

Report of the North Georgia Episcopal Area

During the past four years, the North Georgia Conference has continued its steady pattern of membership growth, adding over 16,000 new members, to close 2007 with 350,087. Since 1996 we have grown by over 65,000 members to become the largest conference in the United States. 2007 realized a net gain in membership of 3,657. With the planting of seven new congregations in June 2008, the North Georgia Conference has now started 98 new churches since 1996. New Church Development and Evangelism remains our highest priority. The opportunities for inviting persons into a deep abiding relationship with Christ are abundant in the North Georgia Area. Our Church Development Office has done a magnificent job of identifying, recruiting, training, coaching and deploying clergy who have a passion to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Our Director of New Church Development, Dr. Parks Davis, has been a fundamental part of the overall success of our program. Under his leadership we have made major strides to reach new ethnic minorities. For example this year we will be establishing our first Vietnamese congregation in Atlanta and another strong Korean congregation in West Point, Georgia. Atlanta is an international city and the world has come to us. New Church Development has been instrumental in helping us to be good neighbors to these persons who come now to live beside us and with us.

Our Area has been privileged to launch several new mission efforts during this past quadrennium. Plans are currently being made for a Capital Fund Campaign to benefit Camp Wesley, a ministry focused primarily on children who live in the urban area, and Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center, where our United Methodist Center is located. In 2007, the Conference voted to invite a private company, Hotel Equities, to run the daily operations of our Conference and Retreat Center. Since that important move was made Simpsonwood is growing in its capacity to meet its primary mission and also proceeding toward greater financial stability. I am grateful in particular for the leadership of our Treasurer, Mr. Keith Cox, and the Board of Directors of Simpsonwood in these important efforts.

North Georgia continues to be a leader in communications and technology under the guidance of Dr. Jamie Jenkins, Executive Assistant to the Bishop. Our staff, led by Mr. Tim McDaniel, has been able to provide cutting edge web-based communications, advertising and video production enhancing the ministry of our Area. During this past General Conference over 40,000 people watched live streaming of the events over our website.

The Board of Laity, under the guidance of Ms. Lyn Powell, has made tremendous progress in the past four years, taking their own responsibilities for leadership very seriously. The Board has strengthened the laity programs throughout our Area. Their premiere lay training program called *Leadership UMC* continues to develop young adults who are now providing leadership at all levels of our Annual Conference.

North Georgia continues to be one of the strongest Annual Conferences in all of United Methodism. I am particularly thankful for the rich system of United Methodist institutions which are within the bounds of our Annual Conference, including Emory University and Candler School of Theology, Gammon Theological Seminary, Paine College, LaGrange College, Clark Atlanta University, Reinhardt College and Young Harris College. Aldersgate Homes for persons with developmental problems, the Children's Home and Murphy Harpst, which reach out to hurting children and families of our Area. Action Ministries, the Housing and Homeless Council, and Wesley Community Centers are all an integral part of our overall ministry. Wesley Woods, which is our ministry to older adults, and its relationship to Emory HealthCare, is a premier model for such institutions throughout the country.

During the past twelve years, Jennifer and I have been honored to be associated with the North Georgia Annual Conference. It has been a high privilege for me to serve here. Of my thirty years of ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church, twelve of them have been in North Georgia. As we leave this Area this year, we leave with deep gratitude for all the kindness that has been shared with us. A part of our hearts will always be in the red clay of Georgia. Special thanks to my administrative assistant, Ms. Chris Selleck. Chris has served with me for the past eleven years. Her ministry to me, my family, and this conference has been wonderful evidence of God's rich grace in our lives. Special thanks also to Dr. Ed Tomlinson, who served as my Executive Assistant for eight years. Ed's support and guidance has been invaluable to me.

I pray that the years to come will see North Georgia become all that God envisions it to be. It has been a great joy to serve with the laity and clergy of this outstanding Area.

Lindsey Davis
Resident Bishop
North Georgia Area
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