



SOUTH WEST DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Rev. Dr. Rinaldo Hernandez, District Superintendent
Julie Bullerdick, Administrative Assistant
Sandy Voigt, Administrative Assistant

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April 2012

Death is swallowed up in victory

“You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross”, Colossians 2:13-15

Over against the Roman Catholic theological trend of emphasizing in the cross, we Protestants have developed over the centuries the theology of resurrection and our emphasis in the victorious Christ coming back to life from the dead.

This has often times transpired into an attitude of triumphalism and a tendency to preach and teach more on Christ’s victory than in Christ’s sufferings. We should not take for granted the cost of our salvation. It is painful to see Christians eagerly claiming the benefits of Christ’s death not understanding that there is no victory without the cross, there is no benefit without sacrifice. There is no such thing like “drive-through” answers to prayers or easy access to God’s blessings avoiding conflict, pain, frustration and stress. But I believe we all need to be reminded about the power of the cross and the joy of the resurrection as a model of what our Christian journey is all about: nothing will be easy, but in all things we are more than conquerors in Christ.

If there is one thing we can learn about Christ’s cross and death is that what seems to be the end is not necessarily the end. Setbacks could be the beginning of something new and better. The ending of a period in our lives could mean the opportunity for a new and more exciting phase in our personal, professional or spiritual development.

As I have been involved these past few weeks in appointments, meetings with Staff-Parish Relationship Committees and deployment of spiritual leaders, I have been able to sense that what we call “the end” of an era is just “another step” forward in the life of a faith community. And the moving of a pastor and his/her family is not necessarily a defeat in the battle but a “refreshment of troops” in order to be more effective on the battlefield.

A situation could be considered a defeat or a change of strategy depending on how personal or corporative we take the situation, if we take more seriously Kingdom benefit over personal stability. An apparent defeat is not

the end for those who believe. Suffering during a transition could be as devastating or as purifying as we want to make it. After every Good Friday there is an Easter Sunday.

My reflections during this Holy Week are based upon Paul's words to the Corinthians: *"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* (1 Corinthians 15:54). As your spiritual leader I am spending time reflecting on the spiritual situation of our churches throughout the District and I have been able to see where the struggles are, how often times we are easily distracted from what should be our main focus and spending too much time fighting the wrong battles instead of dedicating most of our time and energy in fighting Kingdom battles.

I could be easily drawn into negativism and frustration just by looking at some specific situations. But I am asking God during this Holy Week to be able to use more of my time and energy where the power of the Risen Christ is at work, defeating the powers of death, sin and human brokenness. The final word does not belong to death, or Satan – it belongs to the Resurrected Lord of the Church!

According to Colossians 2:13-15, Christ died to give life to those who were dead because of our sins and our sinful nature. We have been made alive with Christ. The true defeat is dying without Christ – the eternal defeat. But for all of us that have been saved by faith in Christ and are still fighting the good battle of faith, there is hope in the power of resurrection, a sign that beyond any circumstantial sufferings, the love of Christ will bring us back to life.

Ephesians 2:1-6 reads, "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. ⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus".

Maybe we have been where Mary Magdalene was, saddened by the sense that life was defeated by death. She did not know how to overcome those feelings of anguish and depression. Only because of God's grace and mercy we could be brought back to life and joy through a true encounter with the Risen Christ.

Christ died to give us life together with Him, delivering us from the powers which tied us to slavery of sin. Life without Christ implies slavery to thoughts, feelings, actions and words contrary to God's purpose. Even those who have known Christ, if we allow our old self to take command of our lives, could be submitted again to the slavery of sin and death.

Those who live without Christ might believe they are truly free, when in reality they are tied up to life-styles and attitudes from which they cannot be freed by themselves. Only in Christ would we find the power to break the chains that every day will try to submit us back to slavery again. *"So if the Son sets you free, then you are truly free"*, John 8:36.

Christ set us free. But we have a commitment to stay in Christ and to avoid turning back to slavery. Galatians 5:1 says, *"Make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law"*. This is our daily challenge! That is why we so much need the operation of sanctifying grace, so we may live and act as redeemed, not as slaves.

- May 11 – Cultivating More & Better Leaders PART ONE, Christ UMC-Venice (9am-3pm)
- May 12 – Cultivating More & Better Leaders PART ONE, Estero UMC (9am-3pm)
- May 12 – DNA Coaching (Transformation TRAINING), Location: First-Bowling Green (9am-11:30am)
- May 12 – DNA Coaching (Transformation TRAINING), Location: Nocatee (1:30pm-4pm)
- May 17 – SW District NCD Meeting, Location: TBD
- May 22 – Clergy Team Meeting. Location: Cleveland UMC (9am-12noon)**
- May 24 – SW District dCOM
- May 29 – Pre-Conference Orientation, Location: Estero UMC – 6:30pm
- May 31 – Pre-Conference Orientation, Location: Christ UMC-Venice – 6:30pm
- Jun 1 – Cultivating More & Better Leaders PART TWO, Christ UMC-Venice (9am-3pm)
- Jun 2 – Cultivating More & Better Leaders PART TWO, Estero UMC (9am-3pm)
- Jun 3 – Pre-Conference Orientation, Location: Memorial UMC-Lake Placid – 3:00pm
- Aug 9-10 – Willow Creek Leadership Summit, Grace-Cape Coral
- Aug 25 – DNA Coaching (Transformation TRAINING), Location: First-Ft Meade (9am-11:30am)
- Aug 25 – DNA Coaching (Transformation TRAINING), Location: Vamo-Sarasota (1:30pm-4pm)
- Aug 28 – DNA Coaching (Transformation COACHING), Location: Beach-Ft Myers Beach (9am-11:30am)
- Aug 28 – DNA Coaching (Transformation COACHING), Location: Myakka City (1:30pm-4pm)
- Sept 18 – Clergy Team Meeting. Location: TBD**
- Nov 10 – DNA Coaching (Transformation TRAINING), Location: First-Immokalee (9am-11:30am)
- Nov 10 – DNA Coaching (Transformation TRAINING), Location: Pleasant Hill-Arcadia (1:30pm-4pm)
- Nov 15 – DNA Coaching (Transformation COACHING), Location: First-Wauchula (9am-11:30am)
- Nov 15 – DNA Coaching (Transformation COACHING), Location: Charlotte Harbor Trinity (1:30pm-4pm)

This newsletter gives an overview of some of the activities of the South West District and the Conference. Please make a note of these events and encourage your lay ministers and church members to participate.



Happenings in the Conference

Conference Launches New Facebook Community

Want to find out what your Conference neighbor churches are doing for children’s worship, a Christmas Carnival, or missions and outreach? Do you want to tell other churches about what you are doing to end child hunger in your neighborhoods? There is a new, Conference-wide [Facebook community](#) for the local churches to share and engage in conversation about faith, missions, outreach, community and worship.

“This online community is for local churches to learn how other churches are impacting their communities and to share what they are doing in theirs,” said Director of Connectional Relations Gretchen Hastings. While the Conference hosts the Facebook community, it isn’t a forum for promoting Conference department programs or a clearinghouse for Conference-related information (for example, updates on Disaster Recovery mobilization or how to find a church).

“We are exploring the potential for adding a prayer room to our Facebook page, as well, and we encourage anyone to post feedback and suggestions on our wall,” she added.

The Facebook community is the text-based companion to the Conference’s You Tube channel, according to Don Youngs, Conference Audio/Visual and Internet Coordinator. “We realize that some of us prefer a Facebook sharing community, while others prefer the video channel as a learning platform.” [What Are Umc Doing](#), the video channel, was launched in January.

In addition to Facebook and You Tube, Florida's communications channels include the Conference [home page](#), the news magazine, [Florida Conference Connection](#), and mobile phone access.

Celebrate Jesus Mission - 2012 Mission Opportunities

Smyrna Georgia: July 7-14, 2012

Florida Space Coast: July 21-28, 2012

Applications are available on their website (www.CJMission.org).

Contact: Marilyn Coppenhaver, Executive Assistant at celebrate.jesus@cjmission.org or 407-893-7305.

Scholarship Available

The Georgia Florida United Methodist Federal Credit Union will award four \$1,000 college scholarships again this year. There will be a winning recipient from the Florida, North Georgia, South Georgia and the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference.

To apply, you must be between the ages of 17 and 24, attend church in one of the conferences and be a member of the Credit Union. Complete the form on our website, attach your required essay (see questions at the end of the application) and mail to the GFUMFCU, PO Box 6446, Marietta, GA 30065-0448.

The website is www.unitedmethodistcu.com. **DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 2012.**

Florida United Methodist Foundation's Christian Education Awards

The Florida United Methodist Foundation is seeking nominations for the Alice W. Lockmiller Christian Education Awards. These awards honor excellence in Christian education for children and youth in pre-kindergarten to 12th grade within the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Each year, two awards are given: \$500 to the outstanding teacher of the year and \$1,000 to the outstanding program of the year. These awards are funded by the Alice W. Lockmiller Charitable Trust and administered by the Florida United Methodist Foundation.

Alice Lockmiller wished to fund ministries within The United Methodist Church that focus on nurturing parents and their children and to increase the participation of children in the membership of the church. A dedicated United Methodist, Lockmiller valued the role that Christian education played in her life and hoped to recognize those who impart Christian values in ministry to future generations of United Methodists.

Individuals may nominate a Florida United Methodist teacher or program by completing a [nomination form online](#) or printing the form and completing it manually. **Nomination forms are due by April 30.** A committee will review the submissions and choose the award recipients.

More information is available by visiting the [Florida United Methodist Foundation website](#) or contacting Tita Parham at titaparham@yahoo.com or 407-421-3656 or Suzanne McGovern at smcgovern@fumf.org or 866-363-9673, extension 7103.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Team Leader Training

Are you interested in leading a mission team from your church? Do you want to lead a team to Haiti when long-term recovery efforts begin? UMVIM Team Leader Training prepares volunteers to lead Volunteer in Mission teams to projects in the United States and around the world. You will learn the "ins and outs" of organizing a mission trip from recruiting the team, to picking the location, getting support, staying safe, planning the work and much, much more. You'll also enjoy a wonderful time of fellowship with other "mission-minded" folks.

Not sure if you're ready to lead a team? Come and learn what it takes – you'll be well informed and a better team member! Cost is \$40 per person (\$50 per couple.) Participants receive a Team Leader Manual and lunch is included.

Please register online at: www.flumc.org/UMVIM

April 21, 2012

10:00 – 4:00 (Check-in begins at 9:30)

St. Luke's UMC - 4851 S Apopka Vineland Rd - Orlando, FL 32819

For more information, please contact Pam Garrison (800) 282-8011 x 148 or by email pgarrison@flumc.org

CLERGY MATES' ANNUAL FALL RETREAT

WHO: Formerly known as Ministers' Mates, the Clergy Mates include the Spouses of active, retired or deceased clergy who have worked in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church

WHAT: 32nd Annual Fall Retreat

WHERE: Life Enrichment Center, Fruitland Park, FL

WHY: Read "The Top Ten Reasons" why every clergy spouse should attend this fun event! Join our Facebook group then read all about it on [Facebook](#)

WHEN: November 1-3, 2012 - Thursday evening through Saturday morning

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Friend us on Facebook by visiting "Florida Conference UM Clergy Mates"
- Email us at FLUMC-Mates@cfl.rr.com
- Call us at (386) 734-9224
- Visit the CLERGY MATES' table at Florida Annual Conference

Clergy Invited to "Sharpen the Saw"

There are several upcoming opportunities for clergy to "Sharpen the Saw"—the seventh of Stephen Covey's habits of highly effective people. The deadlines for applying for the four opportunities are all in April, according to Executive Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence Rev. David Dodge.

The Reynolds Program for Church Leadership: Application deadline is April 13

The Reynolds Program for Church Leadership is available to those who are the "pastor in charge" and are either elders or local pastors who have completed the Course of Study. The brochure can be found at <http://www.umfwnc.org/pdf/2012-2013%20Certificate%20Brochure.pdf> and the application at <http://www.umfwnc.org/pdf/Reynolds%20Application%202012-2013.pdf>.

The Institute of Preaching: Application deadline is April 27

The Institute of Preaching is available to elders and licensed local pastors who have completed the Course of Study. The application and brochure are available at <http://www.divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/lifelong-learning/institute-preaching>.

The Marcy Preaching Fellowship

The Marcy Preaching Fellowship is a cooperative effort between the Candler School of Theology at Emory University and the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church. Application and deadline information for the Marcy Preaching Fellowship can be obtained from Rev. Bob Winstead at Candler School of Theology. His e-mail is rwinste@emory.edu.

The Courage to Lead Program: Application deadline is April 16

The Courage to Lead program is open to deacons and elders and licensed local pastors who have completed the Course of Study, according to Dodge. Information and the application are available at the Center for Clergy Excellence's web page <http://www.flumc2.org/pages/detail/1541>.