's ministries in a new and more focused direction. We have had a record reduction in force of 4.5 positions and are considering what further changes in direction the Conference Reorganization Task Force, on which the CMAC chairman serves, may recommend for our entire conference structure.

In 2007, CMAC set a record, perhaps, for the "largest conference call" in conference history, when our entire membership convened by telephone for about an hour to consider requests for both benevolence fund allocations for 2007 and our budget for 2008. This had been preceded by a similar conference call in which the executive committee and staff spent a like amount of time in developing recommendations to the full body. We saved your travel dollars and our time; yet, we carried out our responsibilities effectively, we believe. We have been pleased that many of our constituent boards and agencies are doing similarly.

In addition to our priorities for funding being based on the conference vision, we have also focused funds on ministries that are truly connectional. That is, they are invested in programs and initiatives that extend beyond the reach of a local congregation or even a district, empowering laity and clergy to be the hands of Christ on your behalf. Good examples are the many teams being sent to help rebuild in the Gulf region that are assisted by our Disaster Response Center; Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries to those in prison; and Project AGAPE, providing medical assistance in Armenia.

As Jim Trollinger assumes a new role as assistant to the bishop, we welcome a new leader for connectional ministries, Arnetta E. Beverly, and, with her, will address the future that God has in store for us as we connect in ministry across the approximately 1,100 churches of the Western North Carolina Conference.

I am honored to serve you as CMAC chair and to represent CMAC on both the Conference Staff Relations Committee and the Conference Reorganization Task Force. Both have had busy years and are engaged in transformational change to make us more effective in our conference tasks of ensuring vital congregations and helping those congregations to do cooperatively what they cannot do alone.

Robert E. Shepherd, *Chairperson*

1. COMMITTEES AND TASK GROUPS OF THE COUNCIL

a. CAMPING AND RETREAT MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

The camps of the Western North Carolina Conference are a vital spiritual resource for the churches and members of our conference. Recently, studies have revealed that, without time apart, places to retreat, and places for spiritual renewal, our church and clergy could face burnout, lack of enthusiasm, and a general malice toward success-driven ministry. Our committee has taken time to meet at our local camps. In the fall, we met at Mt. Shepherd to work on how our camps were fulfilling the bishop's seven goals. After much discussion and work, our camp directors will be shaping and directing all programs to address the aims of the bishop and conference. We all met in the winter of 2007 at Camp Carolwood to seek ways on how our camps might receive funds through specific grants. There was a great presentation by Kevin Long, the director of Camp Carolwood, on how to prepare for and write grants. Along with writing grants, the committee discussed and agreed on accepting the seven "foundations" for our United Methodist camps:

1. Provide An Intentional Place Apart.
2. Extend Genuine Christian Hospitality and Community.
3. Nurture Christian Faith and Discipleship.
4. Develop Christian Spiritual Leaders.
5. Teach Creation Care and Appreciation.
6. Collaborate with United Methodist Churches and Agencies.
7. Equip Guests to Do Love and Service.

As a way of living in faithfulness to Christ and his call to invest our energies, and then rest and retreat together for fellowship, friendship, and common understanding, our camps and retreat ministries are working hard to be what God has created them to be. In other words, our camps are looking at themselves and asking the question, "How can we live and work in faithfulness to Christ?" Out of this inner searching, each of our seven camps has developed a special "flavor," or niche, to define who and what they do. Our committee is energized with the possibility of what God will do in the coming year.

Our seven camps and retreat centers are Mt. Shepherd, McCall, Elk Shoals, Loy White, Carolwood, Guilrock, and Tekoa. Each of them represents the efforts and devotion of countless campers, who over the years have been blessed, refreshed, and physically and spiritually strengthened. Our committee does not believe that any of our camps should be cast off in order to simply make our budgets look as if we are cutting unnecessary costs. We realize that all our conference ministries have suffered budget cuts and shortages in funds. Our camping and retreat ministries are truly a ministry which gives back more than it takes. It gives in location, beauty, quiet moments, morning coffee near a camp fire, the sound of running waters, clean and refreshing air, friendship, and the list goes on. You get the point: Camping and outdoor retreat ministries are a vital link in our spiritual development and future outreach as a church. Our committee calls all members of the Western North Carolina Con-

ference to look within, around, and above to see the great riches God has given in your camp ministries.

James G. Mackey, *Chairperson*

b. COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND MERCY MINISTRIES (CJAMM)

One of the greatest mission fields that the people called Methodists have today are to offenders, ex-offenders, and victims of crime. There are over 35,000 persons incarcerated in the prisons of the state of North Carolina. With over 100,000 persons on probation for crimes and over 2,500 parolees, there are over 125,000 offenders and ex-offenders. When you add to that total those who have been victims of crime, you have a number of persons that is larger than the average worship attendance of the entire Western North Carolina Conference on Sundays. This reality gives us greater opportunities than ever to go into the prisons in the footsteps of our fathers and mothers in faith, like John Wesley, and to fulfill the words of Jesus, who said, "I was in prison, and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:36).

The Committee on Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries (CJAMM), therefore, encourages clergy and laity in churches across our region to look for opportunities for ministry with offenders, ex-offenders, and victims of crime. We encourage you to look for ways to care for persons after their incarceration, to include ex-offenders in the fellowship of your local churches, and to support ministries that provide care for ex-offenders and parolees. We hope that you will also support ministries that seek to be mediation centers in restorative justice between offenders and victims. We ask you to support with your prayers, gifts, and involvement the following ministries, which are all conference Advance mission specials:

1. Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries and Rings of Fellowship, a ministry between the Western North Carolina and North Carolina conferences, which is now at work in over 70 adult and juvenile penal facilities across North Carolina.
2. Epiphany, an ecumenical Christian ministry to juveniles incarcerated in North Carolina.
3. Prison MATCH ("Mothers And Their Children"), an ecumenical effort at Women's Prison, in Raleigh, to nurture the relationship between children and their incarcerated mothers, to break the cycle of imprisonment.
4. Yokefellow Prison Ministry, a compassionate, listening ministry to inmates which is now in ministry in over 50 prisons across North Carolina.

We remind people of faith on the long-standing position of The United Methodist Church against the death penalty and encourage you to speak to our state leaders as they grapple with this issue in these days.

Finally, CJAMM has been privileged in the last year to partner with other conference agencies in plans for an event in early 2008 that will encourage new, developing ministries by churches to the poor and the marginalized. We encourage the clergy and laity of our annual conference to attend this event as plans are announced.

Randy L. Wall, *Chairperson*

c. COMMITTEE ON ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS

The Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns has attempted to be a good steward of the funds that we received. We began the year with a new grant application that covered the areas of ministries, and equipping laity and clergy in the ethnic congregations for ministries. A process was therefore presented that will gradually phase out our awarding grants to subsidize clergy salaries of ethnic pastors.

Because of cuts in our budget, we will be emphasizing and preparing congregations to participate in general-church emphases and initiatives. We hope that the ethnic congregations can experience growth, revitalization, and transformation through these emphases and initiatives.

It is also necessary that we look for other ways to provide funds for ethnic congregations. Our director, Lillie M. Jones, has made the resources available to train leadership from ethnic congregations in grant writing.

We are thankful for the leadership of Dr. Jones and her work with ethnic and justice ministries. Thank God for the gifts she possesses, and how she uses those gifts for the glory of God's kingdom in western North Carolina.

Samuel H. Moore, Jr., *Chairperson*

d. SPIRITUAL FORMATION TASK FORCE

The conference Spiritual Formation Task Force seeks to plant and nurture "deep roots of faith" in laity and clergy within and beyond our annual conference. Guided by our Wesleyan heritage, we teach and encourage the regular, lifelong practice of spiritual disciplines—by individuals and faith communities alike—as a means of grace, that we might grow into the full image of Jesus Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, wrought for the sake of the world.

Our members, drawn from across the annual conference, bring a diversity of experiences and passions, enabling us to offer ourselves, in turn, as a resource for covenant groups, prayer teams, congregations, districts, and conference-wide bodies. Each year, on Wednesday of annual conference week, we offer a "Day Apart" for laity and clergy, which brings well-known and respected scholars and practitioners to the Lake Junaluska area to talk about some aspect of the deeper faith journey. This year, our "expert" is Sister Dawn Annette Mills, O.S.B., a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Clyde, Missouri. A popular author and sought-after retreat leader and keynote speaker, who only takes limited time away from her faith community, Sister Dawn possesses a disarming humor and incisive intellect which help seekers find new and renewed intersections between scripture reading, silence, prayer, and imagination. Along with teaching at the Day Apart, she will also "bring the

message" to a larger gathering of laity, clergy, and guests at the Wednesday evening worship service in Stuart Auditorium, a service the task force plans and leads each year as a prelude to the executive session of clergy members.

In early May 2008, the task force, in partnership with *The Upper Room*[®], will sponsor The Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation™ at Caraway Conference Center, near Asheboro. This is the task force's third time offering this popular program, which draws participants from across the country. At the 2008 academy, our teachers will be Linda Douty (on the power of spiritual friendship to enrich our lives through "Spiritual Guidance") and Robert Morris (on the beginnings of our Christian spiritual heritage expressed in "Hebrew Spirituality").

For more information about (or to call upon the resources of) the task force, please contact: Patience S. Brumley: 704-596-2143(H), 704-596-2356(O), Patience.Brumley@att.net; John F. Blalock, Jr.: 704-279-6939(H), 704-279-3235(O), jblalock8@carolina.rr.com.

Patience S. Brumley, *Co-Chairperson*
John F. Blackcock, Jr., *Co-Chairperson*

2. PROGRAM MINISTRIES COMMISSIONS

a. COMMISSION ON NURTURE MINISTRIES

The Commission on Nurture Ministries continues to work closely with both clergy and lay members of the annual conference to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. As we continue through this quadrennium, the commission continues offering "soul tending models" (i.e. class meetings, workshops, personal days apart, exercise, book studies, topical studies, small-group spiritual direction, and individual spiritual direction). Yet, we are first modeling spiritual nurture by choosing and praying for our prayer partners within the commission. We have also spent some time adjusting to the new budget issues and a change in staffing. The ministry of Mary S. Robinson, as Resource Center coordinator, and Katie S. Fralic, as director of ministries with young people, are greatly appreciated. We welcome the new staff, Sonja S. Clough and Kimberly T. Ingram (interim), as we join in ministry together.

The devotional booklet for the annual sessions of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, called the *Conference Soul Tending Companion*, continues to go well. Amidst the important business of the conference, we would like to help clergy and laity participants reclaim time for prayer and prayerful discernment, so that the space between the participants and God becomes a little more intimate. The 2007 theme is on discernment, as we elect delegates for the 2008 General and Jurisdictional conferences.

May God add blessings as we live out God's Word!

Sarah E. H. McKinney, *Chairperson*

Children's Ministry Offerings

- Equipping local-church children's leaders in all areas of the conference vision.
- Providing a year of Rotation Sunday School for churches with few children, created around the conference vision.
- Consulting with local churches on all areas of child care; connecting to unity in Christ that values diversity and developing ministry with the poor and suffering.
- Ministering to Hispanic children and their families through Hispanic Hand-in-Hand; connecting to unity in Christ that values diversity and developing ministry with the poor and suffering.

Christian Education and Leadership Development

- Equipping Sunday Schools with ways to teach about the conference vision.
- Equipping African American and Hispanic churches in Christian education; connecting to unity in Christ that values diversity.
- Working on a new way to do singles ministry that intentionally relates them to Jesus Christ and giving a model for singles ministry.
- Consulting with local churches on revitalization; connecting to "Shepherd the Shepherds."
- Working on a model for local churches in older adult ministry, connecting to a unity in Christ that values diversity.
- Working with the Spiritual Formation Task Force to help our membership to go deeper and be more yielded to "possibilities with God."

Janet M. Hitch, *Coordinator of Nurture and Christian Education*

b. COMMISSION ON OUTREACH MINISTRIES

The Commission on Outreach Ministries began 2007 with a mission statement, objectives, and goals to lead us through 2008. Through this path, we will continue to resource and equip churches for mission and to provide opportunities for United Methodists throughout the Western North Carolina Conference to be actively involved in ministry throughout the world.

"Passionate Disciples in Mission"

Objectives:

1. To build up the awareness of missions within the Western North Carolina Conference, and;
2. To adequately support these missions connected to the Western North Carolina Conference.

Goals:

1. To have every church in the Western North Carolina Conference to support at least one General Advance Special or Conference Advance Special prior to the end of 2008;
2. To have at least 50% of the churches in the Western North Carolina Conference in a relationship (covenant or otherwise) with a missionary by the end of 2008;
3. To have at least one person from 100% of the churches in the Western North Carolina Conference as a volunteer participant (Christian Servant) in a ministry to the least, the last, and the lost by the end of 2008 (Habitat for Humanity, feeding campaigns, clothing, building team, medical team, etc.);
4. To have at least 25% of the churches in the Western North Carolina Conference involved in a United Methodist ministry to the least, the last, and the lost by the end of 2008 (i.e., Building Team, WCDC, Medical Team, etc.); and
5. To have 10% of the churches in the Western North Carolina Conference to be participants in the "Reach for the Stars" emphasis by the end of 2008.

In late 2006, the commission produced a PowerPoint presentation to help communicate mission possibilities to all persons. In November 2006, emphasis was placed on the "Project AGAPE" Sunday, with churches raising support for the project, now in its 14th year. We continue to stress the work of the Good Samaritan Clinic in the Dominican Republic, the trade school in the DR Congo, the Birzai Church in Lithuania, and the Cambodian Methodist Church, as it moves towards becoming a missionary conference in 2012.

The next Harvest of Blessing events have been set for 2008 in two-parts, east and west, in the hopes of equipping more persons for ministry. Vickie B. Sigmon has agreed to be the chairperson of this event. We will also continue to provide opportunities for persons to visit the General Board of Global Ministries from November 26 to December 1, 2007.

New activities for 2007 through 2008 include the "Nothing But Nets" campaign, inviting every church family in the Western North Carolina Conference to donate a net (\$10) by annual conference 2008. These retreated mosquito nets will help prevent the spread of malaria, one of the main killers in African countries. Another initiative includes the VBS Good Samaritan Kits, providing school and health supplies for children in the Dominican Republic.

We continue to strive to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the annual conference. We want to thank all the churches that have supported outreach ministry by their acceptance and payment of the FairShare program and benevolence portions of their askings. This enables us all to "follow Jesus, make disciples, and transform the world."

Mahalia L. McGee, *Chairperson*
Michael W. Collins, *Coordinator of Mission/Outreach*

Proposal: Advance Specials for 2007-2008**(Petition 2)****(Adopted on June 8, 2007)**

WNCC Initiative for Africa University

General Advance Specials

Salary support for missionaries related to the Western North Carolina Conference:

- Nicholas Gitobu Kithinju, Area Financial Executive for Southeast Asia, Cambodia (13077Z)
- Randy Hilderbrant, Director of Youth Ministries, The Jubilee Project, Sneedville, TN (982961)
- Dwaine Morgan, Mission Response Center, Mooresville, NC (982923)
- Poto Valentine Shutsha, Wings of Sharing Ministry, DR Congo (14163Z)
- Vickie B. Sigmon, Open Arms Ministry, Winston-Salem, NC (982916-8)

Salary support for mission personnel who have connections with the WNCC:

- Clara Biswas, Cambodia (13952-Z)
- Richard Bryant (15076)
- Gordon Granger, Bolivia (010835-Z5)
- Ardell Granger, Bolivia (010836-6)
- Esther Gitobu, Cambodia (13959)
- Fran Lynch, Alaska (982950-1)
- Charles Maddox (11891)
- Patti Maddox (11891)
- Glen Rowley, Senegal (009682-6AZ)
- Jacques Akasa Umembudi, DR Congo (14020)
- Herbert Zigbuo, Liberia (1010911-1BZ)
- Mary Zigbuo, Liberia (010721-4BZ)

Parish Partners Support:

- Alaska Missionary Conference (931027)
- Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (583634)
- Rio Grande Missionary Conference (531733)

Other Projects:

- Africa Church Growth and Development Fund (008233)
- Andean Rural Health Care (010158)
- Appalachian Regional Ministries (982041)
- Baltic Mission Center, Tallinn, Estonia (010923)
- Bethlehem Center, Charlotte (982149)
- Bethlehem Center, Winston-Salem (982149)
- Cambodia Initiative, General (00230A) (Be specific as to intended use)
- Diengenga Technical School, Lodja, DR Congo, Equipment (14389C)

- English-Speaking Congregation, Vienna, Austria (12001)
- Henderson Settlement, Kentucky (773365)
- Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, NC (Program) (731372)
- John Wesley Primary School, Pinetown, South Africa (011033)
- Mission in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (011510)
- Nothing But Nets
- Red Bird Mission, Inc., Kentucky (773365)
- Retreats, Religious Workers, Indonesia (014243)
- Society of St. Andrew (Potato Project) (801600)
- Stop Hunger Now (982795)
- Strengthening Reestablished UMC, Lithuania (012168)
- Thiu Rancho Project, Bolivia (012309)

UMCOR Projects:

- Bread for the World (982325)
- Children's Ministries, Africa (101225)
- CROP (CWS) (982380)
- Disaster Response, USA (901670)
- Disaster Response, International (982450)
- Empowerment and Solidarity with Middle East Refugees (601732)
- Grace Children's Hospital, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (418520)
- Heifer Project International (9852532)
- Sager-Brown Depot (901510)
- World Hunger/Poverty (982920)

Annual Conference Mission Specials

- Building Materials, Scholarships for Building Teams
- Carolina Cross Connection
- Children of Vietnam
- Conference Disaster Response Fund
- Disciple Bible Outreach Ministry
- Epiphany
- Faith Action International House
- Golden Cross-WNCC
- Kenya Partner Ministries (through WNCC Outreach Ministries)
- Materials, Scholarships, Supplies for Medical Ministries
- Open Arms Community
- Prison MATCH Program
- Project AGAPE
- Salkehatchie Summer Service-WNCC
- Scandinavian Caravan-WNCC
- Shalom Zones-Charlotte
- WMAR-WNC, Inc
- WNCC Deaf Ministry
- WNCC Good Samaritan Clinic, Dominican Republic
- WNCC Mission Response Center Support
- Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina

Other Opportunities in Mission

- Children's Fund for Christian Mission
- Bishop's Initiative on Children in Poverty
- Youth Service Fund
- Permanent Fund: Encounter Christ (025100)
- Heifer Project International Partnership with Project AGAPE (27-024-01)
- Special Sundays
 - Human Relations Day
 - Native American Awareness
 - World Communion
 - One Great Hour of Sharing
 - Peace with Justice
 - United Methodist Student Day
- WNCC Special Sundays
 - Disciple Bible Outreach (August 26, 2007)
 - Medical Mission Teams (November 4, 2007)
- Mission Congregations
 - Agua de Vida Mission, Charlotte
 - Cambodian Mission, Charlotte
 - Ghana Community Mission, Charlotte
 - Morningstar Mission, Charlotte
 - South Tryon Community Mission, Charlotte
 - Adonai Mission, Asheboro
 - Capilla de Cristo Mission, Lexington
 - Central Cristiano Mission, North Wilkesboro
 - Ward Street Mission, High Point

Congo (DRC) Coordinating Committee

During the 2006-2007 conference year, several accomplishments were made. Below are the primary accomplishments, more of which may be found in the brochure produced by the conference missions secretary:

- The donations given for the Congo over the past years were collected, packed into crates, and shipped to the DR Congo in a 40-ft. shipping container scheduled to arrive in the DR Congo on April 9, 2007.
- Advance Special numbers were approved by the General Board of Global Ministries to support mission projects of our conference, particularly the DTS Trade School and Lorena Kelly's Girl's School (Mama Tola's School), the Local Pastor's School, and the Alex Reed Schools in Diengenga.
- The Congolese established a democratic government through the cooperation of the United Nations, churches, and religious communities. Leading the work of the churches and religious communities is Bishop David Yemba, of the Central Congo Central Conference. The hopes for peace are finally being realized in the DR Congo.
- Through communications between Bishop David Yemba and Michael W. Collins, conference coordinator of mission/outreach, two building teams have been planned for the fall of 2007 to assist with the education and resource needs of the Central Congo Conference in Kinshasa, the capital city of the DR Congo.
- A Southeastern Jurisdiction Volunteers in Ministry assessment team will be going to DR Congo in September 2007.

Shirley L. Canty, *Chairperson*

Diengenga Trade School Steering Committee, USA

The members of the Diengenga Trade School Steering Committee would like to express their sincere appreciation and thanks to all who have been part of the almost 15-year project of filling a 40-ft. shipping container to send to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (The project was on hold for almost eight years because of the war in that area.)

We thank all of those who have supported this project through donating, collecting, picking up and delivering, sorting, building crates, packing, praying, etc. It has taken all of this effort and more to see the project to the finish, but it has happened. The container was shipped on February 14 (Love Day) from the Mission Response Center, in Terrell. The many people who will benefit from its contents will be very appreciative.

Many individuals and businesses have been generous in their contributions of medical equipment (operating tables, X-ray machine), as well as computers, seeds, sheets, tools, and other needed supplies. This container is a container of HOPE for those who could only imagine HOPE before this.

Jack Miner, *Chairperson*

Golden Cross

In the spirit of Jesus, who was concerned for the whole person, Golden Cross is a compassionate ministry that helps provide health and wholeness through benevolent grants to families who struggle to pay overwhelming medical bills. The year 2006 marked the 75th anniversary of Golden Cross in our conference, a ministry that began in our conference with our own "Golden Cross hospital," the Hugh Chatham Hospital, in Elkin, which opened for patients in April of 1931. Throughout these 75 years, thousands of families have been assisted with grants from this ministry. The need is still there.

In 2006, sixty-three families throughout our conference were assisted with grants totaling \$47,689.68. In addition to benevolent support from conference apportioned funds, these grants were made possible by special gifts and offerings from more than 100 churches of our conference and from individuals who gave directly to the Golden Cross Fund. This extra support continues to be the strength of this ministry! All pastors and churches are encouraged to enable this ministry through financial support and by applying for grants when the need is there.

A. Gayle Ford, *Director*

Proposal: Golden Cross**(Petition 3)
(Adopted on June 8, 2007)**

That all churches designate one Sunday each year as "Golden Cross Sunday" and on this Sunday lift up this ministry, not only giving parishioners opportunity to give a special offering in support of this ministry, but also reminding parishioners that Golden Cross is there for them when medical costs become an overwhelming burden. The traditional "Golden Cross Sunday" is the first Sunday of May; however, if more appropriate to a church's schedule, another Sunday may be observed as "Golden Cross Sunday."

Mission Response Center

In 2006, the Mission Response Center (MRC) saw over \$386,000 in inventory leave for humanitarian help and disaster response. This is remarkable, in that there had been no significant hurricane activity in 2006.

The MRC has dug its well and has placed in a septic system. Work is now proceeding on the addition of office and bathroom space at the center.

Volunteer groups (confirmation classes on up to senior-citizen groups) are the backbones for keeping the MRC going. Some groups have established once-a-month visits, and others have come "as needed" or on a called basis. Since 2004, over 53 different groups have participated, some on a monthly basis.

The committee is grateful to have a dedicated Church and Community Worker in Dwaine Morgan. His devotion has brought the MRC off the back burner and has given it the needed fire!

Walter Hand, *Chairperson*
Dwaine Morgan, *Director*

Project AGAPE

Our Project AGAPE Sunday was very helpful in maintaining and promoting the AGAPE ministry. Total giving for 2006 was \$77,288.23, with \$11,804.39 given in November and \$21,168.78 in December. We begin 2007 with \$31,944.24 going towards the \$65,000.00 to which we are committed for the year.

In 2006, AGAPE entered into two partnerships, one with Habitat for Humanity and the other with Heifer Project International. With Habitat, AGAPE will start rebuilding homes in the Lachin area. This partnership hopes to involve local North Carolina Habitat affiliates by finding some who will designate this area of Armenia as their tithing partner. With this flow of money, AGAPE's housing resources, and Habitat's building expertise, we hope to make a real difference in the poor housing situation in Lachin. The other partnership, with Heifer Project International, entails placing 30 cows with families in the Lachin area to improve the prospects of helping families have sustainable livelihoods. Due to the cost of cows, we were able to give 17 during the first year rather than 10. Mount Pisgah Church, in Greensboro, kicked off this partnership in grand style by raising more than the first year's goal of \$10,000. They have raised \$11,000 in 2006 and another \$2,000 in 2007. We need to raise \$20,000 in 2007 and 2008.

Nara Melkonyan, the country director in Armenia for AGAPE, will be attending the 2007 annual conference to address delegates and the Mission Luncheon. She will also be itinerating to several churches.

Associated with Project AGAPE is a relationship with Pfeiffer University. The Pfeiffer Concert Choir toured Armenia in 2005 and plan to return in 2008. When they are not singing, they will be involved in the Habitat work. They provide a new type of ministry, offering hope through music and song, as well as hands-on construction and working with the children of the community. Project AGAPE looks forward to an exciting 2007!

Cecil E. Donahue, *Chairperson*

Scandinavian Caravan

Last summer, young adults from Scandinavia and the Baltic Republics came to the Western North Carolina Annual Conference. From Reidsville to Franklin and from Trinity to Denver, the members of the Caravan shared life, worship, faith, and service with the people called Methodists in western North Carolina.

From all reports, the experiences for all were positive and mutually up-building. The Scandinavian Caravan Committee is currently receiving applications from young adults in the conference to participate in the 2007 caravan. We look forward to receiving these applications, selecting the new caravan team, and continuing this ministry for another year by sending our team to share in life and ministry with our brother and sister United Methodists in Scandinavia and the Baltic nations.

(Board Members: June Benson, Kerri Bernhardt, Sandy Carper, Michael Clement, David Reeves, Duane Dunlap, Tom Frazier, Lee Gale, Frank Grice, Meredith LeCroy, Manning Wimberly, Gene McAbee, Libby McRae, Sarah Messer, Tim Moore, Jed Tate, Al Ward.)

Timothy S. Moore, *Coordinator*

Town and Country Committee

The Town and Country ministry this year has been working cooperatively with the conference program ministries area to carry out many different ministries. Most of our work is funded through The Duke Endowment. We want to thank the endowment for all the many ways that they support rural ministry in this conference and state.

We continue to offer continuing-education scholarships for individuals in Duke Endowment-eligible churches. These scholarships are to enrich the ministry of both laity and clergy in these communities. We also offer scholarships to individuals who go on their first Volunteers in Mission building teams. These individual must be in Duke Endowment-eligible churches.

In cooperation with the Council on Congregational Development and United Methodist Rural Fellowship, a day-long event called "Evangelism in the Small Membership Church" was held.

In the coming year, we will continue to work with the VIM Committee and other program groups of our conference to enrich the church in town-and-country settings.

We would like to say a special thanks to Mark L. Burden, Michael W. Collins, and Nancy Burgin Rankin for their support and guidance during this past year.

Keys S. Pendleton, *Chairperson*

Volunteers In Mission

The Volunteers in Mission program continues to be the heartbeat of mission in the Western North Carolina Conference, with more and more individuals wishing to share their time and talents in mission-minded avenues. In 2006, churches in the conference reported 1,031 teams (387 over 2005) and 7,989 volunteers (3,338 over 2005)! Many of these teams headed to the Katrina-hit areas of Mississippi and Louisiana. An estimated gift of labor of 319,560 hours (valued by the Independent Sector Leadership Forum for Charities at \$18.04 per hour) was \$5,764,862.40. In addition, each team provided supplies and equipment for its work community estimated at \$2,062,000.

In 2007, UMVIM and UMCOR linked resources for future work in disaster response should another hurricane the size and scope of Katrina hit the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Truly, Volunteers in Mission are the wave of the future!

Michael W. Collins, *Coordinator of Missions/Outreach*

Building Teams

Thirty-five teams will be sent out in 2007 to 12 foreign countries and the state of Alaska. More than 500 Volunteers in Mission will be working and building relationships on these teams.

The team to Bolivia is a combination building/medical team. In Armenia, we work with Habitat for Humanity to build homes in Lachin. Teams to Cambodia combine Christian education with their work. Teams to Zimbabwe are working to build a playground for the orphanage in Old Matare, just outside of Africa University, a special project of the conference.

This year, we readily accepted an invitation to begin work in Nicaragua for the first time. It was very successful. We are pleased to be able to send teams once again to the Congo, where they will work at the Kinshasa Or-

phanage. Teams from the conference to Lithuania have assisted in turning a former Soviet training facility into a United Methodist church. We are also proud of the work that continues in Alaska, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

The Building Team Committee is striving to incorporate medical and education components into our team structure, so as to more fully meet the needs of the communities we serve. The building team program provides leader training to our own team leaders and to individuals wishing to lead a church team. We also offer supplemental insurance for these church teams.

The building team program receives a benevolence grant to help offset the cost of materials for four teams and to provide two ethnic-minority and special-need scholarships. The majority of our funds for materials come from individual and church donations (see conference Advance Specials, above). Our volunteers pay their own way and give of their valuable time to nurture Christians who desire a place to worship, a home for their families, a school where their children can learn, or a clinic where they can get medical attention. We are the hands and feet of God, building relationships as well as structures, wherever we are called.

Sandy Waldron, *Chairperson*

Disaster Response

Paul said to Archippus, "See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord" (Colossians 4:17). In that spirit, our annual conference has been working hard to fulfill its mission to complete its work in responding to disasters within our jurisdiction. We also have been preparing communities to respond in the wake of the next disaster, whether it is in our conference or elsewhere.

By the end of 2006, the conference office knew of about 350 work teams who have gone down to the Gulf region in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many others probably also went, of whom we were not aware. The district partnerships have been a highlight of our disaster response, as districts of the conference have been paired with churches in the Mississippi Conference. John Tucker, pastor of Safe Harbor United Methodist Church, in Moss Point, has been overwhelmed with the response, saying, "As of February 2007, we have logged 100,000 volunteer hours from people who care." The Katrina/Rita relief effort continues, and we encourage you to continue the good work you are doing.

The relief effort continues in the Waynesville District from the floods of 2004. The United Methodist Church is the ONLY charitable organization active in processing claims and providing assistance to the flood-devastated Clyde/Canton area. Other denominations are working under our umbrella, and several have provided large donations. In September 2006, the Western North Carolina Conference Disaster Response received a grant from the state of North Carolina to pay for materials for homes being repaired or replaced. In 2006, 450 volunteers contributed \$400,000 worth of labor to help rebuild homes. New home sites are still being negotiated, with the help of Wesley Community Development Corporation, so people whose homes were destroyed can live in safe, affordable homes away from flood-prone areas.

In August, our conference disaster response program and the North Carolina Conference MERCI Center joined forces to hold a Disaster Response Academy at Mount Shepherd Retreat Center, in the High Point District. Forty students came to learn about the theology of disaster response, hone their skills with chainsaws and rain tarps, and practice their pastoral presence to serve the victims of disaster. This event was comprehensive in its scope and provided essential training for volunteers who want to help victims of disasters.

Minor disasters hit the Western North Carolina Conference and other conferences. Members of the conference responded with gifts of love for the students of Eastern High School, in Guilford County, and with storms in the Northeast and Florida.

Finally, Western North Carolina Disaster Response has been proactive in preparing for a disaster. Project R.E.A.C.H. (Rural Emergency Action for Churches) has been instituted in four districts, to provide trained volunteers, a disaster-response plan, and emergency supplies in disaster-prone areas. Sponsored by The Duke Endowment, this is an opportunity for small, rural congregations to serve their communities. The goal is to have at least one Project R.E.A.C.H. church per district. The High Point District is also making plans to have a mobile self-contained disaster response support trailer that will contain tools and house early-response teams.

With such efforts, the conference will continue to be a leader in providing disaster response in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. The conference should applaud the work of its paid staff and volunteers, who work very hard in responding and preparing to disasters.

Edward D. McKinney, *Chairperson*

Medical Volunteers in Mission

The Good Samaritan Clinic, in Batey 7, near Barahona, Dominican Republic, continues to be the number-one outreach of the Medical Volunteers in Mission Committee of the annual conference. Built with conference funding, the medical clinic has established yearly budgets, met through donations of interested parties, grants, and visiting doctors, nurses, and construction personnel. The committee hopes the persons exposed to the ministry will tithe to the effort, as well as encourage their congregations to become committed, long-term sponsors of the program (see conference Advance Specials, above). There are three medical teams headed to the Dominican Republic in 2007.

The Good Samaritan Clinic officially opened in 2003 and originally was expected to serve one batey. It is presently the only medical clinic serving three bateys. Without this ministry, there would be no medical help in the area. In 2006, Dr. Jorge shared that 170 surgeries, 4,000 consultations, and 141 emergencies were treated. In addition, teams have gone to the bateys to build toilets and to help with the water supply. Through these hygiene efforts, it is hoped to better control germs and bacteria in the bateys, as well as to cut down on the violence in the area (women no longer needing to venture into the forest to relieve themselves, resulting in fewer rapes).

The newest project is the VBS Good Samaritan Kits presently being prepared by churches and VBS groups. Through these kits and the funds associated, the ministries will continue. Mark November 4, 2007, on your church calendar, as it has been designated as Medical VIM Sunday by CMAC action.

Mike Barringer, M.D., *Chairperson*

Refugee/Immigration Ministries

- Two families from Vietnam were received by local United Methodist families and their communities in 2006 as part of ongoing refugee resettlement/sponsorship outreach through UMCOR/CWS and local affiliate, Lutheran Family Services (LFS), in Greensboro. Better strategies and commitment to sponsorship are sought to increase participation by local districts, churches, and individuals for 2007.
- Immigration reform is of great concern to many Americans/Methodists who realize that, as Christ's church, they must continue to welcome the strangers among us and assure that they are treated with fairness, justice, and compassion. In many communities and local United Methodist congregations, we have committed and participated in dialogs/group studies on advocating for immigration reform, understanding faiths, political, or economic movements, and "loving our neighbors, as we love God and ourselves."

Ariel Collins, *Coordinator*

Wesley Community Development Corporation

Wesley Community Development Corporation opened its doors in Statesville in early 2002, funded by a grant from The Duke Endowment to the Western North Carolina Conference. The mission of this incorporated, non-profit organization is to build high-quality, energy-efficient affordable homes in rural areas of the conference for all who qualify, regardless of religion, race, or creed. "Affordable" housing is defined as layers of financing through grants, low-cost loans, and government subsidies, such that a quality home may be built for low- and very low-income families, with house payments they can afford.

Volunteers are very important to our program. Volunteer labor is used in order to reduce building costs, and particular care is taken in construction techniques to minimize normal homeowner costs, such as heating and cooling expenses. Our homeowners must contribute a minimum of 200 hours of volunteer labor to the construction of their homes.

In order to qualify, a client must have a household income below 80% of the median income for the county of residence. A client with a household income below 50% of the median income is considered to be "very low," and special financial considerations may apply. Following client identification and qualification, support includes a close working relationship with the client and related agencies to obtain the best possible financing. Other services include financial counseling, debt-reduction training, support for credit-improvement efforts, and homeowner training. To date, we have completed over 40 homes in western North Carolina and have never lost a homeowner to foreclosure.

Working in close cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA), and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta (FHLBA), we completed 10 homes in 2006, including five in Troutman; four in the community of Olin, near Harmony, north of Statesville; and one in Mocksville, in Davie County. In addition, we completed the infrastructure for the first nine homes in Yadkinville (Yadkin County), and construction began on the first four homes there. That community, named Liberty Glen, will be completed in 2010 and will include 26 homes in all.

Our plans for 2007 include completion of the infrastructure throughout Liberty Glen (Yadkinville), as well as six more homes there, completion of four more homes in Olin, and two more in Troutman. We will continue our close working relationship with the Waynesville Disaster Response Board and expect to assist with several homes in Haywood and Macon counties as well.

Lawrence E. Carella, *President*

Roy J. Helm, Jr., *Chairperson, Board of Directors*

Proposal: Directors of Wesley Community Development Corporation**(Petition 4)**

(Adopted on June 8, 2007)

The Board of Directors of Wesley Community Development Corporation proposes that the following persons be confirmed by the Annual Conference as members of that board:

J. Richard Alsop, Jr.	Valerie B. Rosenquist	Roy J. Helm, Jr.
William Cannon	David E. Smith, Jr.	Olin B. Isenhour
Janet H. Collins	Stephen H Kirby	Randolph H. Harry
Dennis B. Marshall	James H. Graves	Oliver W. Hellsabeck
Helen Rogers	Walter Hand	Samuel H. Smith, Jr.

Conference Director of Volunteer Ministries
Conference Director of Connectional Ministries

c. COMMISSION ON WITNESS MINISTRIES

The Commission on Witness Ministries provides resources and training events to the congregations of our annual conference to equip them for effective ministries of evangelism. In an attempt to be faithful to Christ's Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations," we are pleased to report that our churches received 4,969 people by professions of faith in 2006, an increase of 114 over 2005. We continue to be challenged, however, by the reality that many of our churches report having no professions of faith. It is our prayer that all of our churches will become vital churches, making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Resources that the commission sponsored this year for local churches and pastors included:

- **Evangelism in the Small Membership Church:** "Reclaiming our Passion—It's All About Jesus." This seminar was held on March 8, 2007, at Christ Church, Hickory, with Dr. Ron Crandall as the keynote speaker and Charles C. Kyker, pastor, as the preacher. Julie Kyker led the worship music. Over 170 persons were in attendance. Workshops were held on using demographics, websites, faith sharing,

hospitality, and worship as avenues of effective evangelism. This event was a joint effort of United Methodist Rural Fellowship and our commission.

- **Art of the Start:** This program is offered each year for all pastors starting their first appointments in our conference. They may be new graduates of seminary or the Licensing School for Local Pastors, and some are transferring into our conference from other conferences. Three sessions are given: One on the day before annual conference opens, a retreat in August, and a third in the fall. Participants are introduced to the bishop and conference staff persons, as well as ministries and program resources available through the conference, and they have opportunities to get to know one another and create support systems among themselves. We want to thank Keith W. Bingham for his excellent work as the dean of Art of the Start for the last 15 years.
 - **Evangelism Toolbox:** This booklet explains 10 different evangelism programs for use in local churches. It is available through the Congregational Development Office at the conference Memorial Center and on our website.
 - **New Members Curriculum:** A leader's guide and a participant's manual are available in a four-session format and are downloadable from the conference website.
 - **Churches of Excellence Awards:** To encourage ministries of evangelism and congregational development, the commission recognizes churches each year that have reached benchmarks that included increasing their worship attendance by 5%, receiving a percentage of their new members on profession of faith, starting a new small group or class, and paying their apportionments and askings in full. Twenty-one churches applied for this award and were recognized last year at annual conference. The Church of Excellence booklets were redesigned to be used by local churches as a resource book for ideas for evangelism and outreach ministries.
 - For the 2007 statistical year, we will be combining our Churches of Excellence Award requirements with those of the Outreach Ministry Award, Reach for the Stars, forming the new **Five Star Churches of Excellence Award**. Look for that new application in the Church of Excellence booklet this year.
 - **Denman Evangelism Awards:** Each year, a clergy person, a layperson, and a group that have shown excellence in evangelism efforts are recognized with this award. Clergy and laity may submit nominations for these awards. The deadline is the end of March. Last year, our Denman Award recipients were announced by Bishop Richard C. Looney, director of the Foundation for Evangelism. Jimmy Williams, of Sunrise Church, Lewisville, received the laity award; Stephen D. James, associate pastor at Myers Park Church, Charlotte, the clergy award; and the Disaster Response Center, based at Central Church, Clyde, received the group award. Group members from Clyde Church recognized were Tony Oberley, Carl Hudson, Jackie Bolden, Bill Cannon, and Bethel Lee, along with their pastor, Randall A. Tingle.
- Dynamic conference programs of witness ministries include:
- **Methodist Motorsports Evangelism:** This ministry began as a way to reach new people for Jesus Christ, as local-church volunteers give out fan guides and interact with race fans during 10 weeks of summer races at Lowe's Motor Speedway, in Concord. Two cars raced this year with the United Methodist cross-and-flame logo. The commission paid for the fan guides. Otis L. Snow, pastor of Memorial Church, Kannapolis, and coordinator of the MME program, received an award from the speedway for his excellent ministry to the racing community. He will be retiring this year, and we thank him for his leadership of Methodist Motorsports Evangelism. C. Darrin Everhart, pastor of Royal Oaks Church, Kannapolis, will be succeeding him as coordinator.
 - **Mission to Ministers:** The commission works with the Finch-Hunt Institute board of directors to offer this annual event, which features excellent preachers and evangelism speakers. This year, we were proud to sponsor Dr. Nancy Grisham, of *Living Ignited Ministries*, as the presenter on evangelism.
 - **Effective Evangelism Strategies for Reaching Unchurched Persons for Jesus Christ:** This is a resource developed by our director, Nancy B. Rankin, and has been presented in local churches and district leadership conferences.

With 39.4% of our churches reporting no professions of faith in 2006, we are truly challenged to reclaim Christ's Great Commission and Great Commandment. We are committed to helping local churches to "intentionally reach unchurched persons for Jesus Christ." We thank you for your support of the ministries of the Commission on Witness Ministries.

Louise Jones, *Chairperson*
Robert L. Kerr, *Vice-Chairperson*
Nancy B. Rankin, *Director*

3. ADVOCACY AGENCIES

a. COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONCERNS

The commission has pursued its plan to introduce a study of the ecumenical organization known as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) in the conference during the past year. In addition to the nine Protestant denominations which originally joined in that project, the Moravian Church has now become a member.

Since last year's annual conference, the commission project has been the subject of study at district leadership conferences in the Waynesville, Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Marion, and Greensboro districts. Some of those conference studies were led by Dr. W. Douglas Mills, associate general secretary of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, and others of our own commission members.

The annual LARCUM Bishop's Dialogue, attended by bishops and other representatives of the Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and United Methodist churches, was held on April 30 and May 1, 2007. Todd Donatelli was the speaker on the subject, "The Gift of Conflict."

Sydnor Thompson, *Chairperson and Bishop's Ecumenical Liaison*

b. COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE

The members of the conference Commission on Religion and Race (CORR) continue our commitment to follow the mandate outlined for the General Commission on Religion and Race in ¶ 2002 of *The Book of Discipline*: ...to challenge the general agencies, institutions, and connectional structures of The United Methodist Church to a full and equal participation of the racial and ethnic constituency in the total life and mission of the Church through advocacy and by reviewing and monitoring the practices of the entire Church so as to further ensure racial inclusiveness.

In order to fulfill this mandate, the 2004-2008 commission continues our pledge to: 1) Give voice to the issues and concerns of racial ethnic people. 2) Counsel church leaders and members on different facets of a racially inclusive church and society. 3) Facilitate workshops (such as Bridge Builders) and develop resource materials related to issues of racism, diversity, and inclusiveness. 4) Empower racial ethnic groups. 5) Sensitize the church about racism. And 6) Monitor and evaluate racial and cultural inclusiveness on all levels of the church.

CORR continues our responsibility to monitor and evaluate conference and district boards, agencies, commissions, and committees. During the 2005 annual conference, CORR members monitored worship services, meetings, and events. CORR identified many examples of inclusive participation of racial ethnic constituency. An area of concern, however, was the limited representation of racial ethnic persons within the leadership of this conference. CORR encourages our conference to become more intentional in the inclusion of racial ethnic representation in leadership roles.

CORR proposed a racial harassment policy in 2006, which was adopted by the annual conference. Within the upcoming year, CORR will develop an inclusiveness policy to be presented for approval at annual conference in 2008.

CORR broke tradition, as we did not schedule our annual multicultural celebration during the fall of 2006. It was decided to focus our support for the Southeastern Jurisdictional Multicultural Celebration. This SEJ celebration was initially planned for April 2007; however, it is now scheduled for December 2007, at Lake Junaluska. We hope that laity and clergy from our conference will participate in this celebration.

CORR sponsored the Martin L. King Celebration, which was hosted in the High Point District on January 12-13, 2006. This year's theme was *Let Us Not Forget: Building Community through Service and Collective Responsibility*. Representatives from Memorial and Wesley Memorial churches worked cooperatively to plan and host this event. Friday evening, the conference youth participated in the celebration. The youth worshipped, shared a meal, had a talent show, and participated in an essay contest, "Why We Should Not Forget Martin Luther King, Jr." On Saturday, the day of worship and celebration included Erin Hawkins, associate general secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race, as the keynote speaker. CORR gives thanks to all those who made this celebration a success!

Kathy FitzJefferies, *Chairperson*

c. COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) began its year with the attendance of several members at the Do No Harm/Safe Sanctuaries Conference, in Nashville, Tennessee, in July of 2006, sponsored by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. Our commission worked to bring about implementation of some of the strategies presented at the summer conference. The commission is also working on the quadrennial survey on clergywomen. We continue to survey and monitor salaries and appointment gains and losses by clergywomen as compared to clergymen from the last quadrennium, as mandated by the 2004 annual conference. COSROW will publish this report at annual conference in 2008.

Mary Catherine Willis, *Chairperson*

d. COMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

Part of the emphasis for this committee has been to utilize the *Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century* national initiative. Though there is definitely a ray of hope generating from the African American churches, three goals have been the focus: 1) To strengthen the black congregations, with an emphasis on **congregational training**, especially through annual convocations and district summits; 2) to nurture, equip, and release individuals within black churches through **leadership development**, which will build the capacity of pastors and laity to increase their confidence to serve any place at any time; and 3) to initiate a **Christian education institute**, seminars and coaching designed to provide tools and resources which will equip clergy and laity in their efforts to educate and reach people in their common areas of living and understanding.

Albert O. Perkins, *Chairperson*

e. COMMITTEE ON ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

Under the new directorship of Lillie M. Jones, the Committee on Asian American Ministries has had meetings almost every other month during the 2006-2007 conference year. Starting from the committee members' participation in the annual Korean Pastors' Convention, together with the North Carolina Conference Korean pastors, in Swansboro, held from August 14 to 17, 2006, the committee has had meaningful meetings and made exciting plans. One of the important objectives of the committee has been to strengthen the fellowship among the members, and the beautiful luncheon at Hinshaw Memorial Church, in Greensboro (Bart W. Milleson, pastor), on

Sept. 9, 2006, right after the committee welcomed several new members, was very helpful in that regard. Ever since the committee decided to have the May Gathering, which will be held at Mt. Mitchell Church, Kannapolis (Abraham Kim, pastor), on Saturday, May 19, under the title, "Celebration of Asian-American Heritage," the committee concentrated its efforts on planning and preparing for the event. It includes a worship service, which will show unity in faith within diversity in languages, with keynote speaker Margaret Judy, who served with her husband, Carl Wesley Judy, as a missionary in Korea for more than 38 years. The next in its schedule is cultural awareness celebration, featuring Korean and Montagnard choirs, Cambodian and Hmong dancing, storytelling, Korean traditional music, and a DVD and PowerPoint presentation. The day's event will end with lunch that will be enriched by various dishes from different Asian countries. We hope this event will strengthen Asian-American sisters and brothers in their work within The United Methodist Church and increase the visibility of Asian-American presence in the conference.

Cher Lue Vang, *Chairperson*

f. COMMITTEE ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The Committee on Church and Society has had much to focus on in this quadrennium and, without a doubt, always will. The very nature of the ministry of this committee is to *Follow Jesus* wherever His footsteps may lead us to help the church to be faithful Christians, even if it means being challenged to grow beyond our comfort zones. Just as the ministry of Jesus challenged the unjust systems of His society, which oppressed women, lepers, Samaritans, the poor, and the ill, so the challenge remains for us today. To actually *Follow Jesus* means that we will have to lead congregations beyond the walls to the city squares, roads, villages, hillsides, lakes, and plains, or, in other words, into the "public squares" of our communities, states, nation, and world, to *Make Disciples* (*whole* disciples) who care about the world and its brokenness as much as God cares; compassionate disciples who respond, not with the ministries of mercy only, for this is not social justice and is, therefore, not good enough if we are to *Transform the World* and its systems of justice, which are not just.

During the first half of the quadrennium, the committee continued to focus on the lottery, the death-penalty moratorium, and the war in Iraq. During the second half of the quadrennium, some of that focus remains the same, as well as including healthcare, as the committee hosted a town-hall forum as part of national Citizen's Response Group to collect data and report it back to Congress and the President for the purpose of healthcare reform. The vice-chairperson of the committee, Polly Pearson, served as moderator for this forum—one of only a few held within the bounds of our annual conference—giving constituents a rare opportunity to have a voice in shaping public policy in this way. We are very proud of those who participated and lifted their voices in this effort, including seniors, youth, and young adults. Another emphasis for us is the nine million uninsured children in America, the wealthiest nation in the world, with a \$13.3-trillion economy. We encourage you to contact your legislators on this issue.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing.

Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice (Proverbs 31: 8-9).

Words and actions must match.

The committee is fortunate to share leadership with coordinators in the areas of environmental justice, Boyd M. Holliday; United Methodist Women social action, Linda Young; North Carolina Council of Churches, James W. Ferree; General Board of Church and Society, Les O. Fowler; and peace with justice, Stephen F. Lee. As we acknowledge that all of creation is in the image of God and should be valued and revered and that we are called to live in relationship with creation, we salute Boyd for his leadership in the second annual Caring for God's Creation Conference, at Lake Junaluska. Because of Boyd and the jurisdictional planning team, ours is the first jurisdiction in the nation to have a conference which brings focus to issues of the environment and ecology. We are increasingly being made aware that we must work to mitigate the impact of global warming. Dealing with the issue of global warming today will help the economic impact in future years. It has been suggested that districts and/or local churches host a showing of *An Inconvenient Truth*. Steve Lee has been instrumental this year in assisting the committee with information from grant requests for peace with justice advocacy ministries. The committee has sponsored a grant at Pfeiffer University for its Servant Leadership Series (SLS). Information about this series may be found on our web page at www.wnccchurchandsociety.org.

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) held a Southeastern Jurisdiction event on immigration-related issues, *Our Call to Hospitality*, early this year, at Lake Junaluska, which was successful in furthering dialogue on the issue of immigration. Please visit the GBCS website at www.umc-gbcs.org and stay informed and take action on issues of concern. This year in April marked the centennial celebration of (MFSA) Methodist Federation for Social Action, the forerunner of Church and Society. Next year will be the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Social Creed of The United Methodist Church, and we encourage all churches to have studies of the Social Principles in preparation for this celebration. The committee is grateful for our conference staff person, Mark L. Barden, for his preparation and retraining of the committee on the Social Principles, and we encourage local churches or districts to call upon representatives to assist with local training if necessary by calling in a request to Mark at the conference office.

The committee sponsored three young clergy (under the age of 40) this spring to attend a forum held at the United Methodist Building, in Washington, where the General Board of Church and Society is located, the only non-governmental building on Capitol Hill. These young pastors were exposed to a wealth of resources from our general board on the issues of social justice, advocacy, and action. Three lay women on our committee, at their own expense, joined these young clergy for the Ecumenical Advocacy Days following the forum to glean information that will be shared in a joint poverty initiative in spring 2008 on the annual conference vision emphasis on developing ministries with the poor and suffering in local communities. As has been stated, *the moral test of a nation is how well it provides for its poor and vulnerable*. The committee is sponsoring a seminar trip to Washington, DC, this fall (September 26-30, 2007) and encourages everyone who will be on board for this special trip. The seminar will focus on poverty and help build momentum for the spring 2008 event. Many amenities will be offered on the trip, so first come, first served. Look for details on the webpage and e-news. Another opportunity

sponsored by the General Board of Church and Society, in Fort Worth, Texas, November 1-4, 2007, will be *Living Faith, Seeking Justice (Resourcing Local Churches for Justice Ministry)*. The committee encourages churches to send teams of two or three persons, and we are working on plans to support some of the travel. For information, please check our web page, www.wnccchurchandsociety.org, and *e-news*.

We wish also to thank Dewey W. Smith for his assistance and leadership as conference staff representative to this committee for the first half of the quadrennium. Many thanks also to Marty Folsom, of the conference communications team, who assisted with graphic design for a committee brochure designed by our chairperson.

May we always be prayerful for all of our leaders, that they may have open minds and open hearts and for God to be with them in their decision making, and most of all that they be guided by the Holy Spirit. Mercy pours oil on the wounds of the one who has been attacked, yet justice prevents the attack. This is not to be misleading, suggesting that attacks will never occur, but certainly they may be reduced if faithful people raise their voices and also turn rhetoric into reality. *Faithful voices do not go right, faithful voices do not go left; instead faithful voices go deeper.*

Pamela Shoffner, Chairperson

Proposal: Sustainability Study

(Petition 32)
(Adopted on June 7, 2007)

Whereas, Holy Scripture demands that we "tend the garden and care for it" (Genesis 2:15); and

Whereas, The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church charge all United Methodists to be good stewards of God's creation and "to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation" (*Discipline*, ¶ 160); and

Whereas, Sustainability has been defined as living "within the constraints of nature in a manner that meets present needs but doesn't compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Lennartson, Jay, "How You and I Can Work Toward a More Sustainable Greensboro," *The Greensboro News and Record*, Sunday, January 21, 2007, page H-4); and

Whereas, Christians are motivated to be good stewards, not for frivolous or merely aesthetic reasons, but out of deep moral concern for the fate of the world's poor and marginalized persons, who are the most vulnerable to environmental degradation; and

Whereas, Engagement in environmental stewardship goes hand in hand with the disciplined spiritual life; and

Whereas, The primary means or practices necessary for sound environmental stewardship have the not inconsiderable side effect of saving money *in the long run*, thus freeing funds for other purposes, such as evangelism, planting new congregations, and missions; therefore, let it be

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church:

1. Ask the bishop to appoint a *sustainability working group*, drawn from the Committee on Church and Society and other persons with interest or expertise.
2. Charge this group to conduct a four-year (the 2008-2011 quadrennium) study of how best to guarantee the sustainability and environmental responsibility of the conference and its congregations and affiliated institutions.
3. Receive from the above-mentioned working group a yearly report on its progress, delivered in time for circulation at the annual sessions of the conference.
4. Receive from the working group, at the end of the quadrennium, a comprehensive *sustainability plan*, again delivered in time for circulation at the annual conference session.
5. Consider this *sustainability plan* for approval as recommendations to the congregations and affiliated institutions of the conference.
6. Direct that funds for payment of expenses incurred be requested as benevolence grants from the Conference Ministries Advisory Council and other available resources, such as Duke Energy.

g. COMMITTEE ON HISPANIC MINISTRIES

It was a busy 2006 for Hispanic ministries and the conference Committee on Hispanic Ministries. We continue to respond to the fast-paced growth of the Hispanic population with 13 pastors and 10 lay missionaries throughout the conference, in addition to those Anglo congregations which are reaching out to minister in the name of Christ to Hispanics. We give thanks to God for the pastors and congregations of the conference who partner with a pastor or lay missionary or a Hispanic congregation to tell a hurting world of Jesus Christ. We also thank our conference Council on Congregational Development, our district superintendents, and the district committees on Hispanic ministries for their support and leadership. Our thanks also go to The Duke Endowment for their continuing support and advocacy for Hispanic ministry in the conference.

We began the year communicating with the Council on Congregational Development regarding Hispanic church plants and the training needs of our Hispanic pastors and lay missionaries.

This year included the first ever Hispanic Family Camp, held at Camp Carolwood in August for pastors and some of their key persons in leadership. The camp was led by Alberto Hinojosa, of the Tennessee Conference, and was a great success. There is a hope to hold such a camp annually to build up our Hispanic churches and ministries. We hope to expand it this year to include even more laity.

We also celebrated Hispanic ministry with an event for all Hispanic pastors and lay missionaries in Greensboro during Hispanic Heritage Month (every year, September 15-October 15), hosted by The Duke Endowment. Pastors and lay missionaries were introduced to The Duke Endowment, which has done much in the past several years to help Hispanic ministries. And The Duke Endowment was introduced to Hispanic joy and exuberance in

life and ministry!

Also in 2006, our committee partnered with the Farmworker Ministry Committee of the North Carolina Council of Churches to work on a series of educational and informational workshops and seminars around the issues of farm workers, legal/illegal immigration, justice for immigrants, etc. The workshops and seminars are to be held throughout North Carolina, but the particular emphasis of our committee is for churches in our conference to host a workshop or seminar and learn how we can make a difference for Christ in the lives of many of the very people who feed us. Your church, UMWomen, UMMen, UMYouth, etc., can schedule a workshop by contacting Melinda Wiggins (mwiggins@duke.edu), who is on the Farmworker Ministry Committee of the North Carolina Council of Churches, or by contacting Leo Fair (lofair@bellsouth.net), chairperson of the conference Committee on Hispanic Ministries.

As our state's Hispanic population continues to explode, we are called to be witnesses "in Jerusalem, in Judea, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Perhaps we need to be reminded that "the ends of the earth" include our Hispanic brothers and sisters now in North Carolina, both documented and undocumented; the farm workers in the fields, making sure you and I have food; the construction workers building our new subdivisions; the lawn-maintenance workers tending our yards; and the workers in many of the restaurants and hotels where we conduct our business and pleasure. We continue to work to see that many more Hispanics become faithful followers of Jesus Christ. We ask your prayers and partnership in this vital ministry.

Leo O. Fair, *Chairperson*

h. COMMITTEE ON NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES

The Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) is pleased with the visibility of native persons on the many committees in Methodism, and we are looking forward to annual conference. At annual conference in 2006, CONAM served cookies and lemonade. We set up a tent with displays and sold T-shirts as a fundraiser, and we are still selling shirts. Darlene Jacobs, executive director of SEJANAM, had a monitor displaying their mission work in Bolivia and Louisiana. In September, four native persons attended the Gathering of the Laity at Lake Junaluska, and, in October, three native persons attended the National Laity Conference, held at Scarritt-Bennett Center, sponsored by the Native American Comprehensive Plan. The committee also sponsored two persons in their efforts to attend the School for the Licensing of Local Pastors. In 2005, we agreed that we would focus on involving our youth in all activities, so they will be prepared to lead in the church. We also agreed that we would pay for music lessons for youth in 7th grade through 12th grade. CONAM sponsored seven youth who attended SEJANAM's Laity/Ministers Retreat held at Lake Junaluska in February. Triad Native American Church had the largest number of youth attending this conference. In June, CONAM sent 10 young people to the SEJANAM Annual Conference. We are small in number, but we feel we accomplished much in 2006.

Neffie Connie Locklear, *Chairperson*

4. CONFERENCE RESOURCE CENTER

The past year has been a year of transition and change in the Conference Resource Center. In August, Mary S. Robinson, who served faithfully as coordinator for many years, resigned. Sonja S. Clough became part-time coordinator, assisted by a ministry team of pastors and Christian educators to guide the future of the center.

The resource center provides books, videos, DVDs, and other resources to empower the witness of the church. Whether the resources are for children, youth, young adults, or seniors, the idea is to have a wide range of materials to choose from, representing different authors with varying perspectives, remembering John Wesley's words: "...to think and let think." The focus statement adopted by the Ministry Team reflects this commitment:

In its stewardship, the Resource Center Ministry Team will promote a healthy balance in the acquisition of audio-visuals that reflect the theology and mission of The United Methodist Church, acknowledging the creativity of individual church cultures.

Special effort has been made to select resources that will meet the needs of our ethnic churches. This is an ongoing project. We have also been hard at work, getting the message out: "We are here for you! We are ready to assist in any way possible." Many churches have become members for the first time by paying the small, yearly fee based on church membership. To them, and to returning churches, we say, "Welcome aboard!"

Barbara J. Barden, *Chairperson*

Sonja S. Clough, *Coordinator*