



The Methodist Messenger
JUNE 2019
Whiteville United Methodist Church



Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Communion Service - 6:00 p.m.

GRADUATION SUNDAY

The Sunday after Ascension Day

Seventh Sunday of Easter

June 2

10:00 a.m.

During the morning Service of Worship, the high-school and college graduates of Whiteville United Methodist Church will be recognized and prayed for. Plan now to attend!

DR. TIMOTHY GEORGE:

A GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

On May 3, the Dr. Timothy George Tribute Banquet was held at The Club of Birmingham, AL. Dr. George was the founding Dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. Way back in 1988, he helped establish an ecumenical (that is, Christian-unity oriented) divinity school at the Baptist-related university. As Dean, Dr. George guided this new divinity school for its first 31 years of educational ministry. And he did so with great distinction.

Whiteville United Methodist Church well remembers that Dr. George was the 2013 Carolyn T. High Preaching Mission preacher. While visiting our church and community, he preached sermons on: "St. Augustine: Theology for an Age of Terror," "Martin Luther: Yearning for Grace," and "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Against the Stream." What a stirring sermon series -- based on great leaders from historic Christianity, who now rest from their earthly labors and reside in the Communion of the Saints -- for all of us! We were, are, and will be thankful for Dr. George's service of the Word of God in our midst.

Back to the more recent past. The Club is a very handsome, and probably exclusive, venue. It must cater to the Southern Living crowd of Birmingham. (Interestingly, SL is actually based in that Alabama city.) One of The Club's large banquet rooms, where the events of the tribute took place, overlooks the city. At dusk, the banquet room provided a memorable view of the city winding down for dinner. After dark, with city lights stretching for miles beyond downtown, it was a downright beautiful view.

After dinner, various dignitaries from Beeson Divinity School and Samford University hailed Dr. George -- and kidded with him. Dr. Mark Devine and Dr. Robert Smith, Jr. spoke gratefully for Beeson. Dr. Charles T. Carter, a Beeson fellow and a Samford trustee, and Dr. Andrew Westmoreland, the president of Samford, added comments that radiated with admiration and gratitude. All pointed in the most elevated terms to Dr. Timothy George -- his Christian faith, his Christian character, his theological accomplishments, his faithful deanship. That was as it should have been.

At the end of the lively program, the evening's celebrated one finally stepped on stage to offer closing remarks. The banquet hall hushed. Dr. George began to speak. As expected, he gave generous words of thanks to his colleagues, past and present. Then Dr. George simply quoted Karl Barth, a theological giant of the 20th century.

On his eightieth birthday on May 10, 1966, nearing his death on December 10, 1968, Barth had said: "With horror I read [a] statement that I was the greatest theologian of the century. That really terrified me.... What does the term 'greatest theologian' actually mean?... As a theologian, one can never be great, but at best one remains small in one's own way.... Let me again remind you of the donkey I referred to [earlier]. A real donkey is mentioned in the Bible, or more specifically an ass.... It was permitted to carry Jesus to Jerusalem." (quoted by Ben Myers, www.faith-theology.com/2008/01/karl-barth-on-why-there-is-no-such.html, accessed on 05/05/19; from "Karl Barth's Speech on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday Celebrations," Fragments Grave and Gay [Collins, London, pp. 112-117]).

In closing remarks at his retirement from founding Dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University, Dr.

George repeated the following words from Barth's 80th-birthday speech as if they were George's own: "If I have done anything in this life of mine, I have done it as a relative of the donkey that went the way carrying an important burden. The disciples had said to its owner: 'The Lord has need of it.' And so it seems to have pleased God to have used me at this time, just as I was, in spite of all the things, the disagreeable things, that quite rightly are and will be said about me. Thus I was used.... I just happened to be on the spot. A theology somewhat different from the [then-]current theology was apparently needed in our [modern] time, and I was permitted to be the donkey that carried this better theology for part of the way, or tried to carry it as best I could."

Dr. Timothy George is no longer the Dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University. However, his work is not done. His calling is not fulfilled. He will remain a donkey -- in Karl Barth's sense -- carrying the Christian message. As a Barthian donkey, he will carry this treasured burden until he crosses the Jordan and is met by the One who carried a cross for him. Thanks be to God. And thanks be to God for the life and ministry of Dr. Timothy George. And Karl Barth.

In Christ,
Pastor Paul

"The truth is, we're never as important as we think we are, and, in the end, we and our stories will be forgotten by everyone but God."

--Archbishop Charles J. Chaput
Philadelphia, PA

JUDICIAL COUNCIL RULES CONSISTENTLY

As you will recall, the Traditional Plan was made up of 17 petitions (or pieces of legislation or bills). Around half of those petitions had already passed judicial review by the Judicial Council and had been approved by the 2019 General Conference. Those petitions once again passed the Judicial Council's review of April 2019, and they go into effect in the United States on January 1, 2020.

Again, those adopted, constitutional petitions are:

*the definition of "self-avowed practicing homosexual" is expanded to include those who are living in a same-sex marriage or union (Traditional Plan #1, Petition 90032);

*bishops are prohibited from consecrating self-avowed, practicing homosexual persons as bishops, and from commissioning and ordaining such persons as clergy (Traditional Plan #5, Petition 90036).

*clergy who are found guilty of performing

same-sex weddings would face mandatory penalties: a one-year suspension without pay for the first offense, and revocation of ministerial credentials for the second (Traditional Plan #11, Petition 90042); *the District Committee on Ministry and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry are prohibited from recommending for ministry those who do not meet denominational qualifications, and a bishop presiding over a clergy session at Annual Conference shall rule an unqualified candidate out of order and ineligible for consideration (Traditional Plan #12, Petition 90043); *a bishop can dismiss a complaint only when it has "no basis in law or fact;" in other words, a bishop cannot wave off a complaint he would simply prefer not to handle; also, this petition mandates an expanded paper trail (Traditional Plan #13, Petition 90044); *the one who files a complaint is now involved in the entire process of "just resolution" or mediation (Traditional Plan #15, Petition 90046); and *the church can now appeal a trial-court verdict to the Judicial Council if it involves errors of church law (Traditional Plan #16, Petition 90047). (The above list is from "2019 General Conference Legislation under Review," which was compiled by Ask The United Methodist Church and United Methodist News Service, and found at United Methodist News Daily Digest - March 15, 2019.)

The other petitions of the Traditional Plan have been conclusively ruled unconstitutional by the Judicial Council in April. However, those considered unconstitutional will probably be amended to make them constitutional and placed before General Conference 2020 for consideration.

As you will recall, General Conference 2019 also adopted a disaffiliation plan (Petition 90066). During its April 2019 session, the Judicial Council found this disaffiliation plan to be constitutional. This plan permits a local church to leave The United Methodist Church with its property if: two-thirds of its church conference approves; it pays the previous twelve months of its apportionments and an additional year of its apportionments; it pays its share of its annual conference's pension responsibilities; and its decision is supported by a majority vote of the annual conference. This plan goes into effect immediately. ("Judicial Council Affirms the Traditional Plan," Good News Statement, April 26, 2019)

During its May meeting, the Council of Bishops requested that the Judicial Council, at its next meeting, clarify the "meaning, application and effect" of the legislation passed by General Conference 2019. (Heather Hahn, "Bishops Plan to Explore 'New Forms of Unity,'" May 9, 2019) It seems that these days the church's executive branch is keeping the church's judicial branch fully

NORTH CAROLINA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June is a month known for several events; for most people, Annual Conference is not one of them! Thus I'd like to share a bit about NC Annual Conference before the event takes place in Greenville from June 12-15.

The theme is "Generosity in All People" which will be highlighted by sharing, worship, teaching, singing of our ministries. Bishop Hope Morgan Ward will preside and lead the Annual Conference. The guest bishop will be Leonard Fairley, now serving as the episcopal leader of the Kentucky and Red Bird Missionary Conferences. Before going to Kentucky, Bishop Fairley served in the NC Conference since 1984. Harriett Jane Olson, who has served as chief executive officer for United Methodist Women since 2007, will celebrate the past 150 years of service as UMW works in the present time and looks to sustaining our mission in the future. The Annual Conference will receive three special offerings: Disaster Relief, Youth Storm Fund (up to \$500,000 raised by youth will be matched), Rotifunk Hospital in Sierra Leone, and Laity Ministries.

Local congregations are asked to send items needed for hygiene kits, which will be packed during one of the Breakout sessions. I will be glad to take items with me if they are left in the Narthex or the Church Office. Items needed include: hand towel (15" x 25" up to 17" x 27", no kitchen towels), washcloth, comb (large and sturdy, not pocket-sized), nail file or fingernail clippers (no emery boards or toenail clippers), bath-size bar of soap (3 oz. and up), toothbrush (single brushes only in original wrapper, no child-size brushes).

Annual Conference is a business meeting, first and foremost, with worship, teaching and honoring people holding a prominent place. Voting for delegates for the 2020 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference will take place throughout the three days of Annual Conference. The NCC budget for 2021 will be set (budget and funds for 2020 were already established in 2018.)

The chairs are hard, those speaking from the floor are held to a specific length of time, sitting and listening all day IS exhausting! But seeing a larger picture than what happens in the local church gives a different perspective and calls me to a higher standard of living in service to Jesus Christ. Thank you for allowing me to represent Whiteville UMC at Annual Conference!

Carolyn Hankins,
Lay Delegate to NC Annual Conference

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

Pastor Stallsworth has kept our congregation well informed on the Traditional Plan and his strong belief and ongoing work to bring it to fruition. But there is another point of view among United Methodists in the United States and beyond. The actions of General Conference 2019 stirred up deep distress within The United Methodist Church. Many are asking: how do we live in a church that has adopted values and rules that we believe are not Christian? Do we stay and try to change the church? Or is Jesus, who makes all things new, leading us to create a new expression of Methodism that is more faithful to the gospel?

It feels like we are in a great season of sorting out how much diversity can remain united, and what are the limits beyond which some may have to leave. "Centrists" and progressives have come together to seek a way forward that is more inclusive and affirming so that all God's people can be fully included in the church.

Two groups, among others, met in May: Our Movement Forward met in Minneapolis, MN. UMC Next is a national group of centrists and progressives. Both groups have members who see the way ahead differently: stay and work to reform the UMC from within, or leave and participate in forming a new church. Both groups say the Traditional Plan is against Christian teaching and is unacceptable. They will work against the Traditional Plan being the official stance of the church. General Conference in 2020 will be interesting, to say the least, and change may come sooner than that since the Traditional Plan portions that have been approved by Judicial Council take effect on January 1, 2020.

Carolyn Hankins

HELP WANTED

The SPRC has opened a new position for Substitute Administrative Assistant. This will be a paid position and includes paid training time. If you would like more information, please call Rob Conway, Chair of SPRC, at 640-1395.



Whiteville United
Methodist Church
902 Pinckney Street
Whiteville, NC 28472

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ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
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WHITEVILLE, NC

Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant
Monday-Thursday/8:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.
12 noon-12:30 p.m. Lunch

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian
Monday-Friday/7:30-11:30 a.m.

Ms. Tammie Anderson, Treasurer
Friday/4:00-6:00 p.m. (or later)

Rev. Paul T. Stallworth, Pastor

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The Whiteville United Methodist Church Service of Worship is broadcast on WTXY 1540 AM and 103.9 FM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at www.wtxy1540.com: click on "Click to Listen Live" under "United Methodist Church of Whiteville" at 10:00 a.m. to hear the complete audio of the service.

Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church
As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ's name.