

ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The United Methodist Church is racially, ethnically and culturally diverse. Some of our increased diversity is directly attributed to immigration. This diversity is a gift!

The gift of diversity sometimes offers challenges. ELCC's challenges include meeting the needs of ethnic minorities in the SC Conference United Methodist Churches, supporting and empowering via programming racial and ethnic minority congregations and people as well as being an advocate for ethnic issues.

The current ELCC sub-committees (Funding Committee, African American Committee, Hispanic/Latino Committee and Native American Committee) have been busy. Plans are being made to re-activate the Korean/Asian Committee. A Congregational Specialist has been assigned to this.

The initial ELCC Grant Application Form has been revised. In addition to this form, a second form was created for renewal funding. This form is very short and makes it easy to submit requests for additional funding for the original application. The forms, as well as the guidelines, are located in the forms section of the SC Conference's website.

ELCC continued its tradition in providing funding for: 1) local church ministries 2) Salkehatchie Scholarships 3) Harambee Scholarships 4) SEJANAM Scholarships 5) Youth Annual Conference Scholarships 6) Other Youth Scholarships 7) Granville Hicks Leadership Academy 8) Scholarships for Pastors 9) Scholarships for Laity.

It is ELCC's intent to extend its networking with Religion and Race. Also, ELCC hopes to network with two additional conference agencies (traditionally non-networking) in 2007-8.

Comprehensive Plans are being revised for all sub-committees. They should be completed soon.

ELCC trained 24 Grant Specialists in December. The Grant Specialists will assist congregations in the preparation of grant application forms.

Our new Congregational Specialist, Rev. Dr. George A. Ashford, has been given the African American Churches portfolio in addition to his other duties. He has been extremely busy and is working closely with the African American Committee as well as ELCC. We have seen some "fruits" of his labor.

There is still much work to be done. May God strengthen us to do His will.

Charlotte A. Grooms, Chairperson

REPORT NO. 1

AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMITTEE

The African American Committee's responsibilities were far reaching in 2006. There was much dialogue with the African American Congregation Specialist about redefining the role of the Committee.

Job descriptions, detailing the duties and responsibilities, were written. This committee will continue its relationship with BMCR. The committee will continue to support the Granville Hicks Leadership Academy.

A visioning session was held. A Safe Sanctuaries Workshop is being planned. There will be more dialogue with African American pastors and/or clergy.

Rev. Herbert Fogle, Chairperson

REPORT NO. 2

HISPANIC/LATINO COMMITTEE

In the process of pioneering this ministry, significant impact has been made in the lives of so many Hispanic/Latinos by responding to their social, economic, legal and spiritual needs.

There are continuous concerns in this on-going ministry, far beyond our capabilities and possibilities to solve. That is holding us back from achieving the goals and strategies which we are committed to. Some of the most relevant are:

- 1) The local churches and Districts involvement in this ministry is far behind the needs and opportunities that are challenging us.
- 2) We feel the need of the Conference to have ownership of the Hispanic/Latino Ministry as a ministry of the United Methodist Church.
- 3) There is an on-going feeling of uncertainty regarding the funding of this ministry. This situation is contributing to undermining the stability and the heart for this ministry.
- 4) We believe that our Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters are hereto stay, and so is our commitment to work alongside and worship with them, providing a space where they feel a spiritual connection.

Where are we heading?

We need to be intentional in defining whether the Hispanic/Latino ministry is a priority for the Conference. We also need to be intentional in visualizing the Hispanic/Latino Ministry with a structural personality within the Conference.

There are two basic challenges that we need to focus on:

- 1) **Immigration Laws:** While we recognize the complexity of the current immigration situation, we believe that our calling as people of God is to welcome the stranger and offer hospitality to the poor. This is a Jesus commandment that we must follow.

We, the Hispanic/Latino Committee join the General Board of Church and Society in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform that is not based on amnesty or open borders, but aims to:

- Provide a path to citizenship
- Protect workers
- Reunite families

- 2) **A Call to Hospitality:** We need *“to raise awareness of our lack of hospitality to people who are different from us in our churches.”*

What can we do as a Conference? How can we get involved in this process of **“our call to Hospitality”**? Being more intentional in our commitment, and continuous to raise awareness about the biblical mandate to be hospitable to people who are different from us in our churches and communities. Leviticus 19:33-34 (NCV) says, **“Do not mistreat foreigners living in your land, but treat them just as you treat your own citizens. Love foreigners as you love yourselves, because you were foreigners one time in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”**

The Hispanic/Latino Committee

REPORT NO. 3

NATIVE AMERICAN COMMITTEE

“It was the first time in my life that I felt proud to be both Native American and Christian. I felt accepted. The South Carolina United Methodist Church is true to its word—Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.”

These are the words from a South Carolina Native American, who has experienced how our conference outreaches to native peoples. Too often Indian people are told that they cannot be both Indian and Christian. Through this committee’s outreach, a growing number of South Carolina Indian people are learning that they can be both. We are one body of Christ regardless of our race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability or any other discriminatory factor. We need to maintain this as our focus as a church.

Once again, this has been a busy and a successful year with our committee. Yet, we still have a long way to go – *“Making the Invisible – Visible.”* Our outreach is critical and we continue to struggle with recognition issues and self-esteem as a people.

In May, the chair and a committee member traveled to St. Louis, Missouri for the Native American Comprehensive Plan meeting. There were many conferences represented. We went to gain knowledge of where we need to go next – our future step. To our surprise, we became the role model for other conferences’ Native American Committees. We were able to share our committee structure, how we manage our meetings and operations, our outreach to all South Carolina Indians, regardless of religious affiliation, Rocky Swamp Native American Ministries of Presence, our training of Native American Representatives, promoting Native American Ministries Sunday and other benchmarks from this conference.

A major area of concern was shared with us at this meeting that we want to lift up. **At the 2008 General Conference, a proposal will be made for the deletion of all Special Observance Sundays.** Much of our outreach and success has come from Native American Ministries Sunday. The loss of this special Sunday would severely damage and hamper our mission. Native American Ministries Sunday directly impacts a group of people who are members of this church. This Special Observance Sunday should be maintained. **We ask for your assistance in keeping this Sunday.** Please support all efforts to defeat this measure or at least amend it so that Native American Ministries Sunday is not deleted.

In June, our committee provided over \$3,000 in scholarships for South Carolina Indian people to attend the Southeastern Jurisdictional Agency of Native Americans (SEJANAM) conference at Lake Junaluska. For many Indian people, they would not be able to attend without our assistance. This conference allows fellowship and worship of Indian people from throughout the southeast. It also provides educational workshops on concerns and issues impacting American Indians. In fact, we had two Santee Indians, Kiser and Jennifer Johnson, sing during the Gospel Singing service. Kiser wrote that one thing that Jennifer and he took away from the conference was, “God loves you and there is nothing you can do about it.” Additionally, with their singing, they know they are “Called, Chosen and Equipped to Walk the Sacred Path.” That was the theme of the conference. We plan to continue these scholarships this year.

In July, the chair and secretary traveled to Lawton, Oklahoma to assist with the 49th Annual American Indian Scouting Seminar. It was a special request to help with the local arrangements committee in setting up and running the seminar. The chair of the committee assisted us when the seminar came to South Carolina. We carried out this role and it was successful. In fact, the chair was elected to the Board of Directors.

The host tribe was the Comanche Nation – The Lord of the Plains. This provided a unique learning experience.

The majority of the Comanche people are United Methodists. A United Methodist missionary, John Butterfield, brought Methodism to the Comanche people. Thus, we gained insight to both the positive and negative impacts of missionary experience. One of the elders stated, "At first, our traditions and culture were labeled as not of God. However, as learning continued, we were accepted." They used the symbol of the cross on their horses, cradle boards, and other objects long before the missionary arrived. It was easy to convert Comanche people because they were, in essence, Christian, before the arrival of the missionary. Like all Indian people, there was the belief in one God. More important, there were stories of the Great Flood and many other Biblical stories. The only thing that was missing was the written word (The Bible). Once again, it shows the connection of all people.

In July, under the leadership of Rev. Bart Sistare, the Native American Salkehatchie Camp had 31 young people and adults come together from across South Carolina to a remote section of Dillon County to repair homes belonging to members of the Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper South Carolina. Tribal Chief Carolyn Chavis-Bolton was happy to have the camp working with her tribe to show that someone outside of Dillon County cares about their community. One of the structures repaired was the former Indian School, which was more than 100 years old. The camp will return to Dillon this July. **If you are interested in participating, contact Rev. Sistare at (803) 787-3058.**

Rocky Swamp Native American Ministries of Presence reports directly to the Native American Committee. This outreach ministry continues to grow and thrive. It is the only place of worship in our conference that follows traditional Indian ways as well as the structure of the United Methodist Church. It is unique in the fact that members travel from all over the state. Some travel more than four hours round trip just to worship every Sunday. Many Indian people are still cautious when it comes to organized religion. Yet, this ministry is meeting their needs, without reservations. Recently, 77 people worshipped on one Sunday. This year, the ministry had an educational day teaching native traditions and conducting a sweat lodge. Our committee assisted the church in \$1,500 in travel expenses in their outreach, on behalf of our committee, to all of the tribes of South Carolina.

For the second year, our committee has sponsored one major project – the Christmas Elder Comfort Baskets. Elders play an important role in Indian culture. However, many elders live in substandard conditions. They are often left out during this holiday season. We have asked churches to assist us with putting together the Elder Comfort Baskets. This year was our most successful. More churches helped than the previous year. After all the contributions were gathered, Rocky Swamp members were able to put together 78 Elder Baskets. Every tribe received at least six baskets. This is the best that we have done, but we would like to reach even more. We will continue this project for Christmas 2007 and we continue to need the support of the churches in this conference. We need small laundry baskets to be filled with non-perishable food items, laundry detergent, dish washing liquids, bath soaps, shampoos, hand/body lotions, toothpaste and brushes, toilet paper, tissues, health care products for men and women, facial care products, nail clippers and Christmas candy. **If your church can assist, please contact our vice chair, Cathy Nelson, at (843) 835-8589.** Our committee also handles cash donations for this project to cover pick up and/or delivery of the baskets.

We continue to participate at Annual Conference with a display table. We have also started a fundraiser. A Native-American Committee t-shirt has been developed. Our focus is on the front – *Making the Invisible, Visible*, and our logo is on the back. They were sold at the Native American Representative Training. We plan to sell them at Annual Conference, at the SEJANAM Conference and by orders. The projected price is \$17 per shirt. **If you would like to purchase one, contact Beckee Garris at (803) 325-4194.**

The Discipline requires the establishment of the Native American Committee and for each church to appoint, regardless of race, a Native American Representative. This representative helps support our outreach by providing information to his or her church about our mission, our special projects and Native American Ministries Sunday. We held our fifth training for representatives in February. A training manual was provided to all the participants. The Bishop and all district offices received a manual. A Power Point presentation and an orientation to traditional Native American worship were provided by Rocky Swamp Native American Ministries of Presence. The training focused on dispelling the myths and stereotypes about American Indians, key issues for Native Americans, South Carolina Indian history, the job of the representative, and the focus of our committee.

We had the most successful year to date with Native American Ministries Sunday. It is traditionally around the fourth Sunday in April. Our committee provides speakers for your sermon portion of the worship service and a list of worship materials from United Methodist resources. For the first presentation at a church, the chairperson typically provides the message portion of the sermon. The message covers myths and stereotypes about SC American Indians from past to present, American Indian spirituality, our committee and our outreach. We have brochures, contact cards and a display board. Subsequent years may include traditional story telling or a presentation from a South Carolina tribe. At the end of the service, we present the church with a friendship necklace including a clay medallion made of Catawba clay by a Catawba Indian. Subsequent years will feature the presentation of a traditional Indian bead made by one of the tribes of South Carolina. We hope all churches will build their friendship necklaces.

There are only a few of us on this committee. Thus, the requests for speakers for this Sunday fill up fast. However, we are willing to work with a church and our calendars to provide the service at any time during the year. As a reminder, November is also popular since it is Native American Heritage Month, which is nationally observed. **To arrange a Native American Ministries Sunday, please contact the chair, Zan Tracy Pender at (803) 905-5672.**

We continue to be good stewards of the monies provided through Native American Ministries Sunday. Many of our successes, like the ones listed, are not possible without this Sunday. Additionally, we continue to provide for cul-

tural training and reestablishing our traditional ways by teaching Indian people, especially our youth. We assisted in repairs of a tribal office where the roof was leaking. Our budget is very small, but we try to serve as many needs as possible. Our comprehensive plan forms the foundation of our goals.

One of John Wesley's major missions was outreach to the American Indians. Please continue your strong support and acknowledgement of our vital outreach mission which is a part of this conference and all of our churches. We have only just begun.

May the Great Spirit watch over you as long as the grass grows and the water flows.
God Bless.

Zan Tracy Pender, Chairperson