



The United Methodist Rural Fellowship
(Soon to be U. M. R. Advocates)
Bulletin

Strong Rural Churches Build Strong Rural Communities!

Volume LXIII

Website: www.umrf.org

Tampa, Florida

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

Poverty Simulation Begins Today

Experiencing a low income person's life in poverty is possible through the Poverty Simulation offered today through Friday in Ballroom D at 9 am. Participants will be able to "role play" typical events in the daily life a low income person.

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Since space is limited participants are encouraged to get tickets for the simulation which is sponsored by GBGM, UMRF, and Urban Network.

The simulation enables the participant to

- learn about the different factors that contribute to poverty;
- increase their understanding of what a low-income person must do to care for their family;
- develop an awareness of the skills and tools needed to navigate the systems that confront low income persons;
- experience what it feels like to live in a "survival mode;"
- live a real life story about a family living in poverty; and
- feel the importance of helping others and building community.

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Hospitality Center

Contact Info: 740-707-2901

Hours: 7 AM to 7 PM

(fellowship, light meals, snacks)

Office

Hours: 7 AM to 7 PM

(copies, computers)

Sheraton Riverwalk Hotel

200 North Ashley Drive

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Konica Minolta is pleased to provide the printing capabilities for the United Methodist Rural Fellowship at General Conference.

Rhonda Gledhill 813-297-8229

Konica Minolta Faith Based Representative

POVERTY SIMULATION TICKETS

Tickets for the Poverty Simulation experience Tuesday-Friday, May 1-4, at 9 am in Ballroom D are available from UMRF members. There are only 120 tickets for each day, but entry may be

Legislative Update

UMRF celebrates the passage of the following items:

- Native American Comprehensive Plan #20266
- Strengthening the Black Church in the 21st Century #20267
- Inclusive Language (bi/multi-racial) #20058
- Covenant for Worldwide UMC #20406
- Health Care for Immigrant Populations #20651
- National Coop. Ministry Leadership #20218
- Facilitation of Coop. Ministry #20214
- Ministries of Rural Chaplains #20649
- Rural & Urban Ministry Plan #20222
- Churches in Transitional Communities #20647
- Ministry with the Poor in Transitional Communities #20648
- Assessment of Local Church Vitality #20655
- Full-time Local Pastor on Board of Ordained Ministry/Part-time Local Pastor on District Committee of Ordained Ministry #20101

UMRF urges support for the following pending legislation:

- Drop the "I" Word #20062
- "Lay Speaking" Change to "Lay Servant" #20235
- Disposition of Property of Closed Churches #20368

"Ending Poverty One Family at a Time"

The National Circles Campaign today includes 56 communities in 23 states and a wide array of more than 800 organizations in local and national collaborations that adapt the Circles model for the people they serve. The heart of our message is that we "can and should end our poverty. There is a moral imperative and an enormous economic incentive to create effective pathways out of poverty." The essential components of Circles are to:

1. Organize a community-wide collaboration of faith, business, education, government and social service agencies to establish a Circles initiative that together will learn what it takes for families to become economically stable;
2. Establish Circles of 2-4 community volunteer "Allies" around individuals or families who are committed to get out of poverty.
3. Expand the community's capacity to reduce poverty by adapting Circles to help achieve outcomes in education, employment, corrections, disabilities, and health and neighborhood revitalization.
4. Utilize the insights, resources and connections of families leaving poverty and middle to upper-income allies to change community structures and policies that will increase the capacity of the community to reduce successfully and eventually eradicate poverty.
5. Support system leaders with new community-based teams to increase education, health, and social outcomes in all of the development stages from birth to adulthood necessary for people to become economically stable.

13 million American children live in poverty.

That's 520,000 classrooms of 25 children per room.



(U.S. Census Bureau)

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For more information on National Circles Campaign: <http://circlescampaing.org/>

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When Elephants Fight.

by Ed Kail, senior correspondent

So begins the African proverb: "When elephants fight, the grass suffers." That has been on my mind as I have observed the swirl of passion, opinion and activity around the "big issues" of this General Conference: the Call to Action, the IOT report, the Ministry Study, the restructuring of general agencies, and the call to be a "world-wide church."

Some are concerned that the Council of Bishops is grabbing for power, through the call for a "set-aside bishop." Others are sure that there is a conspiracy among tall-steeple and megachurch types to dominate the agenda for "metrics" and accountability, while destroying the general agencies. It appears that the tensions around human sexuality and some other personal-social issues have been diverted underground for a time, but we know it will be a "big one." The elephants are gathering.

And here we are, the United Methodist Rural Fellowship, with an appeal to all to be mindful of "the grass" – the small, the few, the sparse, the silent, the vulnerable. Please remember that the need for vitalization and revitalization is a pressing need among us all, and that the approach to these can only be effective if it is contextually relevant.

While many delegates have some personal connection with rural contexts, it is often historical, or ancestral, or superficial and brief. The changes and challenges of town and country ministry call for current awareness, engagement, and innovation.

As a “rural guy”, I confess to real ambivalence about the General Conference process. In my low times, I wonder if it will make any difference at all, regardless of what action it takes. I know it can make life in local church and district complicated. The trumpeting, pushing and shoving seem so far away, and yet we have to deal with the aftermath of policy and polity. But on my better days, I remember that faithful people of good will bear in mind the pressing needs of congregations in every place. Can we join together in that hope?