

PENSACOLA DISTRICT

One focus of the Core Team and Board of Laity in 2007 has been “Where do we go from here? What is the next step?” After discussions and suggestions developing from these questions, we see the need to evaluate our churches. We need to discover which churches are moving forward, staying the same, or backing up. As a Core Team and Board of Laity, we need to equip our local churches to live our lives so that others see Christ in us. We need to help our churches be a better part of the communities surrounding us, stressing that the church belongs to the community and the community to the church. We are seeking answers to what the Core Team and the Board of Laity can do to help local churches as they serve their communities. The Core team is also looking at defining a better mission statement for the Pensacola District by working to answer the question “What do we believe God wants from us five years from now?”

Training and Renewal: We began the year with opportunities for training and renewal. We offered a Day Apart January 4 as a time for pastors to examine wellness and effectiveness and for recreation and relaxation. The theme was “Tend the Flame!” Mid-January we offered to all laity and clergy a seminar on *Leadership in the Local Church* by educational and inspirational speaker Rev. Bert Jones, President and CEO of GO InterNational. District Superintendent Mike Roberts led the annual Staff-Parish training as an evening workshop, which proved so successful that we planned two evening multi-officer sessions for the following year.

Clergy Spouses: Jo Ann Roberts planned several clergy spouse gatherings. In December she led spouses on a “Mission” to create and deliver gift baskets to thank, encourage, and recognize widowed spouses, shut-in spouses, and those who find themselves as full-time caretakers.

Churches: District churches reported 677 professions of faith, ending 2007 with 33,231 professing members, a net gain of 313. Sunday worship attendance averaged 272. Latham Chapel, Niceville First, and Chumuckla earned Conference Church of the Year awards. For several years the District has recognized “District All-Star Churches” based on churches’ meeting three criteria in the course of a year: paying 100% apportionments, having more than 50% proportion of attendance by membership, and having a net gain in membership. Those recognized in 2007 for meeting these requirements in 2006 were Chumuckla, Ensley, Jay, and Niceville First. Those recognized in 2008 were Annie Jones, Crestview First, Niceville First, and Woodbine. 22 churches received certificates from the Conference Missions Secretary for their involvement in at least 8 mission areas. 10 churches received certificates “for exceptional giving to and participation in the ministry of the United Methodist Children’s Home from April 2006 to March 2007.”

Community Ministries: More than 300 participated in the Pensacola United Methodist Community Ministries (PUMCM) outreach event October 20. Many registered for classes and showed interest in the agencies and ministries PUMCM offers. Children from the community are now coming to Sunday School and several have attended worship at Richards Church. Top of the Bottom Food Ministry has grown to more than 180 families per session. On November 30, PUMCM and “Coats Off Your Back” provided several hundred homeless people with clothes, showers, haircuts, meals, and other assistance. Networking with PJC and UWF has helped PUMCM offer services involving education, training, and employment issues. Children in our

impoverished community continue to have a high priority, and we will explore issues such as nutrition, vitamins, tutoring and mentoring. Director Joe Mullen works with local agencies and seeks support for PUMCM ministries through speaking engagements, DVDs, and the new pensacolafreshstart.org website.

Wesley Foundation: The District has made itself known on the University of West Florida campus by having several events such as a Nothing But Nets awareness fund-raiser and a midnight exam week pancake breakfast. The health and growth of the Wesley Foundation can be attributed to the wonderful support of many local churches, groups like United Methodist Women, and individuals like Jeff Pement and the rest of the Wesley Board. Wesley now has three weekly scheduled events with many other fellowship and missions opportunities. In 2007 we moved from having one intern to three, and the additions added to our productivity.

Conference Matters: On October 25 the District Conference approved selling the parsonage and establishing a housing allowance for the District Superintendent. Administration budget for 2007 was \$64,985; less than 94% was spent. In June the Richards Memorial and St. Paul Churches in Pensacola became a 2-point charge.

District Board of Missions: The Pensacola District Board of Methodist Missions, Inc., continues to fulfill its main mission of searching for real property to assist in the creation of new churches in the District and in assisting new and older churches under special circumstances. Currently major interest is centered in the growing areas surrounding Crestview, Pace, and the area north of Cantonment. Visits have been made to these areas to look at possible sites and growth potential. The Board also looks for new ways to perform its mission and is currently evaluating how it might join with existing healthy, growing churches to parent new churches in developing areas. The creation of new churches has always been a major factor in the sustained growth of the District and its ability to minister more effectively to its existing members and to the unchurched. In 2007 the District Board helped fund the newly created District Missions Coordinator services by contributing \$25,000.00 to this ministry. Other special District Missions projects are considered from time to time as the needs and opportunity develop. Under the direction of Martha Ravira, progress is being made to start a new Hispanic mission church in our district.

Missions: In June Rev. Carl Dickerson was appointed District Missions Coordinator, making him available to help local churches organize, lead, or send a mission team and to connect them with foundations that will expand the impact of missions work. One project was to send to Costa Rica 280 wheelchairs and, for the severely disabled, 32 specialty wheelchairs. Volunteers in Mission with qualified therapists distribute the chairs. In partnership with the Fabretto Children's Foundation, Pensacola First UMC and Give-A-Book sent a container of new books to Nicaragua. A number of volunteers from St. Luke and First UMC in Pensacola prepared the books for shipment in October. The District is very involved with the Love for Peru Foundation. In 2007, local Methodist church teams came from Gulf Breeze, St. Paul, Cokesbury, Navarre, Bellview, Pine Forest, and Gonzalez, with support from Chumuckla.

Lay Speaking Ministries: In August Kurt Burgess became the District Director of Lay Speaking. There were 56 local church lay speakers and 67 certified lay speakers (CLS). CLS

filled pulpits 35 times at 13 different churches, including covering Baker UMC June-August. CLS were supplied to The Haven of Our Lady of Peace Nursing Home in Pensacola every Sunday of the year. The District had two training sessions, hosted by Niceville UMC and Bellview UMC. Three CLS are active in Kairos Prison Ministry: Kurt Burgess, Perry McInnis, and Michael Silverman.

United Methodist Men: UMM started the year with a new District President, John Johnson. John immediately set out to organize UMM and get it moving for our Lord. August 13 brought forth a great meeting of Santa Rosa County UMM. Twelve churches participated. Thanks to Arthur Frazier of Christ Church in Milton for hosting and setting up the event! Guests were the D.S., the new District President, and the AL-West FL Conference President. The Low Country Boil was simply great eating. We need volunteers to step up to similar gatherings in Escambia and Okaloosa Counties. Thank you to all local church UMM who demonstrate God's love through good deeds and helping-hand projects across the District.

United Methodist Women: UMW started the year with District Leadership Training January 6 at Cokesbury Summit Park Campus. 81 from 18 units were present. Local officers were very positive and enthusiastic. The District Mission Team held planning meetings January 6 at Cokesbury Summit Park Campus, May 5 at Gulf Breeze UMC and August 18 at St. Luke UMC. We attended Conference Leadership Training at Blue Lake January 12-13 and September 28-29.

Mission Studies were held February 17 at Gulf Breeze UMC (*India and Pakistan*), attended by 89 members from 16 units; March 31 at Fort Walton Beach First UMC (*Globalization*), with 105 from 14 units; and April 28 at Milton First UMC (*Shalom*), with 79 from 14 units. March 23-24, 10 members from 8 units attended the Conference Spiritual Enrichment Retreat at Blue Lake. Pensacola District UMW showed an awesome turn-out for the Cooperative School of Christian Mission July 26-29 at Blue Lake: 34 members and 2 guests from 12 units.

We held a District Annual Day Apart September 15 at St. Luke UMC. Lynn Hamric from the Women's Division was our awesome guest speaker, and it was wonderful. The theme was *Fruits of the Spirit*. 105 members from 20 units with 3 guests attended. 17 units were 5-Star units. 66 from 13 units participated in the Reading Program. 18 units participated in the Mission Today criteria; 2 were Bronze Mission Today Units, 5 were Silver, and 5 were Gold. Plaques were awarded to St. Paul for the most members participating in a UMW event and to Warrington for the host unit having the most members present for a UMW event. We would like to see more units organizing and re-organizing and more involvement in units by younger women and teens. We will continue to endorse such projects as Give-A-Book Foundation, PET Project, the Children's Services Center, and other avenues and projects that the Conference and Women's Division endorse that aid and support women, children, and youth.

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