

Lay Delegate's Report on Annual Conference



The time I spent as a Lay Delegate to the 133rd session of the NM Annual Conference at Glorietta June 3-6, did not disappoint me. As a second year delegate, it was still exciting, interesting, educational and fun. This year, both NM and Northwest Texas Annual Conferences met at the same time at Glorietta, and with the exception of a few business sessions, all meetings were attended jointly.

After breakfast Tuesday morning, we gathered outside Holcomb Hall by Districts and processed inside at the trumpet fanfare. Up front were large, beautifully decorated banners depicting this year's theme, "Moving Forward with Hope" which were designed by Cheryl Hicks of Trinity UMC in Albuquerque. The banners were displayed at the front throughout the rest of the Conference. At opening worship, a humorous skit by Francie Pittman (as a lost Methodist delegate at the Glorietta Baptist Camp) and Rev. Steve Trout, introduced Bishop Whitfield who gave a message entitled "Setting the Thermostat". He told us that too many of us know we need to make changes, but become too comfortable and get stuck, thinking life and the situations we face are too complicated when really, it is very simple. We need to overcome our fear of the unknown and take action. The offering for the opening worship service, over \$4,000.00 went to Lydia Patterson Student Scholarships. Music for six of the eight worship services were lead by Rev. Terry Lowe, organist, Rev. Marv Gregory, pianist, and Rev. Ruby Moultrie, song leader all from Texas.

Later that morning, institution reports were made from the following: Mt. Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, United Methodist Reporter, Black College Fund, UM Health and Welfare Ministries, McMurry University, Perkins School of Theology, Methodist Children's Home, and Methodist Mission Home. Landsun Homes was awarded the 2008 Organization of the Year.

Jim Hawk, Albuquerque District Superintendent, presented to the assembly six basketballs which were autographed by several ball teams or coaches including, McMurry, UNM, and others. The balls would be up for silent auction bids during Annual Conference. Everyone bidding, not just the winner (who would get the ball), would pay their bid and the money would go to Nothing But Nets campaign. A similar silent auction was held at General Assembly earlier this year, and \$440,000.00 was raised (which included matching funds made by Bill Gates) and went to buy treated mosquito nets for families in Africa to combat malaria. By Friday morning, Nothing But Nets received nearly \$20,000.00 from the Annual Conference silent auction and offerings from Thursday evening worship service.



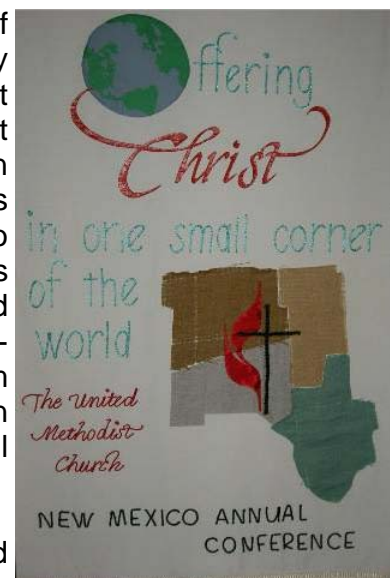
After lunch separate meetings were held by clergy and laity. Bill Wood, lay delegate to General Conference spoke to us. Every voting lay delegate received the book "Three Simple Rules, a Wesleyan Way of Living". We were then dismissed to go to our own District Meeting. Nominations were made to fill vacancies for committee chairs and coordinators. Superintendent, Beverly Jones led the meeting. The theme for the District was "Aloha" and Houchen Community Center was designated as the fund raising project. As she made introductions of new pastors coming into the District, and conducted District business, she proposed that people make bids (money going to Houchen) to name a person to wear a flamingo hat and grass skirt who would stand up front until another bid was made. I have photos of **Jon Moore**, **James Large**, and **Beverly Jones** in the grass skirt, and flamingo hat. Tubes of mini M&Ms were handed out and once emptied, were filled with quarters and given to Houchen.

After dinner on Tuesday, was a most inspirational Communion service. Rev. Tyrone Gordon, Conference preacher, gave the message, "There is a Place at the Table". Rev. Gordon is a national revival preacher and workshop leader and was pastor of St. Mark United Methodist in Wichita, Kansas in 1988 which was considered to be one of the fastest growing (from 350 to 2,600 members) African American congregations in the United Methodist Church. Presently, he pastors at St. Luke Community UMC in Dallas. Special music was by Enchantment -- Albuquerque Hand Bell Ensemble. They were wonderful! The offering of over \$5,000,00 went to United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). After the service was a reception hosted by McMurry University. I went to a choir practice for volunteers who would be in the choir for the Memorial Service on Thursday.

Wednesday morning after breakfast, was a joint business session. David Murrah gave a humorous presentation using overhead projections of maps giving the history of the marriage of New Mexico and Northwest Texas Conferences. Reports were given by: Texas Methodist Foundation and New Mexico Methodist Foundation. (New Mexico Methodist Foundation Inc. was the institution that conducted the financial campaign for Morning Star's new construction.) They will soon have an office in Las Cruces. Scholarship awards were made to individuals who enter into the ministry as a second career, to a woman entering into the ministry, and to individuals supporting education. Announcements of upcoming workshops for equipping clergy and laity (Round Up and EDE) were made with literature passed out. Conference Board of Global Ministries gave a report with the various Volunteers in Mission projects. University UMC of Las Cruces received the Cinco Estrellas (Five Star) Award. Information for training to be on a disaster response team was distributed by the NM Annual Conference Disaster Response Ministry Leadership Team. A resolution concerning the management and accounting of Operation Hogar was presented and passed. Sacramento Methodist Assembly gave its report. A short video on Camp Sunshine for the mentally handicapped was shown. Northwest Texas Conference of Camping Ministry was awarded a plaque. Next was the recognition of camp directors. **Jon Moore**, chairman of NM Conference Higher Education Campus Ministry, gave a report. Presently there are six campus ministry units in the NM Conference. A seventh unit is being established (ENMU-Roswell) and one is in the works for Odessa. Jon's report included a video clip of NMSU Wesley group with their "Free Advice" campaign. Northwest Texas Higher Education Campus Ministry report included a testimonial by a student at McMurry. The Frances Asbury Award was presented to Harold and Jane Humphreys for 25 years of service to homeless people. An inspiring video of an interview with Harold Humphreys was shown. Cokesbury representative, Karen Cole presented checks for pension programs to both the NM and NWTX Conferences. NM Board of Health & Pension Benefits gave a report.

Just before lunch, was a service of licensing and commissioning for both NM and Northwest Texas. Four men and six women were candidates to be licensed as local pastors. Four women and three men were candidates to be commissioned as probationary members, and one man was elected as an associate member for service as pastor under appointment of the Bishop. The service included special music, and the presentation, affirmation, examination, and laying on of hands for those being commissioned.

The Wednesday afternoon business session consisted of the introduction of the officers and staff of both NM and NWTX Conferences and reports by Hispanic Ministries, and Safe Sanctuaries. A video clip was shown about the need to protect the children of the church. Safe Sanctuaries' next project will involve ways to protect children who use the internet. A report was given on the Conference Team for Making Disciples. We voted on four resolutions -one was to retain Bishop Whitfield to the Northwest Texas-New Mexico Episcopal Area for the 2009-2012 quadrennium, and one was to adopt as the three main goals for our conference: "Do No Harm", "Do Good", and "Stay in Love with God" from the book "Three Simple Rules". Church Evangelism Awards were presented. **Morning Star** was again nominated from the El Paso district for the mid-sized church (we won last year), but Belen UMC won the award this year. First UMC of Marathon, Texas won the small church award, and First UMC of Farmington won the large church award.



The Archives and History commission presented the Living Archive Award for Laity to Clarice Clayborn from Odessa and the Living Archive Award for Clergy to Rev. Paul West, for his work with the Navajo people in the 4-Corners area.

Wednesday evening was the Service of Ordination for both Conferences. St. John's Chancel Choir from Albuquerque (where I was a member when I lived in Albuquerque) presented the special music. The persons to be ordained processed down the aisle followed by all the pastors that were attending the Conference in their clerical robes. The one woman to be ordained as a Deacon and nine men and three women to be ordained as Elders were presented. Rev. Gordon preached a dynamic message, "So, You Want to Be a Great Church?" The following are just a few of the points Rev. Gordon made in his message: "You must be a 'Go To' not a 'Come To' church— because Jesus said to go into the world to make disciples." "We're Trying to do 8-track Ministry in an I-Pod World", "we get caught up in church work instead of the work of the church," and Jesus doesn't ask us to be successful, he just asks us to be faithful . Following the sermon was an offering and special music, then examination, laying on of hands and prayer for the Ordination Candidates. Over \$5,000.00 in offering was collected which went to McMurry University for scholarships. The newly ordained Elders and Deacon and robed pastors processed out. Afterwards there was a reception in the tower atrium and courtyard.

Thursday morning was another combined business session. Delegates to the General Conference gave a report. There were 992 Delegates (including our own **Pastor Jon**), representing Methodist Districts from all over the world and over 6,500 people who attended the General Conference which was held in Texas. They had 1,544 petitions and a budget of \$642,000,000.00 to deal with. The United Methodist Church has made a lot of inroads on the continent of Africa. The African Methodist University in Zimbabwe, started in 1992 with 40 students, now has 1,400 students from 26 different countries. There are 1.3 million United Methodist members in the Congo alone. The President from Liberia, the first woman president from an African country, had spoken at the General Conference and told of how she received her education from United Methodists. Next were reports from the Lydia Patterson Institute, the Trustees Report, and the Administration Report. The Shared Ministries Program (which includes each church's apportionments to the various programs of the United Methodists around the world), had the highest payout in 10 years which made our Conference one of the most generous in the jurisdiction. The Board of Church and Society gave awards to St. Paul's in Las Cruces (large church), First UMC in Gallup (mid-sized), and Cloudcroft (small church).

Before lunch, was a meaningful Service of Remembrance with special music provided by the volunteer choir. We sang "At the River" (a song our Morning Star Choir has sung before), directed by John Fuss of First UMC of Roswell. Rev. Eddie Allsup, Director of Mission and Administration of NWTX gave the sermon, "Hope Does Not Disappoint". Twenty-six pastors and pastors' spouses from the two Conferences, who had passed away during the year, were remembered by the symbolic lighting of a candle and tolling of a bell, as their name was called.



Thursday afternoon, the two Conferences had their separate business meetings.

A short retirement service for five men and two women and their spouses from the NM Conference was conducted with a ritual of recognition and passing of the mantle and hymn singing. The major part of the meeting which continued into part of the dinner hour, was concerned with the new structure proposal for the NM Annual Conference. It proposed the Conference be composed of three basic ministry teams with 12 members each along with their satellite groups—they are: Envisioning, Engaging, and Equipping. After much debate and amendments proposed and voted on, the resolution was finally passed. **Pastor Jon** will be a member on the Engaging Ministry Team. Reports were made by the Rules Committee, Commission on Equitable Compensation, and Nominations Committee. The Conference Lay Leader presented a pin to the new Conference Lay Leader. Gifts were presented to James Large (outgoing Director of Mission & Administration) and Bill Wood (outgoing Conference Lay Leader).

After dinner was the Thursday Night Worship Celebration. The contemporary service was lead in music by the rock band Burgundy Road from Bastrop, Texas. CCYM students from the NM Conference presented several thought-provoking skits. Rev. Tyrone Gordon gave a dynamic sermon entitled “Created for Greatness” based on Psalm 8:3-8. He explained the difference between greatness and success. Success is how the world sees you, but greatness is how God created you. Rev. Gordon encouraged us to embrace our dignity, uniqueness, self-respect and destiny.

A final Service of Going Forth With Hope-filled Expectations was held Friday morning for both Conferences. Special music, prayers, hymn singing and a message on the parable of the sower by Bishop D. Max Whitfield prepared us for our departure. Copies of the NM and NWTX Conference Appointments for the coming year were distributed. We will have **Pastor Jon Moore** here at Morning Star for an eighth year. **Donna Nelson** will continue a second year at Cheltenham UMC in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. **Dare Stevens** will be the new director of the Wesley Foundation at ENMU. The NWTX Delegates left as they had finished their business session Thursday. NM Delegates finished up business by selecting Representatives for the Jurisdictional Pool and announcing the dates and places for the next two Annual Conferences. Odessa will be the site for 2009 (June 3-6) and we will meet back at Glorietta in 2010 (June 2-5).

The first few days of the Conference, the tower atrium was filled with supplies donated by churches and individuals going to the Navajo 4-Corners Ministry. During the meals, special interest groups such as UMM, UMW, small membership churches, extension ministries, Clergy women, Perkins Alumni, Duke Alumni, Asbury Alumni, etc. scheduled a meeting in one of the smaller dining rooms. Also at 10:00 pm an optional Devotional Service on Wednesday and Thursday was offered. In the hallways on the second and third floors were displays from many of the schools, organizations and mission groups with free materials, snacks or candy. Childcare through preschool, a prayer room, hospitality room, and Cokesbury Bookstore with discount prices were also available.

I learned more about the inner workings and organization of the United Methodist Church. I saw old friends, one whom I hadn't seen since high school days over 45 years ago, and at lunch on Thursday, I happened to meet, for the first time, a fourth cousin. There were many people at the Conference that were not Delegates. Some even brought family members. I would encourage you to attend an Annual Conference if you can, because the worship services and preaching are awesome and nothing can compare with the fellowship of meeting with other Methodists from all over the Conference. I came back with a sense of what it means to hope in Christ with confident expectation. Thank you, Morning Star, for your trust and confidence in me as a voting delegate.

-- Fran Boldt