

## B. CONFERENCE MINISTRIES ADVISORY COUNCIL

Your Conference Ministries Advisory Council (CMAC) has been taking necessary steps to improve the health and vitality of the connection throughout our conference and in the linkages beyond that enable us to say in truth that "The world is our parish." First, we fully embrace our conference vision: *"Follow Jesus, make disciples, transform the world."* Thus, we embrace the seven strategies of the Vision (one example being "Intentionally relate unchurched persons to Jesus Christ"). These seven strategies have become the focus of work by our connectional ministries staff, ably guided by James T. Trollingier. They have also become the key to our budgeting and program funding for 2006 and 2007.

We believe our actions, taken in an era of reduced funding for connectional ministries, will help restore trust by local churches in the conference's effective use of apportionment funds in ministries to which we know United Methodists are committed. We have notified our Western North Carolina Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) that we have prioritized and cut ministries funding to the "bare bones" in our 2006 control budget and in our 2007 proposed budget. It is noteworthy that CMAC's 2007 proposed budget is 39% less than the approved 2006 budget. We have been extremely selective in funding benevolences and programs in your behalf, and we believe these steps will help restore the spirit of mission and faithful stewardship that characterize United Methodists. In this regard, we await the reports of the two stewardship task forces appointed by Bishop McCleskey—"Stewardship of Giving" and "Stewardship of Managing."

CMAC and/or its steering committee have been meeting at least quarterly over the past two years to make decisions in an "era of scarcity" of ministries funds. Also, CMAC is represented on the Committee on Conference Staff Relations (CSRC), which is now very active. It, in consultation with Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey, CMAC representatives, and others, is evaluating optimal staff needs, organizational structure, and efficiency. We and the various constituent connectional ministries groups are substituting telephone conferences and e-mails for expensive travel to face-to-face meetings where feasible and effective.

We salute the conference staff for unusual creativity and commitment to making necessary adjustments. We have seen staff embrace "zero-based" budgeting and "out-of-the-box" thinking.

Although funds have been limited, we rejoice that our Western North Carolina Conference has continued to support a variety of ministries which carry out our conference vision, as well as fund some new ministries which are plowing new ground, enabling us *"to follow Jesus, make disciples, and transform the world."* Through your giving, YOU and your local church maintain the Wesley dictum: *"The world is my parish."* Collectively, we continue to "offer them Christ in places Christ's hands would not always reach, where lives are at risk. Yes, our beloved connection and the United Methodist spirit of stewardship continue to be effective. Together, we are strengthening the basis to fulfill Christ's statement that *"Even greater things than these, you will do!"*

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 and spiritual resource for the churches and members of our conference. There are some who look at the camping and outdoor retreat ministry as "playing second chair" to what can be deemed as the vital ministries of the local church. The truth is evident for all to see who have eyes to see and ears to hear. 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.

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, "What is it that we do very well?" Out of this inner searching, each of our seven camps has developed a special "favor" 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 conference 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 Conference to look within, around, and above to see the great riches God has given in our camp ministries.

James G. Mackey, *Chairperson*

### **b. COMMITTEE ON ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS**

This has been a successful year of collaboration between the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns (ELCC), the Commission on Religion and Race, and the Western North Carolina Conference Black Methodists for Church Renewal. We have accomplished several projects together. We were able to dream and vision together and with the Committee on African American Ministries.

As a result of this collaboration, the Committee on African American Ministries held a retreat for African American clergy in August 2005. The Commission on Religion and Race monitored last year's annual conference session. The Western North Carolina Conference for Church Renewal and Volunteers for Mission work-weeks were held at Bennett College for Women in May 2005 and May 2006. ELCC gave grants, which assisted in paying salaries for some of the ethnic clergypersons and enhanced the ministry of the ethnic congregations of this annual conference.

It is a rewarding experience to assist in the growth of the ethnic congregations of this annual conference.

Samuel H. Moore, Jr., *Chairperson*

### **c. SPIRITUAL FORMATION TASK GROUP**

The conference Spiritual Formation Task Group is composed of passionate people who seek to keep Jesus Christ at the center of all life. Spiritual formation is defined as "a life-long journey of being conformed to the image of Christ in community, by the gracious work of God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit), for the sake of others (the world)." We seek to plant deep roots into faith and spiritual disciplines, so that we can grow into the full image of Jesus Christ. This is primarily an inward journey, an internal movement, versus an external one, but always more effective in community. It is a life-long maturing process.

The members of this group will inform and teach, promote and encourage the regular practice of spiritual disciplines throughout the conference. We exist as a resource for the conference to consult, present, foster, and facilitate aspects of spiritual formation. We share a wide diversity of experience and gifts throughout our participating members. We also have a wealth of collective wisdom that seeks to bless others.

We continue to host the "Day Apart" on the Wednesday before annual conference begins. This time apart sets a different tone for conferencing each year. This year, the Rev. Dr. Steven W. Manskar, director of accountable discipleship with the General Board of Discipleship, will present, "Covenant Discipleship Groups: Moving from Membership to Discipleship," on Wednesday, June 7, at Central Church, Clyde.

On Wednesday evening, we host a worship service which serves as a vehicle to enter the beginning of conference prayerfully, thoughtfully, and spiritually. During this time, we have utilized many forms of worship and prayer (Taizé, contemplative, contemporary, Celtic, healing prayer, etc.).

We gather on Thursday of annual conference to listen, to share wisdom and knowledge, and to offer ourselves as resources for the conference. We are most willing to lead and assist in district leadership training events around the area of spiritual formation.

We have just completed our second Five-Day Academy (Upper Room event), which ended on May 5, 2006. Currently, we have begun the initiation of procedures that will bring our third Five-Day Academy to the conference in the spring of 2008.

For additional information you may contact our co-chairpersons: Patience S. Brumley, (R) 704-596-2143, (O) 704-596-2356, [Patience.Brumley@att.net](mailto:Patience.Brumley@att.net); and John Blalock, (R) 704-279-6939, (O) 704-279-2335, [jblalock8@carolina.rr.com](mailto:jblalock8@carolina.rr.com).

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

### **d. COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND MERCY MINISTRIES (CJAMM)**

Since the days of the Wesleys, the people called Methodists have gone to offer Christ where the people are. A growing number of youth and adults are incarcerated in the state of North Carolina. This reality gives the people called Methodists in western North Carolina 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). Therefore, the Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries Committee (CJAMM) encourages clergy and laity in churches across our region to look for opportunities for ministry with offenders, ex-offenders, and victims of crime. We also encourage you to look for ways to care for persons after their incarceration and to include them in the fellowship of your local churches. We encourage you to support with your prayers, gifts, and involvement the following ministries:

1. Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries and Rings of Fellowship, a ministry between the Western North Carolina Conference and the North Carolina Conference, 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 55 prisons across North Carolina
  5. Restorative Justice—meditation centers in restorative justice between offenders and victims.
- We also encourage laity and clergy to support the efforts of the Advisory Committee on Religious Ministry in Prisons, North Carolina Department of Corrections, an interfaith group of religious leaders across North Carolina to support the work and expansion of state-funded prison chaplains across our good state, and to communicate the same to their state legislators. Finally, we remind people of faith of the long-standing position of The United Methodist Church against the death penalty.

Randy L. Wall, *Chairperson*

## 2. PROGRAM MINISTRIES COMMISSIONS

### a. COMMISSION ON NURTURE MINISTRIES

In a very busy and fast-paced world, our commission is to steer the laity and clergy of our conference to keep our focus on God and God's will for us. As we continue our mission to "shepherd the shepherds," this has been a year of compiling more resources to live out this area of Christ-centered transformation in our conference. Please visit the "Nurture" link in the "Ministries" section of our conference website ([www.wnccumc.org](http://www.wnccumc.org)) for more details. Programs we are working on are:

- Private personal sabbath places and resources.
- Central listing of retreat center for spiritual renewal.
- One-on-one spiritual direction.
- Small e-group study.
- Small-group studies on special topics: natural spirituality, music, etc.
- Prayer shawl ministry resources.
- Linking with Shepherd Care: a program designed to equip, empower, and nurture pastors to be healthy shepherds among the flock.
- Coaching Annual Conference Soul-Tending Companion.

Our commission seeks to continue and grow these ministries and more in the future. We are continuing to be creative as our finances adjust with our circumstances. May God add blessings as we live out our mission!

Sarah E. H. McKinney, *Chairperson*

#### Children's Ministry

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.

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

#### 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.
- Consulting with local churches on revitalization; connecting to "Shepherd the Shepherds."

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

#### Family Ministry

The family ministry area of the Conference Ministries Advisory Council continues to work on ways to resource families in the local church. A list of people, places, and resources, both print and audiovisual, which can help the local church minister to and support its families, is continually being updated.

Mary S. Robinson, *Director*

#### Older Adult Ministries

The older adult ministry area also seeks ways to resource ministry connections in this area for the local church. We have an active Older Adult Council that is planning "A Day Apart for the Young at Heart" for May 23 and 25, 2006, at West Market Street Church, Greensboro. Dr. Richard Gentzler and Rev. F. Belton Joyner, Jr., will be the keynoters. This event is a joint project with the older adult ministries of the North Carolina Conference. On Wednesday, May 24, 2006, Dr. Gentzler will lead a day-long training event for clergy and lay leaders in older adult ministries. I am looking for ways to network areas related to older adults and to provide information and connections for local churches, districts, and conference-level people, activities, and resources. Both family ministries and older adult ministries now have a presence on the conference website. This will provide a valuable tool for resourcing these areas and the local church.

Mary S. Robinson, *Director*

## 2. COMMISSION ON OUTREACH MINISTRIES

The Commission on Outreach Ministries continues to resource and equip local 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. We continue to support the Africa University Initiative, which will help transform the continent of Africa. In addition, the commission continues to highlight the needs of the five countries we are emphasizing this quadrennium: Armenia, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, and Lithuania.

To equip persons for mission in the local church, we continue to communicate through Missions Alive. The next Harvest of Blessings is set for October 7, 2006, in Hickory, for everyone to experience the full scope of conference missions in a festive atmosphere. This year, we are also finalizing training to enable local church outreach personnel to make full use of the resources available in planning their mission programs.

District representatives experienced an educational and informative visit to the General Board of Global Ministries, in New York, last August. It was so transformational that we are providing a similar experience in November for all who are interested.

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 all of us to "follow Jesus, make disciples, and transform the world."

Mahalia McGee, *Chairperson*

Mark L. Barden, *Director of Missions/Outreach*

### Proposal: Advance Specials for 2006-2007

**(Referred as Petition 2 to Forum Group 6)  
(Adopted by conference on June 9, 2006)**

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)  
Dwayne Morgan, MRC, Mooresville (982923)  
Poto Valentine Shutsha, Wings of Sharing Ministry, Democratic Republic of Congo (14163Z)  
Vickie B. Sigmon, Winston-Salem District (982916-8)

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

Richard Bryant (15076)  
Gordon and Ardell Graner, Bolivia (010835-5EZ)  
Esther Gitobu (13959)  
Fran Lynch, Alaska (982950-1)  
Charles and Patti Maddox (11891)  
Glen Rowley, Senegal (009682-6AZ)  
Jacques Akasa Umembudi (14020)  
Herbert and Mary Zigbuo, Liberia (010911-1BZ)

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 (014195) (Be specific as to intended use.)  
Cherokee Indian Mission (731144)  
Congo General (DRC) (04791A) (Be specific as to intended use.)  
Diengenga Technical School, Lodja, Democratic Republic of 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)  
Red Bird Mission, Inc., Kentucky (773365)  
Retreats for Sunday School Teachers, Women, Men, and Youth, 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 (Church World Service) (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
  - Materials, Scholarships, Supplies for Medical Ministries
  - Open Arms Community
  - Prison MATCH Program
  - Project AGAPE
  - Salkehatchie Summer Service – WNCC
  - Scandinavian Caravan – WNCC
  - Shalom Zones - Charlotte
  - UMAR-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)
  - Special Sundays
    - Human Relations Day
    - Native American Awareness
    - World Communion
    - One Great Hour of Sharing,
    - Peace With Justice
    - UM Student Day
  - 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
    - Centro Cristiano Mission, North Wilkesboro
    - Ward Street Mission, High Point

#### **Congo (DRC) Coordinating Committee**

The Congo Coordinating Committee for the Western North Carolina Conference took a significant step in reaching out to the war-torn, poverty-ridden country of the Democratic Republic of Congo. An assessment team was sent at the beginning of the year to evaluate the situation and work with Bishop David Yemba in discerning ways the conference could be in partnership with the central Congo area. Bishop Yemba has asked this conference to make the Diengenga Trade School the primary focus, because it is essential to helping the area rebuild. Poverty, hunger, disease, and lack of resources abound. Our committee is completing a report, with recommendations on how our conference can be in partnership ministry with the Congolese.

Shirley L. Canty, *Chairperson*

#### **Diengenga Trade School Steering Committee USA**

From December 2005 to January 2006, three members of the Diengenga Trade School Committee participated in an assessment team to the Democratic Republic of Congo, concentrating on the village of Diengenga and the trade school. The needs all over the Congo are great. In Diengenga, the school is in need of moneys for scholarships, equipment, and building materials. The school has continued to operate, but

only under extremely adverse conditions. Many teachers left because of finding jobs that paid or death. The school, however, continues to function, with mechanics being the largest of the classes. There is much more to report, and that will be done through the conference office in Charlotte. In order to help the school, please check the conference website ([www.wnccumc.org](http://www.wnccumc.org)) for more information and updates on progress of the DTS's recovery from the war.

David L. Miner, *Chairperson*

### **Golden Cross**

As with all ministries of the conference, Golden Cross began the year 2005 with limited funding from conference apportionments. However, special gifts and offerings from 109 churches and from individuals giving directly to Golden Cross, along with the funding from the conference, enabled this ministry to give grants totaling \$41,413.04 to 51 families in 2005. A special thank you to all who made an extra gift in support of this compassionate ministry that reaches out with financial assistance to families burdened with overwhelming medical costs.

In 2006, Golden Cross celebrates 75 years of ministry in our conference. Across these 75 years, thousands of families of our conference have been assisted with grants. The need is still there, and pastors and churches are urged to continue support of this special ministry and to apply for grants when the need is there.

### **Proposal: Golden Cross**

**(Referred as Petition 3 to Forum Group 6)  
(Adopted by conference on June 9, 2006)**

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 designated for recognition of Golden Cross.

A. Gayle Ford, *Director*

### **Health Care Ministries Committee**

In 2005, the Health Care Ministries Committee implemented several initiatives, which included increasing awareness and prevention of cardiovascular disease throughout the conference, providing a summary on the new Medicare prescription-drug plan and serving as a resource to retirees of the conference in regard to that plan. On a continuing basis, the committee coordinated the Wellness Fair at annual conference and continued to serve as a resource for parish nursing and health ministries.

Judy Durham, *Chairperson*

### **Mission Response Center**

The Mission Response Center (MRC) is a vital link in our response to human suffering. We are able to receive and distribute humanitarian aid throughout the world. Our conference's response to the 2005 hurricane season, and specifically Hurricane Katrina, was aided by our ability to distribute the disaster response supplies on hand while more materials were being gathered. The MRC allows the Project AGAPE and Dengenga Trade School committees to efficiently package and prepare supplies for shipment overseas. The committee continues to seek ways to improve the MRC's operation and facilities.

P. Glenn Kinken III, *Chairperson*

### **Project AGAPE**

The cooperative ministry to Armenia between the Western North Carolina and North Carolina conferences continued for its 11<sup>th</sup> year. The project, under the outstanding leadership of Nara Melkonyan, in-country director of Project AGAPE, continued to meet basic needs of the most vulnerable people in Armenia. Humanitarian aid and support for the hospital, children's home, and Christian Education Center in Lachin meet critical needs in this area of Armenia. Project AGAPE continued its ministry to a children's school in Stepanakert for the handicap with humanitarian support, as well as improvements in their facilities. Project AGAPE is experiencing funding shortfalls while needs remain at a high level. But, if 1,000 people across WNCNC would join the Fellowship of 1000 at a financial commitment of just \$100 per year, Project AGAPE could thrive and make a life-saving difference for hundreds of children and adults in Armenia! Contact the missions/outreach office in Charlotte to join.

Cecil E. Donahue, *Vice-Chairperson*

### **Refugee/Immigrant Ministry**

The Commission on Outreach Ministries has now created a website for Refugee/Immigrant Ministry (RIM). Along with e-news, the site feeds relevant issues related to immigrant and refugee plights. RIM has also created advocacy circles on behalf of immigrants and refugees requiring justice and hospitality. As action alerts come to attention, they are sent to individuals and groups that call legislators and write letters to influence legislation on state and national levels. On the other hand, we have not, as a conference, experienced an enthusiasm for refugee sponsorships. Perhaps an outreach-RIM liaison focus group should be created to address better approaches of engaging more churches and individuals into this mission service.

Ariel Collins, *Coordinator*

### Scandinavian Caravan

The summer of 2005 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> year in which young adults from our conference have traveled to Scandinavia to share in the ministry and culture of our United Methodist brothers and sisters from the Northern European Annual Conference. Consequently, the summer of 2006 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year that young adults from Scandinavia have retraced the trip back across the Atlantic to North Carolina. As a committee, we celebrate those from our conference who have participated in past caravans, who have been host churches, and who have otherwise supported this vital ministry within the United Methodist connection. Over the coming years, we hope to strengthen that connection through reunions, regular communications, and other shared ministry opportunities. Finally, we thank the annual conference for sustaining this ministry in the past, and, through the conference's continued financial support, we rejoice in the extension of this ministry into the future.

Timothy S. Moore, *Chairperson*

### Town and Country Committee

The Town and Country Committee has been involved in the following ministries this past year:

- Southeastern Jurisdictional Town and Country ChurchLink Workshop: "Building Bridges Through Stewardship."
- Scholarships for leadership development for both clergy and laity.
- Scholarships for first-time participants in conference Volunteers In Mission (building teams).
- Planning for an educational opportunity to the General Board of Global Ministries in August 2006.

In 2007, the United Methodist Rural Fellowship will do leadership-training workshops on reaching the unchurched in rural communities.

We, the Town and Country Committee, want to say a special thanks to The Duke Endowment for its support of our ministry and to Mark L. Barden for his leadership in this area.

The United Methodist Rural Fellowship will have its annual banquet on Wednesday, June 7, 2006, at 5:00 P.M. at Long's Chapel Church, at Lake Junaluska.

Keys S. Pendleton, *Chairperson*

### Volunteers in Mission

The Volunteers in Mission program continues to grow in the Western North Carolina Conference, with more and more individuals wishing to share of their time in mission-minded avenues. It is the future for the missions of the conference, as illustrated in the following reports:

#### Building Teams

Going into 2005, the building teams program faced a severe financial shortage. Through the concerted effort of the Building Team Committee and our dedicated volunteers, no teams were canceled for lack of funding. During the past year, the program sent out 549 volunteers on 35 teams to 11 foreign countries and the state of Alaska. Approximately 33% of these missionaries were first-time building team volunteers.

Teams to Lithuania and Cambodia drew a lot of interest and were very successful in establishing relations in those areas. These mixed teams (building and education and/or medical) have proven themselves as a new direction in building and sending teams. For 2006, the BTC has accepted invitations from the bishop of Jakarhand, India, for a team to Pakur, India, as well as from Africa University for a team to Mutare, Zimbabwe.

There were changes in the program:

- The Building Teams Committee has new officers for 2006-07. The changes made last year, in relation to the functions of our officers, has worked very effectively in handing the business end of the building team program.
- In response to the financial strain faced going into 2005, the committee has limited the number of teams to be sent out each year and the amount of funds that will be given to teams by the committee for materials.

Training:

- An application process has been adopted for choosing new team leaders.
- A team leader training manual was developed for new leaders and those who have not led a team in over a year.
- The manual is adaptable for leaders who may take teams not under the conference committee's umbrella.
- Team leader training will be scheduled twice a year.

Sandy Waldron, *Chairperson*

### Disaster Response

The Western North Carolina Conference continues to be involved in disaster response within the conference and the areas affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In addition, it has actively pursued ministry within the tsunami-affected regions and the earthquake area of Pakistan.

In the beginning of January 2005, a conference *Manual for Disaster Response* was approved, and each local church received copies of the local-church edition during the 2005 annual conference. There was only one early response team in January 2005, with approximately 60 persons trained in early response. As of the end of March 2006, over 1,500 persons have been trained in early response. Two new vehicles have been purchased by Disaster Response, and several disaster response trailer units have been outfitted through the conference, districts, and individual local churches.

Since September 2004, over 200 teams have gone to the mountains of North Carolina, with approximately 2,000 individuals giving of their time in rebuilding. Total value of volunteer labor exceeds \$1.2 million. In addition, through February 2006, over 100 teams and approximately 1,200 volunteers have been

sent to the Gulf areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. In addition, over \$540,000 in supplies have gone to the Gulf. Throughout the 2004/2005 hurricane seasons, \$1,038,781 was raised for conference disaster response, and over \$2,267,154 was sent to UMCOR for hurricane, tsunami, and earthquake response (as of December 31, 2005).

Presently, the districts of the Western North Carolina Conference are being partnered with churches in Mississippi active in disaster response. Through this effort, the conference will continue to feed volunteers and supplies to work under the direction of the affected areas.

Edward D. McKinney, *Chairperson*

#### **Medical Volunteers in Mission Committee**

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 Western North Carolina Conference. Built with conference funding, the medical clinic has established yearly budgets met through donations of interested parties, grants, and visiting doctors, nurses and other 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.

The Good Samaritan Clinic officially opened its doors on June 16, 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 these areas.

In addition to medical needs, teams have gone to the bateys to build toilets and 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 work in Dominican Republic is just in its infancy, but with work, a five-year goal to assure operating funds from yearly donations is not out of reach.

The Haiti Mission, an outreach ministry of Providence Church, Charlotte, and facilitated by the Medical Volunteers in Mission Committee, has worked in the north of Haiti for 25 years in order to provide medical care to the poor. Six teams work each year at two clinics, built and equipped by this mission. The clinics are staffed by Haitians who have been trained to give basic health care, so that, when our teams are not in Haiti, the clinics continue to treat patients. A malnutrition program for children, which has achieved some note, is based on a fortified food product developed in Malawi, and brought to Haiti by Dr. Pat Wolff, a team pediatrician. In a region once defined by Sante Publique as having a population of 25,000, our clinic at Tovar has treated more than that number. We have seen the difference such a service makes in raising the health and hope levels of the community. The glaring problems that we now face are hunger and HIV/AIDS.

Mike Barringer, M.D., *Chairperson*

#### **Wesley Community Development Corporation**

Formerly known as Rural Affordable Housing, Inc., Wesley Community Development Corporation opened its doors in Statesville, North Carolina, 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 affordable homes in rural areas of the conference for all who qualify, regardless of religion, race, or creed. By definition, "affordable" housing is defined as layers of financing through grants, low-cost loans, and government subsidies so that quality homes may be built for low- and very low-income families, with house payments they can afford. 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.

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.

We completed 12 homes in 2005, including completion of our Westglow community, near Union Grove (northern Iredell County), as well as seven homes in Mocksville (Davie County), two in Troutman (southern Iredell County) and one in Jefferson (Ashe County). Our Westglow community was the 2005 North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) award winner for homes in a non-urban setting. Award criteria included (1) quality of life, (2) quality of construction, and (3) value for the cost to the homeowner. This community is often featured on the NCHFA website, as well as in many of their presentations. In addition, Wesley Community Development Corporation remained closely aligned with the Waynesville Disaster Response Board in efforts to help residents in Haywood and Macon counties who were impacted by devastating floods from hurricanes Frances and Ivan.

Currently, we are continuing construction in Troutman, where we plan to complete at least five more homes in 2006. In addition, we are beginning to work on the infrastructure— as well as initial home construction—in Yadkinville (Yadkin County) on the 13.25-acre site we purchased in 2005. We plan to complete a total of 27 homes in Yadkinville over the next four years. In addition, we will continue our close working relationship with the Waynesville Disaster Response Board and expect to complete several homes in Haywood and Macon counties as soon as land becomes available.

Lawrence E. Carella, *Vice-President and General Manager*

**Proposal: Directors of Wesley Community Development Corporation**

**(Referred as Petition 4 to Forum Group 6)  
(Adopted by conference on June 9, 2006)**

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.	James H. Graves	Helen Rogers
William Cannon	Walter M. Hand	Valerie B. Rosenquist
Michael W. Collins	Randolph H. Harry	David E. Smith, Jr.
Coley E. Hooker, Jr.	Roy H. Helm, Jr.	Sam H. Smith, Jr.
Janet H. Collins	Olin B. Isenhour	James T. Trollinger

**c. COMMISSION ON WITNESS MINISTRIES**

The Commission on Witness Ministries provides resources and training events to the congregations of our 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 4,855 professions of faith were made in our churches in 2005, although that is 412 fewer than the number of people who made professions of faith in 2004. In addition, we continue to be challenged by the reality that some 40% of our churches report having received no one by profession 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:

- **Effective Evangelism Strategies for Reaching Unchurched Persons for Jesus Christ:** This topic was presented in five of our district leadership conferences this year by our director, Nancy B. Rankin. Lists of evangelism resources were placed on our website.
- **Evangelism Toolbox:** This booklet explains ten different evangelism programs for use in local churches. It is available through the congregational development office at the conference center in Charlotte 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 each year recognizes churches that have increased their worship attendance by 5%, received a percentage of their new members on profession of faith, started a new small group or class, and paid their apportionments and askings in full. Over 60 churches qualified last year. The Church of Excellence booklets were redesigned last year to be used by local churches as a resource book for ideas for evangelism and outreach ministries.
- **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. Sam H. Smith, Jr., received the laity award; Kelly P. Carpenter, the clergy award, and the youth group of Grace Church, Kings Mountain, the group award.

Dynamic Conference programs of Witness Ministries include:

- **Methodist Motorsports Evangelism:** Begun as a way to reach new people for Jesus Christ, this program features local church volunteers giving out fan guides and interacting with race fans during ten weeks of summer races at Lowes Motor Speedway, Concord. Four cars raced this year with the United Methodist "cross and flame" logo. The Commission on Witness Ministries sponsored the drivers. Other volunteers worked with the pit crews and race teams to offer them the good news of Jesus Christ. This evangelism ministry has attracted the attention of other conferences which now want to start similar outreach evangelism ministries at racetracks in their areas.
- **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 Mark Mittleberg, author of *The Contagious Congregation*, as the presenter on evangelism.
- **Royce and Jane Reynolds** have graciously funded a new **Leadership Academy on Evangelism and Discipleship** that began in January with 25 selected pastors who will attend six sessions over two years. They have asked that this program be run through the office of congregational development and witness ministries and be facilitated by Nancy B. Rankin. On-site visits to effective churches will be made, as well as having leading presenters come to the academy locations and engage the participants.
- **Inspiring Worship Conference:** Members of the Witness Commission joined with the Council on Congregational Development in hosting this conference that addressed the need for every worship experience to be inspiring, regardless of its style. Kim Miller, of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church, in Tipp City, Ohio, was the keynote speaker, and six workshops were held that addressed how to create inspiring worship experiences and how to use Natural Church Development to help assess and improve your church's health. Inspiring worship is one of eight characteristics of church health explored in Natural Church Development.

With 40% of our churches reporting no adult professions of faith in 2005, 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

Our newly re-established commission has initiated plans for a conference-wide study of the document entitled *Mutual Recognition and Mutual Reconciliation of Ministries*, issued to the nine member churches of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC, formerly COCU) by that body's Ministry Task Force in June 2005. Our commission conducted a workshop led by Dr. W. Douglas Mills, associate general secretary for dialogue and interfaith relations of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, on January 21, 2006, at Dilworth Church, Charlotte, through the courtesy of senior pastor Frank H. (Duke) Ison. Representatives of most of the districts of the conference were present and were commissioned to introduce the study of the *Mutual Recognition* document in their respective districts.

Members of our commission also attended a similar CUIC study led by Dr. Rollin Russell in Greensboro on November 19, 2005.

The commission is now planning to introduce the CUIC program study at the upcoming district leadership conferences in the new church year and is in the process of training persons within the conference to conduct that study.

The annual LARCUM Bishop's Dialogue, attended by bishops and other representatives of the Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and United Methodist churches, was held May 1 and 2, 2006, at the Catholic Conference Center, near Hickory. James C. Howell, senior pastor of Myers Park Church, Charlotte, was the principal speaker on the subject, "Why Fundamentalism Still Matters: A Way Forward."

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

#### b. COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE

The members of Commission on Religion and Race (CORR) continue our commitment to follow the mandate outlined 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 commission continues our pledge to:

- Give voice to the issues and concerns of racial ethnic people.
- Counsel church leaders and members on different facets of racially inclusive church and society.
- Facilitate workshops (such as Bridge Builders) and develop resource materials related to issues of racism, diversity, and inclusiveness.
- Empower racial ethnic groups.
- Sensitize the church about racism.
- Monitor and evaluate racial and cultural inclusiveness on all levels of the church.

This year, CORR began the task of monitoring and evaluating conference and district boards, agencies, commissions, and committees. We developed monitoring profile forms, which were distributed to the leadership of our districts, conference ministries (agencies, commissions, boards, and committees), and conference programs ministries. This information is being compiled and will be shared with our annual conference.

The members of the commission were pleased that an initial review of these monitoring surveys indicates that several organizations within our conference have an interest in participating in the Bridge Builders training. CORR received a grant this past year to provide funding for a Bridge Builders workshop retreat for conference leadership. The commission is committed to sponsoring Bridge Builders programs for the leadership throughout our conference.

On October 5, 2005, CORR sponsored a multicultural conference celebration, hosted by the Winston-Salem District. *Unity in Christ that Values Diversity* was a successful event and provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the diversity of God's Kingdom. We are indebted to our keynote speaker, Margaret F. McCleskey, wife of our bishop, for her insightful and animated presentation!

CORR sponsored the Martin Luther King Celebration, which was hosted in the Statesville District, January 13-14, 2006. This year's theme was *Valuing Our Diversity: Making His Dream Our Dream*. On Friday evening, conference youth attended a Charlotte Bobcats game and then had a sleepover at Fair View Church, in Mooresville. The next day, the youth joined the adults to take part in the MLK Celebration program and

worship service. The youth participated in a skit that honored Rosa Parks. The keynote speakers included James Ferguson, a civil rights lawyer, and Chaplain Col. Paul Vicaloi. CORR gives thanks to all those who made this celebration possible, especially those who chaperoned the youth sleepover, the liturgical dance groups, and St. Mark's Mass Inspirational Choir!

After considerable research and prayer, CORR drafted a racial harassment policy for the conference. It is printed below as a petition to the 2006 session. In addition, the commission is honing the process to follow through with identifying racial-ethnic leaders in support of the *Inclusiveness in Leadership Positions* resolution, which was accepted at our 2005 annual conference.

Kathy FitzJefferies, *Chairperson*

#### **Petition: Policy on Racial Harassment**

**(Referred as Petition 5 to Forum Group 2)  
(Adopted by conference on June 9, 2006)**

The Commission on Religion and Race proposes that the following policy be adopted:

##### **Introduction**

The Western North Carolina Annual Conference is committed to assuring dignity for all and desires that every church be welcoming to all persons. Harassment based on any motive, including, but not limited to, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national, cultural or ethnic origin, disability, or age results in the victim's humiliation and loss of esteem and the violation and breakdown in the sense of community within and beyond the church.

Under our United Methodist *Discipline*, all forms of harassment are chargeable offenses for both clergy and laity. The policy and procedures which follow come from the Western North Carolina Annual Conference so that the churches in its jurisdiction will have a clear definition of and a policy for dealing with a particular kind of harassment, namely, racial harassment. The document is also designed to improve our ability to respond effectively to complaints concerning racial harassment.

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to laity, clergy, and lay employees of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference regarding cases of racial harassment. The existence of and attention to such a policy, including procedures for complaints, will act as a deterrent to inappropriate behavior.

##### **Foundational Statement**

Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enable all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world. Thus inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. As United Methodists, we have a commitment to bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ, the living reality at the center of the church's life and witness. Jesus calls us to community and acceptance. Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. These four elements are linked together in the quest for justice and inclusiveness in our world to which Jesus calls us.

##### **Theological Basis**

The prophet Micah proclaims: "*The Lord has told us what is right and what he [the Lord] demands: See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God*" (Micah 6:8 CEV). The church is called to do the work of the God who requires justice and mercy of those who would walk humbly with God. God's plan for creation was and is to *unite all things, both in heaven and in earth* (Ephesians 1:10). *For this reason, Christ came into the world as our peace and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility* (Ephesians 2:14). *Jesus asked, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"* Responding he said, "*All who do the will of my Father*" (Mark 3:31). *We are one body and one Spirit, called to one hope in Christ* (Ephesians 4:4).

The role of the church is to be an agent of God's plan for unity and reconciliation. Reconciliation is the mandate of the Christian faith because God has made of one blood all persons who dwell on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26). The church, therefore, is called to proclaim the transforming and cleansing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel that transforms relationships and cleanses us from the sin and guilt of racial harassment. God's gracious promise is to be with us in our efforts to see that justice is done, to let mercy be our highest aim, and to guide us in our effort humbly to obey our God.

As we seek to dismantle the racism and cultural biases in our structure, policies, and practices, we will also continue to work to create an environment in which all people are respected, accepted, and welcomed. *There is one body. But it has many parts. Even though it has many parts, they make up one body. It is the same with Christ* (1 Corinthians 12:12). *If one member suffers, all suffer together with it, if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it*" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

##### **Definition**

The General Conference of 1992 defined the following conditions as racial harassment:

Abusive and/or derogatory language that in a subtle or overt manner belittles, impugns, humiliates, defames, or demeans a person or a group of persons based on racial and ethnic traits, heritage and characteristics;

A behavior (individual, group, or institutional) which abuses, belittles, humiliates, defames, or demeans a person or a group of persons based on racial or ethnic traits, heritage, and characteristics;

Documentation, printed or visual, which abuses, humiliates, defames, or demeans a person or group of persons based on racial and ethnic heritage, traits, and characteristics. (1996 *Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*, pages 372-373)

The Western North Carolina Annual Conference will not tolerate any acts or communications which intimidate, demean, annoy, or insult an individual on the basis of his/her race, national, or ethnic origin. We prohibit behaviors that contribute to the creation of a racially hostile and offensive church or work environment.

This environment is created when words or actions directed toward a group or an individual of a particular race or ethnic origin are unwelcome and seriously and pervasively offensive and demeaning to the victims *whether intended or not*. These prohibitions against racial harassment apply to any person within the Western North Carolina Conference, whether laity, clergy, or staff. The offended person may be another individual in the church, a recipient of the church's services, a staff member, or a community member. The prohibitions against racial harassment may apply at any place or time.

While all persons are expected to take part in maintaining an environment safe and free from racial harassment, each supervisor, pastor, and congregational leader is responsible for taking steps to create such an environment. This responsibility is also intended to cover any racial harassment complaints lodged against third-party providers of services to the Western North Carolina Annual Conference or individuals involved in business relationships with the conference. Those who have knowledge of incidents involving substantiated racial harassment and fail to respond appropriately also are in violation of this policy.

#### Procedures

If you are racially harassed, witness racial harassment, or have clear evidence of harassment, proceed as follows or advise the person harassed to do so:

- State firmly and clearly to the harasser that this behavior is unwelcome and you want it to stop. It may be helpful to take another person with you for support. This action, in some cases, will resolve the issue.
- Keep a journal that documents all incidents of suspected racial harassment, including dates, times, and descriptions of the incidents. Record the names of any witnesses to the harassment. Keep copies of all written materials and references to the harassment. If you receive any letters, cards, or memos of a harassing nature, keep them and note the date and how the material was received (mailed to your home, left on your desk, or otherwise).

If the issue cannot be resolved through personal confrontation you may:

- Inform your staff-parish relations committee, your pastor, the district superintendent, your immediate supervisor, or other such person or group. Keep copies of all correspondence. Remember that the church supports an environment free from racial antagonism and that the above-named persons are committed to helping you.
- You may present your situation to the chair or any member of the Racial Harassment Prevention/Response Team.

If you are accused of racial harassment:

- Try talking with the individual who is making the complaint against you, with the permission of him or her through a third party. Try to reach a solution. Document the agreement and actions taken.
- If the issue cannot be resolved through personal dialogue, you may: (1) Inform one of the above-named persons or groups, depending on which is appropriate. (2) Present the situation to the chair or any member of the Racial Harassment Prevention/Response Team.

If racial harassment is reported to you:

- Listen objectively and take it seriously.
- Help the person follow the steps outlined above.

Any incident of racial harassment experienced, perpetrated, or observed is to be reported to the chair or any member of the Racial Prevention/Harassment Response Team, who are obligated to provide opportunity to reflect upon, learn from, and correct harassment behaviors in a spirit of sensitivity, respect, and reconciliation. This policy is designed to be correctional, rather than punitive.

In any event, the offenses outlined in ¶ 2702.1 (clergy) and .3 (laity) and the procedures outlined in ¶ 2703 of *The Book of Discipline* (2004) and other relevant sections may be pursued by either of the parties. The procedures in this policy statement are supplementary in nature and do not, in any way, supersede the tenets of *The Book of Discipline*.

#### Proposals for Implementation

1. That the annual conference adopt the policy.
2. That a Racial Harassment Prevention/Response Team be formed, at which time bylaws and procedures will be established.
3. That some of the current members of the Commission on Race and Religion serve on the Racial Harassment Prevention/Response Team.
4. That the bishop appoint additional members to the team, in consultation with groups in the conference who deal with racial issues.
5. That over half of the Racial Harassment Prevention/Response Team members consist of racial ethnic minorities, which include representation of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Hispanics.
6. That this policy be translated into appropriate languages needed to make it clear to all language groups represented in the conference.

7. That the annual conference approve a budget for the work of the Racial Harassment Prevention/Response Team in the conference budget of 2007.
8. That the annual conference direct that this policy be printed on the conference website and in the journal.

[Materials in this policy statement are drawn from a number of sources and documents, including: Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference Racial Harassment Policy; Ohio Annual Conference Racial Harassment Policy; New England Annual Conference Racial Harassment Policy; Colby College Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedures (Waterville, Maine); *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (2004); *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* (1996 and 2004)]

### c. COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) focused on the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women, and some of our ideas have been incorporated into the conference celebration for clergy women. We will also have a display available at annual conference.

In July of this year, several COSROW members will attend a safe sanctuaries/sexual harassment seminar in Nashville, Tennessee, to help us better assist all clergy with services dealing with misconduct (sexual abuse) and maintaining safe sanctuaries for our children and youth.

Beginning in the fall of 2006, COSROW will begin work on a new study on the appointments of, contemporary attitudes toward, and compensation of clergywomen, as well as those of their male clergy counterparts, following up on our 2000 study. This will be done in collaboration with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. COSROW is the agency of The United Methodist Church that is charged with working to achieve the full and equal participation and leadership of women in the denomination.

Mary Catherine Willis, *Chairperson*

### d. COMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

The Committee on African American Ministries is working closely with the conference director of ethnic and justice ministries. During the past year, we have continued to identify the areas of congregational training on which we want to focus our attention. The committee will work in conjunction with the bishop and cabinet and other ministries to host the second African American clergy retreat and convocation, which will be held in early September 2006.

Bishop Woodie W. White was the keynote speaker at our first convocation, along with facilitator Marvin Moss, who preached our opening worship service. The three-day event was a success, in that we began to break molds of the past and affirm our ministry for the future. We look forward to our second annual convocation this year. It will be held at the University Hilton, in Charlotte, in early September.

Again, we would like to thank Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey and his cabinet for their concerns and support of this convocation.

In fulfilling our purpose, the committee will work with the conference to provide resources for:

1. Celebration of faith and culture to educate all churches within the conference through seeking justice, loving kindness, walking humbly with our God to recognize, accept, and celebrate the unique expressions of faith among all God's children.
2. Leadership development to identify, nurture, equip, and release individuals within African American churches to assume:
  - a. leadership within the local church, district, and conference;
  - b. leadership within the local community;
  - c. full-time Christian ministry.

Our theme for this year's retreat and convocation is, "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you" (2 Timothy 1:6). We are grateful for the participation of each member of the committee, who represent each district.

Albert Mills, *Chairperson*

### e. COMMITTEE ON ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

After being officially constituted in the Western North Carolina Conference in March 2005, the Committee on Asian American Ministries has had quarterly meetings during the 2005-06 conference year. At the September 26, 2005, meeting, the committee elected Samuel Om as its new vice-chairperson and received new members.

One of the most meaningful events during the past year has been the participation by committee members in the annual Korean Pastors' Convention, together with Korean pastors from the North Carolina Conference, at Trinity Center, in Salter Path, August 16-18, 2005. The committee has decided to continue to have the annual conventions with them.

The committee has also surveyed the current conditions in, and expectations of, the Asian American churches, in an effort to support their ministries.

Cher Lue Vang, *Chairperson*

#### f. COMMITTEE ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY

By God's design, we are to be relational, interconnected, and in partnership with each other and with God for His causes. In the movie  *Antwone Fisher*, Antwone recites a poem, "Who Will Cry for the Little Boy":

Who will cry for the little boy, lost and all alone? Who will cry for the little boy, abandoned without his own? Who will cry for the little boy, he cried himself to sleep? Who will cry for the little boy, who never had it for keeps? Who will cry for the little boy, who walked on burning sands? Who will cry for the little boy, the boy inside a man? Who will cry for the little boy, who knew well hurt and pain? Who will cry for the little boy, who died and died again? Who will cry for the little boy, a good boy he tried to be? Who will cry for the little boy, who cries inside of me?

This poem speaks to the little girl in us as well, and we are to be reminded by it that we are our brother's keeper or risk hearing the response of the Lord, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:9b-10). The moral test of a society is how that society treats... those who are in the dawn of life...*the children*; those who are in the twilight of life...*the elderly*...and those who are in the shadow of life...*the sick, the needy, and the differently-abled*. (Attributed to numerous sources.)

This past fall, as Christians expressing the love of God in both word and deed, committee members joined in solidarity with 96 bishops of The United Methodist Church for a Call to Repentance and Peace with Justice, which included a statement of conscience regarding the war in Iraq.

We were, unfortunately, defeated in our efforts against a state lottery, which won by a narrow margin, while violating the state constitution to do so. Our peace with justice coordinator, Stephen F. Lee, has done such a wonderful job of monitoring and keeping us informed on the lottery issues. He reminds us that, even before the first ticket sold, there were already scandals, investigations, and efforts to use lottery proceeds to supplant, rather than supplement, education funds. For this reason, he reminds us now to stay informed about efforts to cut or to freeze education funding, as has happened over time in states with "education" lotteries. And, as church people, we need to witness to our values by not participating in the lottery. Steve further states that the lottery is just one small part of the bipartisan effort at the state and federal levels to shift more and more of the tax burden to lower-income people, while cutting services and health care for the poor, the young, and the elderly and granting more and more corporate welfare to the rich. Government budgets, no less than church budgets, conference budgets, and individual budgets, are moral documents and reflect more fully where our real values lie than do any words we say.

As a part of this report, Steve also leads us in continuing to encourage our representatives to place a moratorium on executions while studies are made to see how to reduce the flaws in the system and to prevent the kind of prosecutorial misconduct that has allowed the withholding of exonerating evidence in past cases. Of course, the United Methodist Social Principles oppose capital punishment altogether. We would like to thank those churches that participate in the Peace with Justice offering each year, and we encourage all churches to observe Peace with Justice Sunday. Worship materials are linked from our committee's website. As an alternate time for this observance, the lectionary readings that lead up to Advent and for the First Sunday of Advent are often particularly appropriate for this observance.

We have joined with the North Carolina Council of Churches this year at the request of its executive director, George Reed, to pray throughout the year for the council's member bodies and their leaders. We have also extended this same invitation throughout our conference via the e-news and district newsletters and websites. Also, in serving as a link between the General Board of Church and Society and the districts and local churches within our conference, we have lifted up via the Web and newsletters the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids annual celebration of *Kick Butts Day* in April, which educates kids of all ages about the dangers of tobacco and allows youth an opportunity to advocate by organizing a variety of activities to expose and counter the tobacco industry's powerful promotional strategies aimed at youth. Committee members also participated in the Caring for God's Creation conference, in which Boyd M. Holiday, our environmental justice coordinator, served on the planning team and presented a workshop at this conference. People of faith were called to reexamine our understanding of our relationship to God and creation and look at the issue of ecological justice and to begin the task of raising awareness through the creation of Earth Care Ministries.

During the last half of this quadrennium, the committee plans to partner with CJAMM and other justice networks within our conference and state, as well as the General Board of Church and Society, on poverty issues as we develop ministry with the poor and suffering in local communities. Later this year, in collaboration with the North Carolina Council of churches, we will lift up the issue of health care in forums and also some poverty issues in a town-hall meeting style. The Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), the forerunner to Church and Society, will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in April 2007 in Washington, D.C. In 2008, we will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Social Creed, and we encourage all churches to have studies of the Social Principles in preparation for this celebration.

Please visit our Web page: Go to [www.wnccumc.org](http://www.wnccumc.org) and click on the left-hand menu bar "Program Ministries" and then "Ethnic and Justice Ministries," or you may type in the address at <http://www.gbqumc.org/albemarle/soccon.html>. Locate information to keep you on top of social justice issues at this site. We also invite and encourage all members of the conference to visit the General Board of Church and So-

ciety website at [www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org) and click on "UMPower" as a way of easily staying informed and taking action on issues of concern.

God has created a world of sufficiency for all. The problem is not the lack of natural and economic resources, but how they are shared, distributed, and made accessible within society and throughout the world.

This report is offered on behalf of our entire committee. Together, as a conference in God's Kingdom-building work through faithful advocacy and action, may we always *Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, and Transform the World.*

Pamela Shoffner, *Chairperson*

#### **Proposal: North Carolina Lottery**

**(Referred as Petition 40 to Forum Group 3)  
(Adopted by conference on June 9, 2006)**

While we have lost the fight to prevent a North Carolina lottery, there is still much we can do and need to do to mitigate the harm it will cause to the poor and the young people of our state. It is not enough for us just to say, "We told you so," at each hint of scandal, or every time someone in power suggests that funds be used to supplant, not supplement, current education spending.

Therefore, we, the Western North Carolina Annual Conference do hereby resolve to:

1. Stay in touch with our legislative representatives to discourage further weakening of the safeguards against exploitation of the young and the poor and, indeed, to encourage the adoption of those that were in the bill that originally passed the House. In that process, we should try to find reliable statistics about the socio-economic and age demographics of those who buy significant numbers of lottery tickets.
2. Monitor the uses of the proceeds of the lottery to see how much actually gets spent on education, how much winds up out of state, etc.
3. Oppose every effort to divert lottery funds from spending upon public schools or to fail to increase education spending so that the schools are no better off than they would have been without a lottery. We need to learn from the experiences of other states that have resulted in less per-pupil spending for education in "education-lottery" states than in non-lottery states. Although we oppose the lottery, we should work to see that, as long as the money is collected, some of the money actually does some good.
4. Oppose amending the state constitution to entrench the lottery under the guise of protecting education spending.
5. Discourage United Methodists from participating in state lotteries. If our people want to support education, then direct contributions and volunteer work will have much more impact.
6. Encourage United Methodists to support those businesses that have chosen not to participate in the lottery.
7. Encourage our churches to discuss and establish policies on whether they will accept gifts that they know come from lottery winnings.
8. Continue to oppose the trends of state and national tax policies of shifting more and more of the tax burden to working-class and lower-middle-class people.

#### **g. COMMITTEE ON HISPANIC MINISTRIES**

The Hispanic/Latino population continues to grow in the state of North Carolina, specially in the Western North Carolina Conference territory. From children's ministry to *mujer-a-mujer* programs across the conference, the need to reach Latinos is great. Various forms of ministry are taken place, such as the mother-to-mother program in Coburn Memorial Church, Salisbury; contemporary bilingual worship in Forest Hill Hispanic ministry and free clinic, Concord; inspiring worship music in University City Faith Community, Charlotte; and a message of hope through "*Sigue a Jesus, Haz discipulo, Transforma al mundo.*"

Vibrant and new ministries are flourishing through our conference, with faith communities developing ministries with children and families. Modules I, II, and III of the National Plan for Hispanic Ministries are being offered through the conference. We celebrate the rapid growth of missions, including the High Point District *Mision Adonai*; in Greensboro, Glenwood Hispanic Ministries; and in Waynesville, the Hispanic center.

Leonard O. Fair, *Chairperson*  
Frank Ramos, *Conference Director*

**Proposal: Drivers' Licenses for Immigrants**

**(Referred as Petition 44 to Forum Group 3)  
(Adopted by conference on June 9, 2006)**

Whereas, Many of our Latino immigrants suffer as a result of our mixed messages to come to this country, with or without documentation; and

Whereas, There is no such thing as an "illegal" person, only persons with or without documentation; and

Whereas, Immigrants who have come to this country to work will continue to drive to work, with or without drivers' licenses; and

Whereas, Drivers without licenses cannot get insurance; and

Whereas, Drivers who do not get licenses have little incentive to learn to read traffic signs or the rules of the road; and

Whereas, An undocumented driver without a license, having fear of punishment, will flee the site of an accident, thus risking more damage and suffering; and

Whereas, Drivers' licenses were never intended to be proof of citizenship or legal status; and

Whereas, Issuing drivers' licenses to immigrant persons would alleviate suffering on the part of all drivers and passengers, especially immigrants, both documented and undocumented, and show our empathy with the Latino population, which is expected to grow to 20% of the population of the United States within 14 years; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Western North Carolina Conference call for the issuing of drivers' licenses as an earned privilege to drive for all people who have shown the responsibility to learn the rules of the road.

#### h. COMMITTEE ON NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES

The conference Committee on Native American Ministries is continuing to work as a vital group within our annual conference. Our focus for this year is to train Native leaders who can participate on committees at the local church, district, conference, jurisdictional, and general-church levels. This training includes our youth, who play a vital role within the Native community. Youth are being encouraged to use their gifts and talents for the church through music, Bible study, and evangelism. It is important that they know how important their participation is in the church.

We continue our role as Native educators throughout the conference. The Native story is important, because we cannot know who we are as Methodists without knowing all the stories of the people that make up our denomination. This is a part of the vision for the multi-cultural celebrations each year. The sad part is that too many folks let this opportunity pass without taking advantage of it. The failure to know the various peoples that make up Methodism is the failure to be the church God calls us to be, for God is the One that created us. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to proclaim the gospel in every language represented. The Holy Spirit is still doing this today through those who are willing to be disciples of the Pentecost of our day.

Chris J. Bennett, *Chairperson*

#### 4. CONFERENCE RESOURCE CENTER

The Conference Resource Center continues to provide a wide variety of resources for use in the local church and in district and conference areas of ministry. Churches may get ideas, materials, and video/DVD resources to address all seven of the Western North Carolina Conference Vision for Ministry emphases. All types of resources, both print and video, are available for use in Sunday school classes of all ages, youth programs, children's church and after-school programs, family night, UMWomen and UMMen programs, and short- or long-term study groups. In addition to specific requested resources, we also offer consultation on topics and resources that we have available. The resource center has also offered consultation and resourcing for local churches that are developing new libraries or revamping existing ones. The catalog for the resource center is available through the conference website, [www.wnccumc.org](http://www.wnccumc.org). Visitors to the catalog website can e-mail requests directly from the website or contact the Resource Center by telephone for questions and additional information.

Mary S. Robinson, *Director*