

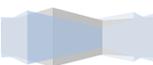
Lumber River Conference of the Holiness Methodist Church: An Analytical look at the Churches and Leadership

Each year the Ordained Clergy Board (OCB) of the Lumber River Conference of the Holiness Methodist church provides training opportunities to the clergy within the conference in order to provide a wide range of training thereby better equipping them for pastoral service. While the curriculum is designed for the clergy the laity and visitors have been given the privilege to participate in the course offerings. This year's course was titled "Strategic planning for Church Growth and Renewal: Empowering the Laity" participants spent two hours a night for four nights receiving instruction. What follows is a summation of what was taught, recommendations received and an overview of some very tough but honest open discussions expressed by those participating in the classes.

The course emphasized the need for the pastors of local conference churches to take a very sincere look at the state of the church. This would be done by examination of the local church from four general viewpoints: Healthy, showing signs of sickness, very sick and declining or dying churches. The healthy church is the church that has a clearly defined purpose with Vision and Mission Statements that are God-driven, Christ-centered and Holy Spirit-led to achieve the primary goal of the church of Jesus Christ here on earth which is evidenced by a two-fold method. First, the Body of Christ is called to evangelize and secondly, to provide Christian Discipleship to all of the Body (Mt 28-19-20). Pastors and leaders of the church must understand that the role of the pastor is to provide leadership that "equip the saints" of the church "to do the work of the ministry" by allowing all "of the parts to work together". (Eph 4) The days of pastors declaring that in "my ministry this thing or that thing happens" needs to come to an end. The pastor, as well as, the entire Body of believers must understand that all ministries belong to Jesus Christ and the members are called to do the work.

Secondly, are those churches that are showing signs of sickness these churches have been showing numerical decline for the last five years with no outreach programs, a lack of times for biblical study, has begun to focus on themselves and not on Christ, generally they have no concrete plans for growth or Christian discipleship. The third classification are those congregations that are very sick which have been in decline or stagnant for a period of ten years or more these churches display a great deal of apathy and complacency, there is no effort by the pastor or the congregation to reach out to the community and most are very satisfied with the status quo. Finally, there are the dying churches that are so sick that most will close their doors in the next five years or less.

Participants were asked to take the knowledge they had gained over the past week and state what condition they felt best described the church which they currently attended. Of those responding



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85.7% said that they felt that their church showed signs of being sick while the remaining participates (14.3%) stated that they felt that their local congregation was very sick. If these numbers can be trusted that would mean that the churches across the conference as a whole are in need of drastic measures to be successful for the KINGDOM of God.

One flaw in the data recorded here is the fact that the vast majority of Conference Clergy did not participate in the course all together therefore some churches had no recorded responses to the survey questions asked. This was an issue discussed by the clergy and laity in attendance. Some concerns stemmed around why those ordained within the Conference did not attend the course of study curriculums offered, the group considered several reasons for this and an examination of some are listed below:

1. Clergy are unaware of the date classes are offered—the date is set at Annual Conference and posted in the Official Journal, on the website (LRCHMC.ORG)
2. No publicity- Clergy were mailed a letter with dates, some clergy were contacted by (OCB)
3. Many are working during this time
4. Consideration was made for those who were either sick or had a spouse dealing with an illness.

The overwhelming consensus was that most of the Conference Clergy were much like the congregations in that they had grown complacent and that they exhibit a great deal of apathy when it comes educational and training opportunities made available to them. This attitude can be seen across the Conference with other events as well. It was clear to the group that no one can be expected to be at all events yet concerns were raised about events where no clergy or only one or two were present and as it related to those clergy who had not attended any Clergy Course of Study to this point. Those present felt that there was a severe lack of accountability as it applied to the clergy.

Recommendations: The local church bears a great deal of the responsibility for the Clergy that are currently serving in the Conference since it is the local church which recommends individuals for consideration to the OCB, more prayer and more sincere examination of a candidate's gifts and graces needs to be made on behalf of the local church. Secondly, more authority needs to be given to the OCB to deal with those clergy who continually choose to ignore the policies and procedures of the "Book of Disciplines". The group was unanimous that one of the reasons there is such a low rate of participation is the fact that there are no consequences from the Conference Bar for those choosing not to participate. Clergy need to be reminded that the training is provided so that as a pastor or clergy in another leadership position they can be more fully prepared to "EQUIP" those congregants that God has placed in his care to more effectively fulfill the tasks of the great commission.

Conference course of study 2015

When asked to give specific reasons for their determination of the church's condition all (100%) of those responded that the congregation seemed to have a great deal of complacency and apathy when it comes to the work of the ministry. In addition 75%, expressed a feeling of frustration in what to do to be able to turn these trends around so that the work of the ministry could be more beneficial and effective in its' overall efforts.

IMPERATIVE: it is absolutely imperative that the feelings of frustration be addressed immediately as it relates to the clergy serving specifically in a pastoral role. Left unchecked these feelings of inadequacy and frustration can lead to bitterness and resentment that could prompt those facing such a situation to leave the ministry. Thereby further exacerbating the life of the local church and the Conference by default. According to data given our by the United Methodist Church (UMC) one of the largest mainline protestant denominations in the Unites States most of their Annual Conference were losing clergy at an alarming rate. In several conferences they had as many as 32-35 pastors retiring while at the same time had only eight coming into the Ordained ministry that is a mere 25% of those required to take the place of those leaving. One way they have tried to overcome this problem is by merging sometimes as many as six congregations into one church. In other similar moves they reported on average four churches are now being merged into one. As a Conference we stand on the threshold of the greatest years in all the years of our existence. Currently all nine of full-membered churches, as well as, our two affiliated churches are served by individuals who have been examined by the local church, have been presented by the Ordained Clergy Board and sanctioned by the Annual Conference Bar. While some are sick or have family members that are sick there also exist within our ranks clergy serving in other roles such as Conference Superintendent, Missionary, Evangelists, Exhorters and others who are able to be called upon so that the very best can provide for the health of the local church.

It was argued that God doesn't always need the best perhaps the following example may shed light on this attitude. When we send our children off to school we want them to get the best education. If we are sick or are facing surgery we don't want the doctor with lowest patient satisfaction rating but rather the one that everyone considers the best. Somehow when it comes down to the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the attitude is "that's good enough" as though the effort put in to fulfilling Christ's command to His church deserves less than what is desired for ourselves and our children.

Vision, Mission and Tagline Statements: All of those responded shared a need to have a very clearly defined Vision Statement and while some believed that at the local church level they had a statement they believed it needed to be redefined and clear disseminated to the entire church Body. Clarity has to be made since we are an Episcopal Ecclesiastical Body all of the local church Vision and Mission statements must line-up with that of the Official Conference statement.

In light of recent events in Kentucky it's crucial that the conference be clear as to how it will handle similar social issues the days of sitting quietly while issues of Homosexuality, Abortion,

Conference course of study 2015

Illegal Immigration and “Which Lives Matter” are over whether we like it or not. If the Conference does not clearly define what it believes one can rest assured that someone else will. What steps will be taken when a Gay or Lesbian couple walks into one of our local church services and hug and kiss each other in the middle of the event as happened this week in a Church in Texas. The church’s unwillingness to confront the world with Jesus has given rise of the world confronting the church with Satan.

Material for this course was gathered in short or long from a variety of sources including:

“The Holy Bible”, God

The followings books by Thom S. Rainer: “The book of Church Growth”, “Effective Evangelistic Churches”, “I am a Church Member”
“Transforming Church in Rural America”, Shannon O’Dell
“Revolutions in World Missions”, K.P. Yahannan

DWAYNE LOWRY

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

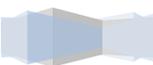
Prospect United Methodist Church (UMC)	1987-1988	Maxton, NC
Fairview UMC	1989-1992	Hamer, SC
Pleasant Grove UMC	1992-1995	Rowland, NC
Christ the Victorious Christian Church	1995-1998	Pembroke, NC
New Philadelphus UMC	1999-2006	Red Springs, NC
New Bethel Holiness Methodist Church	2010-2012	Fairmont, NC
Shoeheel Holiness Methodist Church	2013-2015	Maxton, NC

NON-PROFIT EXPERIENCE

- 2002 Native American Interfaith Ministries, Inc. (The Healing Lodge) Founder- Executive Director, Program Manager Social Ministry: HIV/AIDS, Domestic Violence, Substance/Alcohol Abuse, Pembroke NC
- 2005 Helped establish Harvest Ministries a service of Union Chapel Holiness Methodist Church,
Organized the Board for 501 (c) 3 qualification process Pembroke NC
- 2006 Sacred Pathways, Inc. Founder-Executive Director Soup Kitchen, Food Bank, Crisis ministry Pembroke NC
- 2012 Helped to organize CYNAS 3E Policy and Procedures, 501 (c) 3 obtained

MISSION EXPERIENCE

1990-2006 Served as Director of Missions of the Rockingham District Native American Cooperative Ministry (RDNACM), which consisted of fourteen Native American congregations



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2003	Mission work building Tres de Mayo church	Montero, Santa Cruz, Bolivia	South America	(15 days)
2003	St. John UMC	Anchorage, AK		(15 days)
2009-2015	30 wheelchair ramps	Locally		(30 days)
Tornado 2011	removed down trees covered roofs	Rowland, NC		(2 days)
Tornado 2013	helped gather/deliver food and supplies	El Reno, OK		(9 days)

SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

Pittsburg PA	Cleveland, OH	Ontario, CA	Denver, CO
St. Louis, MO	Little Rock, AR	Norfolk, VA	Columbia, SC
Chicago, IL	Vineland, NJ	Ocala, FL	Anchorage, AK
Santa Cruz, Bolivia, S.A.	Portland, OR	Atlanta, GA	Steubenville, OH

