



## **Preparations for 2009 Annual Conference session have begun!**

### **Evaluations from 2008 fed into the planning process...**

In 2008, almost 200 Annual Conference members completed evaluation forms offering affirmations, suggestions and ideas. Thank you for your input! **Your Feedback Counts!**

#### **Brief Summary**

Here is a brief summary of input offered. Your responses strongly affirmed the following:

- Registration process and information;
- Gordon College location, facilities and Chapel;
- Bishop Peter Weaver, his leadership and humor;
- Zeigler preaching;
- Worship (especially Memorial Service and décor);
- Barbara Lemmel's Systems presentation;
- Kate Campbell's gift of song;
- Youth participation; and
- The new location for displays and Cokesbury (Olsen Science Center).

In written comments this year and consistent with past years, conference members seem equally divided on the following issues.

- **Scheduling of Annual Conference:** Need to meet Saturday and Sunday for lay attendance vs. need to end on Saturday/Sunday is Sabbath (Note: lay attendance is consistently higher than clergy with both schedule formats)
- **Worship vs. Business:** More time for worship vs. more time for business (Note: total time for worship and conferencing has shrunk for the past three years to avoid lengthening conference)
- **Style of Worship:** Need for more traditional worship vs. need for more praise and contemporary worship

#### **Some Responses to Your Input**

The following summarizes some of the suggestions offered and this year's plan for responding to your input. Thanks!

1. In response to requests for more agenda information, a brief description of each session's proposed items will be provided in advance.
2. Presenters will continue to be coached and advised to shorten reports.
3. Food service continues to be a challenge despite significant dialogue with Gordon College. We continue to seek improvements and encourage conference attendees to note where kitchens are located in dorms. If the cafeteria food is not acceptable to your palette or dietary needs, you should be able to find a full kitchen in your dorm or apartment. The registration process in 2009 may allow you to select only the meals you wish to take in the cafeteria.  
  
\*Note: Gordon College provides a free Coffee Service from 6am to 6pm for Conference attendees.
4. The Retiree's Reflections have been impacted by the shorter conference schedule and we continue to offer video alternatives and try different options. This year, the Reflections time will be on Thursday afternoon, after the Preacher's Aid Society Luncheon and Memorial Service. This places the event during the daytime, but early in the schedule.
5. Concerns about Episcopal nominations process are being forwarded to the Rules Committee for their work between now and 2012.
6. Many noted the desire to extend greater hospitality to our guests from Vermont. We expect many new opportunities as we build relationships and move into ministry with our neighbors and friends in Vermont.
7. Communications will continue to orient members to the procedures for getting PreConference materials as we transition to electronic communications.
8. Several responses asked how we might shorten the ordination service. Since the liturgy for that service is mandated by the General Conference and provided by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, our creativity and service management is limited to that framework. We continue to seek to offer a well managed worship experience for this service of ritual and order.
9. Some expressed frustration about time for Learning Centers being eroded by extended plenary sessions. Both the presiding Bishop and the conference members have the ability to manage conferencing times. We plan to provide more information and to re-establish the use of Orders of the Day.
10. Several requests inquired if the Registration site could be closer on the first day. Since Grapevine Rd. is a public road, Gordon asks us to hold registration in the Barrington Center where there is ample parking and cars will not get backed

up onto Grapevine Rd. This helps Gordon maintain good relations with the town police department.

11. Parking continues to be a challenge when we flood the campus with our vehicles. The overflow parking lot has ample space, but requires significant walking and is not legally accessible by the golf carts. We encourage you to unload quickly and don't leave your vehicle unattended, then park as far away as you are able to make room for those who need closer access. The lot next to the Chapel must be reserved for persons with walking or physical disabilities. Through adversity, we build community. May we be a community that drives and parks with the needs of our neighbors in mind. Thank you!

12. We continue to be open to alternative locations for Conference. Gordon College is a private institution and does not charge us facility or security fees that public schools would have to charge. To date, the alternate venues we have explored would cost at least twice as much as Gordon. We continue to explore.

Numerous other creative and constructive suggestions were received and have been forwarded to the appropriate areas for consideration.

**Volunteers for 2009!**

If you volunteered to help at Annual Conference 2009 or would like to volunteer, please contact Bonnie Marden at [BonMarden@comcast.net](mailto:BonMarden@comcast.net).

We look forward to hearing from you. As we recruit over 200 volunteers each year, please speak up if we missed you!

**Pray for our Annual Conference**

We welcome your prayers and your support as we prepare for Annual Conference June 18-20, 2009.