

2008 DISTRICT REPORTS

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

Throughout the Central Massachusetts District, congregations have embraced the vision statement of the New England Conference: "Transformed by the Holy Spirit, we will become united in trust as we boldly proclaim Christ to the world." In many exciting and Spirit-filled ways, we see congregations being transformed through their offering of radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional spiritual formation and risk-taking mission and ministry. As individuals and congregations are being transformed, the communities in which they are located are catching a glimpse of the light of Christ.

Worship and church school attendance has remained steady. Persons are making first-time confession of faith in Jesus Christ and many are living out their faith in discipleship as they generously offer their prayers, presence, gifts and service. Congregations in the District have partnered with each other and with others in our annual conference to support ministries and mission projects at home and in far of places as Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia. We have reached out to the hungry, the marginalized, the imprisoned and those seeking to know God in Christ Jesus.

This past year, a number of congregations participated in the Faith and Money, Financial Stewardship Event as well as the Bishop's seminar on Stewardship. The events were offered to educate and assist churches by offering practical, biblical-based resources to educate and strengthen both the personal and congregational stewardship of their members. Several congregations have also benefited from the seminars offered by the Conference staff. Thanks to the sacrificial giving of our churches and the faithful financial stewardship of many of the members, several churches continue to increase their support of the Conference through Mission Share payments. There is reason to anticipate growth in this area and vitality in many places as pastors and lay leaders open themselves to new ideas and challenges.

We rejoice in the growing number of multicultural congregations in the District. Wesley Church in Worcester continues to be a leader in this area. Other successful efforts are Quinsigamond UMC also in Worcester and Centraville Church in Lowell. Cooperative youth ministry among the churches in Framingham and Wayland are among some of the new efforts in the District. We are also looking forward to the launching of a bold venture in the Greater Lowell area as churches in that cluster seek to support the work of El Buen Pastor UMC as well as to support outreach and community ministry in that city and surrounding towns.

With gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus Christ, the laity and clergy of the Central Massachusetts District will continue to grow in grace and bear much fruit.

Ron Wilson, District Superintendent

CONNECTICUT/WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS CELEBRATIONS!

The CWM District has much to be thankful for during the last year of our ministry together. In October 2007, our new District Ministry Team, under the direction of George Button, coordinated our first Leadership Academy which was a huge success with over 110 in attendance. The second Leadership Academy held in the Spring of 2008 was also well received.

During the 2007 Charge Conference season, a variety of District Ministry Team representatives made the commitment to travel with me to EVERY charge conference on the district! This outpouring of love and support for all the churches on our district was a powerful

witness to our desire to improve connection/communication seeking to vision together where the Lord is leading us.

The CWM District is the second largest geographic district in our New England Conference. We now have a Lay Leader for each state in our district: David Bolster for our churches in MA – and David Dunham for our CT churches.

January 29, 2008 we celebrated the chartering of a new Korean UM church – CT Central UMC currently located in East Hampton, CT! They had been gathering as a “mission” of the Northeast Jurisdiction since 2004. With this new church, our district total is 68 churches/ 55 charges. (This total includes 6 Federated churches.) During the 2007-2008 appointment year we had 36 full-time appointments, 9 half-time and 8 quarter-time.

Pastoral statistics are as follows: 30% of clergy are male, 25% female, 18% persons of color, 82% European-American. As of July 1, 2007 - 36 of our pastors had only been in their appointment 2 years or less, 9 pastors 3-4 years, 5 pastors 5-6 years, 1 pastor 7-8 years, 1 pastor 9-10 years and 3 serving over 16 years (one part-time local pastor and 2 Federated church pastors).

On December 15, 2007 we celebrated the birth of the first “Blended Parish” model of ministry in our New England Conference. The United Methodist Churches of Putnam and North Grosvenordale, under this new model of ministry, worship together on Sunday morning in Putnam, continue vital community outreach ministries at both church locations, and celebrate a mid-week service of prayer and praise at North Grosvenordale with attendance double what it was on Sunday morning when they were on their own. How the Lord blesses when we reach out and try new ministry ideas! “Behold, I am about to do a new thing!” (Is. 42:9)

We also celebrate George Button - our first Certified Lay Minister (CLM) in this district! George completed the four intensive training modules through GBHEM and has been assigned to work with a mutual ministry team (MMT) in his home church (Hope UMC, Belchertown). He will continue serving as chair of our District Ministry Team sharing his gifts around our district. Congratulations George!

We completed Viability/Possibility studies in Bolton, Crystal Lake and Greenfield and will begin studies in the summer of 2008 for Moodus, Great Barrington, Alford-Housatonic.

One last celebration to share – I began praying in the Fall of 2007, how to shift to a more intentional model of “spiritual administration and leadership.” Out of that prayer time, I felt led to offer Healing Services every Sunday night during Lent traveling around the district. I received wonderful feedback and saw God’s healing grace poured upon many individuals and churches. I believe the Holy Spirit is at work here through me and all of God’s wonderful partners in ministry on this district.

I look forward to seeing what “new thing” the Lord might have waiting for all of us as we journey together in hope seeking to “make disciples for the transformation of the world.”

Together in Ministry, Heidi N. Chamberland

METRO BOSTON HOPE OVERVIEW 2000 – 2008

It is with great pleasure that I write my last Hope District report. I have been blessed;

- by the building of many relationships,
- by the witnessing development and growth of great of lay leadership,
- by the commitment of so many pastors who kept faithful to their calling even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances,
- by the response of several people to God’s call to serve in the ordained ministry,
- by the rich theological, cultural, linguistic, racial and pluralistic Hope community,
- by the many hard lessons learned, some through pain and tears, others through joy and laughter, many in the companionship of a beloved community,
- by the watching churches turn their energy away from the building and focus in ministry,

- by the effective team work of all district committees led by spirit filled leaders: Ruth Oduor, Rick McKinley, Glen Mortimer, Larry Wimmer, Wendy Millar-Page, Maria Coleman, Donna Costa
- by the new Certified Lay Minister position of Doreen Powell
- by a group of Covenant Leaders who gave their time and care to shepherd their covenant pastors,
- by the chartering of two churches, Saugus Brazilian UMC and Grace Vision UMC,
- by a mission tough small in numbers, its courageous ministry goes beyond the boundaries of our district and conference, well done, Cambridge Welcoming Ministry,
- by the growth of a Hope District Youth who aims high and keeps birthing new young leadership,
- by two Bishops, Hassinger and Weaver, who trusted and guided my ministry of supervision and mission,
- by an Extended Cabinet and cabinet who was just a phone call away when needed,
- by a district Lay Leader, Ralph Oduor, and a Conference Lay Leader, Oscar Harrell who walk with me this journey of faith,
- by the blessings of wonderful AAs like Cathy Collins (former Metro Boston North AA) and Josephine Sierra the new “boss in the office”
- by a DS committee that under the leadership of Sam Johnson have shepherded me all these years
- by the appointment of a new District Superintendent, who will lead the Hope District to a higher ground, Adelante, Martin, Adelante!

I would like to conclude with the words of an old pastor, John at Patmos, says to the church; “I see everything you are doing for me. Impressive! The love and the faith, the service and persistence. Yes, very impressive! You get better at it every day.” Revelation 2:19 in The Message.

Love and grace, Aida

MID-MAINE 2008

The Mid-Maine District has had a year of contrasts: There has been good news from many churches, but, as with all the districts, some external factors that have presented challenges to the churches.

The challenges common to all our churches on the district have come from the extraordinary rise in oil prices and the large snow fall of this past winter. Both of these challenges have increased the operating costs of our churches at a time when many budgets were already stretched very thin. In addition, the heavy snows of the winter had a negative impact on attendance. The Mid-Maine District churches have responded in creative ways to help deal with the financial issues, but it has definitely put a strain on many of our churches.

Because of this strain four churches on the Mid-Maine District have had to go from full time pastoral appointments to part time pastoral appointments. These churches are the Bridgton United Methodist Church, the United Methodist Church of Good Fellowship in Naples, Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Rockland, and Centenary United Methodist Church in Skowhegan. In all of these cases, the move was necessary due to financial constraints and in none of these cases was it from lack of will, spirit, or faith. The Naples and Skowhegan churches in particular are using this change in appointment time as an opportunity to become more effective in mission and ministry.

The Mid-Maine District has many smaller attendance churches, but their size does not limit their vision. In community after community, small churches are being creative in reaching out to share the love of Christ with their community. Our smaller churches also take giant steps of faith to increase their outreach to the community. Both the East Pittston and the New Sharon churches are putting on additions to make their churches more “user friendly” and accessible to the community as

well as church members. Along with the additions come wonderful visions of ways to touch lives and fulfill the needs of those around the church.

The district office will be moving from its location in the district parsonage to the Mission Building at Camp Mechuwana. In a sense this is a home coming as the Maine Conference Office was located there in the past.

It has been obvious in the response to missional needs that the Spirit is alive and well. The needs responded to by local church groups have been local, regional national, and also in the wider world. The people of the Mid-Maine District have responded not only with words, not only with financial support, but also with their very selves to the needs of our world.

David Svenson, District Superintendent

NEW HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT

The New Hampshire District churches just continue in their unique and wonderful ways to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. New exciting ministries in the district churches continue to catch the imagination of members as they seek to reach out into their communities and beyond to make a difference in others lives.

The Lebanon UMC voted overwhelmingly this last year to become a reconciling congregation. They publicly affirm that all are precious in God's sight and are striving to be a community of faith where all of God's children are welcomed and encouraged to participate fully in the life of the church.

You will remember that just about 5 years ago the building known as Trinity UMC in Whitefield was condemned. This community of faith was devastated, but not about to abandon the United Methodist witness in their community. They have persevered under the guidance of the Spirit of God and in May their brand new building, known as Trinity UMC, was dedicated to the Glory of God. It is on the same location and is truly a litany of miracles as God provided for their every need along the way.

In Contoocook, one member spoke to an individual and invited them to the church. One thing led to another and on Mothers Day 10 African refugees joined the church, only 5 of whom speak any English at all, while another 5 are awaiting warmer weather in order to be baptized in the river before becoming members. This congregation has found creative ways to minister to others in need. They drive to Concord each Sunday to bring these children of God to church, they are teaching them to drive, helping them to find employment, teaching them God's word in Bible Study and Sunday School, and helping to provide basic household goods for their apartments.

The clergy serving in the East Lempster region have organized a team ministry in an effort to re-open the East Lempster Community UMC. All ready some who have never been a member of any church have asked how they can become a part of this vital faith community. It will be fascinating to see what God unfolds in this community.

Churches throughout the district have organized and have participated in Volunteer in Mission trips to make a difference in Slidell/New Orleans, LA, Down East Migrant Ministries, in Jacksonville, ME and the United Methodist Economic Ministry in Salem, ME.

In the midst of all the exciting ministry that is taking place, though there are concerns that I have about the long term viability of some of our congregations. The Berlin UMC was closed this year and in addition there were seven congregations that "downsized" their pastoral leadership by moving from full-time to part-time, from ½ time to ¼ time or even in some cases from ¼ time to a preaching supply. In the three years that I have served on the district there have been 6 full-time appointments that are no longer available. Our congregations are shrinking and can no longer afford full time ministry.

The other concern that I share with you is around the number of aging facilities we are worshiping in. Many of these were built in the 19th century for ministry in a different age. As we

continue to stay in these buildings we find ourselves re-aligning the focus of the church into a different direction. Rather than looking out at ways we can be in mission to our community we find ourselves looking inward at all that needs to be done to maintain, preserve and sustain the property we have.

I am convinced though that God is moving in our midst. As we continue to remain faithful, pray for wisdom and discernment, and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will be led to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

John Blackadar - Superintendent

NORTHERN MAINE - 2008

Changes since July 2007.

Vision: Claiming the love of Christ, we will be a people of perpetual Pentecost.

I. Description of the Northern Maine District

The district encompasses the greater part of eastern and northern Maine. The southern-most churches were in Dixmont, Winterport and Stonington, while the eastern and northern boundaries extend to the Canadian border. The western-most church is the Greenville Junction UMC, in the Mooshead Lake region. The district consists of 65 churches and 48 charges, 15 of which were single-point full-time charges. There were 11 two-point charges. Of the 11, 5 were 2-point full-time charges and 7 were 2-point part-time charges. There were 17 single-point part-time charges. There are, 2 federated churches and two mission stations. Forty-five pastors serve the Northern Maine District: 13 elders, 3 probationary members, 14 local pastors and 4 supply pastors. There were 4 deacons, 2 pastors serving from other annual conferences, 5 pastors from another denomination, and 2 associate members. In terms of gender and ethnic diversity, there were 26 male pastors, 24 female, 4 ethnic men and 4 ethnic women. This year was a very difficult financially for the majority of the churches in Northern Maine. Not only was the winter a long and cold one, but at the same time fuel prices rose to unexpected amounts. This led to an increase in snow removal costs as well as higher fuel costs. As a result many churches found themselves in struggling to keep up with their operational costs, including Mission Shares.

II. Changes since last year

The Monticello UMC continued under the care of the Aroostook County Cluster and the District Committee on Congregational Development. The pastoral team of Pastor Marilyn Rhodin and Paula Lilley was appointed to sport the congregation in their continue progress. This year also saw the dissolution of the Pine Tree United Methodist Ministries. The Cooperative decided to function as separate churches and each of the existing pastors was appointed to the church where s/he was serving as worship leader. In April the closing worship service for the Smyrna Mills UMC was held. The Dover-Foxcroft Church moved from $\frac{3}{4}$ -time status to $\frac{1}{4}$ -time and the Corinna UMC moved from full-time to $\frac{1}{2}$ -time.

III. Leadership Development Efforts

There were a variety of training events offered in the district for lay and for clergy, they included the following: Charge conference training on prayer, regional training on Holy Baptism, technology and worship, clergy gatherings reviewing the book "I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church." There was also a summit for the Downeast Churches in order to dialogue about the demographic and appointment realities for that region. 16 of 17 churches were represented. A follow-up meeting was held in the spring to continue to dialogue about models of ministry that might serve the pastoral needs of the region. For the second time in five years a Northern Maine pastor was nominated and received the Denman Evangelism award: Ellen Bearisto of Vanceboro UMC.

Summary:

This was a very difficult year financially for most of the churches, but they continued to demonstrate strong efforts in trying to fulfill their connectional responsibilities. In 2007 42 churches fulfilled 100% of their Mission shares: 65%, for a total Mission Share payment of 78.54% for the Northern Maine District.

Submitted by Rev. Marcelle Dotson, OSL, M.B.A, District Superintendent for Northern Maine

RHODE ISLAND AND SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS **(RIM JULY 2007-JUNE 2008)**

I am thankful to God for the steadfast faithfulness and love that the people of the RISEM District continue to show in all matters of Gospel. As is typical for any given year there have been places and actions that have challenged the churches as well as places and actions where the church has challenged the culture. Into this tension, we are called by Jesus, into this tension we are called to be a witness to the world, into this tension we demonstrate the relevancy of faith and the body of Christ.

Within the district itself we have had major concerns over immigration and gaming. Both Rhode Island and Massachusetts have had significant pressure to engage in casino gambling as a way to balance local and state budgets. So far, citizens of each state have shown their disapproval for these venues; however, as finances tighten, the temptation will grow larger. Thanksgiving to the Massachusetts Council of Churches and the Corridor Cluster as well as the Rhode Island State Council of Churches and the Rhode Island Cluster for their leadership and voice in this area. In New Bedford, MA. and Providence, RI there have been significant immigration raids which have separated young children from the families. While religious leaders have had conversation with government leaders, and concur with those leaders that there needs to be more conversation about immigration on a national level, the cruel punishment of leaving children abandoned by incarcerating their mothers and fathers is not just. Santos Escobar (Vida Abundante) has provided pastoral care to many of those who have been detained.

We have celebrated new buildings: Northside in Brewster completed its addition and Cuttyhunk has undertaken major restorations in the community church. In Rhode Island, Shepherd of the Valley completed its addition, Asbury in Warwick a new parking lot, and East Greenwich the building of a new church! Other celebrations include the moving from ½ time to full time by the Westport Point UMC as well as St. Paul's in Newport. The newly merged communities of Open Table of Christ in Providence and The River; United Methodist Communities of Faith have completed their first year and are moving forward with new enthusiasm.

The District celebrated "Nothing but Nets" by providing scholarships to the event held in Springfield and also raising about \$14,000 over the course of the year. Contributions to UMCOR and mission shares also held steady for 2007. RISEM district continues to reach out in the communities it serves with passion and a generous presence.

At Annual Conference, Duane Clinker, Santos Escobar, Patricia Miller-Fernandes and Rebecca Mincieli were welcomed as elders in full connection. Phil Viall continues to provide leadership as the District Lay Leader and Kim Whynacht has become the District Director of Lay Speaking as Rebecca Hewitt now assumes the position of Conference Director of Lay Speaking. Several people are in discernment about a call to ministry.

We celebrated the faithful ministry of Marion UMC which closed on July 1, 2007. The closing worship service conducted by Pastor Sandra Russell was one of inspiration, witness and thanksgiving.

I am hopeful that this upcoming year will provide the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel, as well as the faithful to live boldly in the name and because of Jesus.

Rev. Gary Shaw, District Superintendent

TRI-STATE REPORT JUNE 2008

The Tri-State District includes 74 churches in 3 states: Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The district covers coastal New Hampshire, the north shore area of Massachusetts, and coastal Maine extending just north of Portland. The churches are in rural, urban, small town, and suburban settings. They are served by full time and part time pastors.

Many of our congregations have shown incredible faith, determination and grit as they've weathered storms within and without, taken risks for the Gospel, explored new avenues of stewardship and sought to reach their communities with the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

New life and growth is evident in the many building projects around the district. They include completion of an addition at the Church on the Cape in Cape Porpoise, ME, solar panels installed at the York Ogunquit UMC, in York, ME, a new sanctuary at Cressey Road UMC in Gorham, ME, an addition to the fellowship hall at Chebeague Island UMC, Chebeague Island, ME, and a new building in progress for "The Rock" in Plaistow, NH.

We are grateful for the many dedicated pastors and laity who have responded to the call to serve the church on the district level. The District Committee on Ministry, Board of Church Location and Building, District Superintendency Committee, Committee on Leadership, Lay Speaking and Mission Share Review Committee have all been active and functioning effectively. Our District Ministry Team has done excellent work around the needs of the district. They will share their findings at church conferences this fall.

District events were well attended and received. One highlight was Bishop Peter Weaver's day on the district to lead us in a program around inspiring worship. We appreciate the collegiality and support seen among the clergy and laity.

For the second consecutive year, 2006 and 2007, we saw an increase in average church attendance and an increase in the percentage of mission shares paid. Praise God!

At church conferences, every church was challenged to support the "Nothing But Nets" campaign. Our district goal was 1,000 nets. At this time, we have far exceeded our goal with almost 4000 nets! Last year, a new church started in Portland seeking to reach young adults. Our Hispanic ministry at Christ UMC, Lawrence, received 40 new members at Easter. God is blessing these ministries. Throughout the district, we see creative ways that churches are seeking to reach out into their communities.

God's renewing Spirit is alive in Tri-State. May we continue to pray and support one another as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

Revs. Janice & Michael Davis, Co-Superintendents