

# A Day Apart With the Bishop

## A Special Report

### Things I Learned and Things I Need to Share

#### Bishop Swanson Calls All Ministers to a Meeting

##### —Do I Really Have to Go?

#### Thoughts and Ideas I heard at the Meeting

- Being intentional doesn't just happen—you have to work at it.
- “At the end of the day God won't ask you the kind of church you belonged to, but the kind you longed for.” -George Turrell
- Stop just passing the plate on Sunday morning. Tell the stories of lives that are changed by giving. Make the offering more than just symbolic. People will give to those things that they see working.
- 15 trillion dollars will pass from one generation to the next in the next 10-20 years. Make sure that your church gets a portion of it. Have your people include the church in their wills.
- Most pastors have little to do with and most churches discourage the pastor's active involvement in issues related to money in the church. This is a form of malpractice. Money is a spiritual matter. Money can come between us and our relationship to God. The pastor needs to be involved.

Usually, in the business world, when the boss says that all employees need to report for a special meeting of the firm, you get the impression that something is afoot. It's the same in the church when the Bishop says that all ministers need to attend a special Day Apart with the Bishop. The call goes out and you put the date on your calendar and you attend.

Well, rumors began to circulate about this particular meeting. I heard that the topic was going to be the Conference Budget and the lowest collective payment toward the Fair Share since the Holston Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968. The conference Treasurer reports that in 2006, the churches of the Annual Conference only paid a total of 88.04% of the Fair Share Apportioned to them.

With these figures floating around and the purported theme of the meeting being our looking more closely at this shortfall, I was not eager to get in my car and make the trip to Bristol, Tennessee for A Day Apart. However, since there were no surgeries or other things to keep me in Bluefield doing my pastoral duties, I got in the car and made the journey. **Let**

#### **me say I am glad that I did.**

The day was not the gloom and doom scenario that my imagination had conjured up. Rather it was rather straight forward and to the point. It outlined the situation we are facing as an Annual Conference and presented me with challenges that I want to share with you in this special report.

The meeting began with discussion of the events at Virginia Tech. We then listened as Bishop Swanson gave us more of an idea of why we had come to this gathering of preachers.

The Reverend Grady Winegar then gave us a history lesson of the Annual Conference going back to 1968 when we became a part of The United Methodist Church. I'll share more of what he said inside.

We then heard from other speakers that talked on the topics of

- Conference Finance and Clergy Benefits
- Christian Stewardship and the Role of a Pastor
- Christian Witness

In the remaining pages, I invite you to learn more about what I learned.

## A History of Giving in Holston Conference

The Reverend Grady Winegar gave us a history of giving since 1968. During his presentation, he suggested four reasons that giving to the Fair Share has fallen from its record high of 93.98% in 1976 to its low of 88.04 % in 2006.

1. Many Clergy and/or Laity have not been taught or have taught the practicalities of Stewardship as a way of life.
2. We have misplaced the culture of expecting to pay 100% with a culture of, lets cut the Fair Share to balance our local budget.
3. We've not done a good enough story of telling where the Fair Share Apportionment money goes and the various ministries that it supports.
4. Several of our churches through the years have built bigger barns for themselves, by not paying their portion of the Fair Share.

Grady also pointed out that the inflation rate since 1968 has been 491.79%. This means that if we took our 1968 conference budget of \$2,650,092, then the budget adjusted for inflation in 2006 would be \$13, 032,887. Our actual 2006 budget was \$15,310,588. This is an increase in actual dollars of \$2,277,701. Most of this increase can be tied directly to rising healthcare and pension costs of the ministers of the Annual Conference..

Another fact that Grady pointed out was related to pastor's salaries. In 1968 the minimum salary for an elder in full connection with the annual conference was \$6,000 per year. Adjusted for inflation this would amount to a total of \$29,507 in the year 2006. Our 2006 minimum salary was actually \$33,822. This is an amount of \$4,315 above the rate of inflation.

We are paying more, but as an Annual Conference, we seem to be doing less. Across the country there has been growth in population. Yet within our Annual Conference, we have fallen from the all time high of 199,727 members in 1965 to the current all time low of 166,818 in the year 2006. We are losing members even as the towns and communities around us are growing.

Grady suggested several reasons to help explain this loss of membership.

1. Not all of our churches are in good locations.
2. Many of our churches are resistant to change.
3. Many churches lack the facilities to appeal to modern churchgoers.
4. Many churches lack the hospitality skills to effectively integrate visitors into the life of the church.
5. Many churches lack an evangelistic fervor to win people to Christ.
6. Many churches lack necessary leadership from both the clergy and/or the laity.
7. The secular world is no longer knocking down the church door trying to get in. People won't come just because we are there.

### The Effect of Pledging on Giving to the Church

- The typical United Methodist gives 1.7% of household income to the church.
- Studies have shown that churches that use just a pledge card, without any program, receive about 2.9% of household income from their members.
- Studies have shown that churches which use a pledge card in conjunction with a stewardship program or campaign tend to receive 4.9% of the household income of their members.
- 82% of members will likely increase their giving if they are effectively asked to do so and are shown how their gifts are changing people's lives.

### Our 2006 Fair Share Payments

Conference Asking: \$21,567  
 Conference Paid: \$6,290  
 Shortfall: \$15,277

District Asking: \$2,686  
 District Paid: \$0

## Where does your offering go?

The following is based on the 2007 budget of the Holston Annual Conference and the 2006 total local church expenditures found on the Year End Conference Report (Table II). This reflects what happens to **each \$100 that is placed in the local church offering plate** and shows how that money would be used to fund the ministries of the local church and the Annual Conference.

**The dollar amounts for program ministries** (missions, youth, children, colleges, Wesley Foundations, etc.) **are reduced significantly when Fair**

Out of each \$100 given in the offering plate on Sunday morning...	Annual Conference Average	How Virginia Avenue Compares
The Global Church receives	<b>\$2.46</b>	<b>\$1.12</b>
The Annual Conference receives	<b>\$10.61</b>	<b>\$4.88</b>
The Local Church retains	<b>\$86.93</b>	<b>\$94.00</b>

A careful look at the charts on this page will show you that at Virginia Avenue, we are well below the Conference Average when it comes to supporting the ministries funded through the Fair Share.

By our continued shortfall, we are adversely affecting ministries in our district, annual conference, jurisdiction, nation, and around the world. You are encouraged to be in prayer about this matter and to see if you can provide a second mile gift, on a regular basis, to help us reach our Fair Share goal of \$23, 272 and our District Fair Share goal of \$2,795 in 2007.


### Where the \$2.46 is used by the General (Global) Church?

	Conference Average	Virginia Avenue Actual
Global Missions	\$1.26	\$0.56
Ministerial Education	\$0.43	\$0.19
Expenses related to Bishops	\$0.32	\$0.15
Black College Fund	\$0.17	\$0.08
Administration	\$0.11	\$0.05
Jurisdictional Support	\$0.10	\$0.05
Africa University	\$0.04	\$0.02
Interdenominational Support	\$0.03	\$0.02

In our 2007 Information Guide, you were provided with a copy of our 2007 church budget. If you do not have a copy of this guide, then please contact the church office.

### Where the \$10.61 is used by the Annual Conference

	Conference Average	Virginia Avenue Actual
Cabinet Related	\$1.31	\$0.60
Communications	\$0.22	\$0.10
New Church Development	\$0.48	\$0.22
Board of Higher Education	\$0.70	\$0.32
Conference Program Ministries	\$0.88	\$0.40
Board of Ordained Ministries	\$0.17	\$0.04
Wesley Institute/Pastoral Counseling	\$0.44	\$0.20
Conf. Administration/Technology	\$0.92	\$0.42
Trustees/Archives/Episcopacy/Laity	\$0.09	\$0.04
<b>Returned to the Local Church... :</b>		
For Pastor's Pensions	\$2.70	\$1.24
For Pastor's Health Insurance	\$2.54	\$1.17
For Equitable Salary	\$0.16	\$0.07



## Things I Learned and Things I Need to Share

### What Are Some of the Things Healthy Churches in our Conference are Doing

Ann Travis our Conference Director of Connectional Ministries spoke to us and shared some of the things she has learned about the churches of our annual conference. In her talk she listed eight things she has learned in talking to healthy churches.

1. Healthy churches have vital and energizing worship with varying styles offered at various times of the week.
2. Healthy churches are intentional about being a welcoming church.
3. Healthy churches encourage members to invite their friends, relatives, associates and neighbors to worship with them.
4. Healthy churches reach out to younger families with children and youth.
5. Healthy churches offer their buildings to the community at little or no charge and have people from the church present to greet those that come to use the facilities.
6. Healthy churches provide mission opportunities for their members.
7. Healthy churches are in ministry to the people in the neighborhoods surrounding the church.
8. Healthy churches encourage intentional faith sharing from their members.

### The Promise I Made at the Meeting...

As the meeting drew to a close, all the pastors were asked to make the following covenant. We signed a form. The Bishop signed the form. Our District Superintendent signed a form which said....

In grateful response to the grace of Jesus Christ, in whose life, death, and resurrection we find new life, I am awed by God's trust in me to be God's disciple.

Having been called by God to proclaim and share the Gospel as a clergy member of the Holston Conference, The United Methodist Church, I hereby claim anew these clergy vows.

- I will continually deepen my faith that I "...grow up in every way into Christ."
- I will prayerfully nurture my relationships with clergy sisters and brothers so I can support them in their life and ministry and that I may receive the support and care they give.
- I will be guided in my life and ministry by the highest ideals of Christian conduct and standards of clergy leadership.
- I will move to a new level in my commitment to witness to persons with Christ's saving grace and receive more persons into Christ's Church.
- I will demonstrate a commitment to making disciples for the transformation of my community and the world as I work in partnership with the people of my congregation(s).
- I will cultivate and call forth in my people a more generous response to God's grace to the end that a culture of "abundance" rather than of "scarcity" will prevail in our congregation(s).
- I will claim my responsibility as a United Methodist pastor to model Christian stewardship and lead my people to provide the financial resources necessary to fund ministries identified by my local church, district, conference, and general church.
- I will expect the Bishop, my District Superintendent, and members of the extended Cabinet to be a supportive team as I seek to fulfill my duties to Christ and to the Church.
- I will enlist the counsel and resources of the Annual Conference, the Extended Cabinet, and Conference staff to make me a more effective clergy leader.
- I will continue to "develop bonds of unity and common commitments to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the annual conference."