



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

Wednesday, May 2, 2012

Reaction: “Wanted To Cry”

“I wanted to cry,” was the response of a GC Delegate from Iowa to the Poverty Simulation Tuesday morning. He continued, “I am depressed that people have to go through so much just to survive.”

The Poverty Simulation, which is offered each day at 9 am in the Convention Center’s Ballroom D, enables participants to experience struggles that people in poverty face daily: deciding who to trust; devoting a majority of time to coping with survival; learning to navigate the systems designed to help poor people.

Another participant said: “I have a better understanding about the sociological impact of growing up in the midst of poverty and (I now realize that) depending on assistance changes how you think about how to survive in society.”

Anyone wanting to participate in the Poverty Simulation may do so by signing up outside

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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.
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Ballroom D or by getting a ticket from a UMRF member. Without doing either, entry may still be possible at the last minute if there are “no-shows.”

POVERTY SIMULATION

Places in the Poverty Simulation experience Wednesday-Friday, May 2-4, at 9 am in Ballroom D are available by registering outside the ballroom or by getting tickets from UMRF members. Space is limited to 120 each day, but

Storm, Table, Plan

by Judith Bortner Heffernan, former Executive Director, Heartland Center for Town and Country Ministries

The wind named Katrina blew. Hurricane-driven waves crashed the shore and roared inland flattening everything in their path. Morning light revealed that Gulfside Assembly, the United Methodist center in Waveland, Mississippi, was a mass of former trees and demolished buildings, all mixed with debris from the sea. Amazement. Sorrow. Tears. Despair.

Then the Spirit moved. Create from this heap of refuse something of beauty, of inspiration, of usefulness to my people and to my glory!

When General Conference 2008, whose symbol was a tree, convened in Fort Worth, Texas, a bright ceiling light shown down in the center of the delegates where two big aisles crossed. It illuminated a spectacular round table made of red cedar whose base was clearly made from a tree

trunk. On the stage stood an oak altar table, podium, baptismal font and a cross. Every piece of wood had been salvaged from the broken trees of Gulfside. Every piece of furniture had been crafted by the Rev. Clay Smith – then Executive Director of Hinton Rural Life Center, and his helpers.

(continued on reverse)

The center of worship at General Conference 2012 is again blessed by these pieces salvaged from Gulfside. It was from the table made from Katrina’s debris that the elements of communion were shared at Opening Worship with all delegates and attendees.

As we rejoice in the powerful message these objects from rural places share with us, let us remind ourselves that of the 35,000 UM congregations in the United States, 25,000 of them are in town and country places where God and God’s people planted them. These congregations represented by the parade of the 25,000 paper butterflies at GC 2008 were blest to know that a plan to resource them had been developed through the General Board of Global Ministries and named ***Born Again In Every Place: The National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Rural Ministries.***

Several members of the United Methodist Rural Fellowship, including the Rev. Smith, helped to give birth to this vital plan and we rejoice that the resources are still available to all through GBGM.

Two things we ask of GC delegates:

1. Kindly ponder when voting how the legislation proposed will affect these congregations in the US, as well as the town and country congregations of our brothers and sisters in the Central Conferences; and

2. Please support the rebuilding and restoration of the ministry of Gulfside Assembly through the General Advance # 760235. See

www.gb-gm-mc.org/gulfsideassembly/history

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Not of One Mind

by Ed Kail, senior correspondent

Sometimes, I have described UMRF as a network of like-minded people from rural/town and country/non-metropolitan contexts, and that is true. However, I do not want to give the impression that we all agree on everything. We are like-minded, but we are not of one mind.

We are people of faith. We love and serve in the United Methodist Church, embracing the Wesleyan theological tradition. We have many common values regarding rural life and rural cultures and



Within three blocks of the General Conference meetings a homeless person naps on a bench in the beauty of Tampa’s Riverwalk.

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communities. We have a common commitment to the mission and to the vitality of congregations.

AND, we represent many of the diversities of the USA. We have theological conservatives and theological liberals; social conservatives and social liberals; Democrats and Republicans; introverts and extroverts; optimists and pessimists; men and women; varieties of age, marital status, ability, and opinion! We are not of one mind.

And since we are not of one mind, there are some things on which we do not take public stands. We will talk about them together, and seek

understanding and possible common ground. But we do not require agreement in order to work together on our common mission of advocacy. For us, the mission is the thing, and for other things we “think and let think,” as did John Wesley.

It may be frustrating to some on-lookers who invite us to join them in some agenda. They may judge us to be lacking in moral courage or something. But they must understand that, though we may respond to their calls as individuals, our unity of purpose under the banner of UMRF is of primary importance. As an organization, there are stands we will not take because we value each other in our common bonds.

Perhaps it could be seen as a witness to the UMC at large: it IS possible to be committed to a common mission and not be of one mind about everything!