

The North Carolina Conference
2011 JOURNAL

**North Carolina Annual Conference
Raleigh Area
of
The United Methodist Church
Southeastern Jurisdiction**

Successor to
The North Carolina Conference, Methodist Protestant Church, 1828-1939
The North Carolina Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1837-1844
The North Carolina Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1845-1939
Blue Ridge -Atlantic Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1879-1939
Eastern District, North Carolina-Virginia Conference, Central Jurisdiction,
The Methodist Church, 1940-1967

being

The Forty-Third Session of The United Methodist Church
and the One Hundred Eighty-Sixth Session of the oldest constituent member
Conference of United Methodism in the North Carolina Conference

June 15 - 18, 2011

Alfred W. Gwinn, Presiding Bishop
James L. Bryan, Conference Secretary



ALFRED WESLEY GWINN, JR.
Raleigh Area Bishop

A FUTURE WITH HOPE: LEADING TO JESUS

The theme of the 2011 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference is "A Future with Hope: Leading to Jesus." Jesus Christ is the hope of the world! That is the claim of scripture and surely the testimony of believers here and all over the world. We gather because someone dared to share the Good News with us and led us to Jesus. Now it is our turn to offer this gift to a new generation and to those who are searching for hope.

James Howell, Senior Pastor of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte, reflected on the movement of the Christian faith in the early years of the church:

"Seventy-five years after Jesus' death and resurrection, Christians comprised a mere 0.01% of the population. Two centuries later Christians were still only 10.5%; in every city, multiple religions competed for the attention of spirituality shoppers. Yet, with no buildings, no budget, and no business plan, Christians spread the story of Jesus, so that by the year 350, a handful of unlettered fishermen had grown the faith into over 33 million."

How did they do it? Few people could read or write, and there were no books or newspapers, no social networks or email systems, so word of mouth was their medium. Shopkeepers and travelers talked about their transformed lives. At work, over dinner, walking through the villages, Christians shared what they knew and believed. Christian believers led others to Jesus and to the new life he brings.

Jesus told them, "You shall be my witnesses . . ." As an Annual Conference, we have the creativity, the courage and the conviction to lead people to Jesus, by things we say and do. At the very least, people in the early days of the Christian movement were impressed by the cross-cultural, cross-generational community, as they observed with wonder, "See how they love one another!" Jesus promised his disciples, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." This power is waiting on our willingness to go, to share our stories of transformation and to offer hope, the hope we have found in Jesus.

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