

THE COMMITTEE ON CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The report of the Committee on Congregational Development represents the efforts of many people across our annual conference. Our new church starts, Grace Community in Fort Mill, Journey in Columbia, Point Hope in Mt. Pleasant, and Waters Edge in Beaufort, are showing signs of growth and vitality. Grace Point in Bluffton experienced a change in leadership and is working toward launching weekly worship services. Point Hope has leased a building in Park West and will begin worshipping there in the spring. This will be a major step for them as they have worshiped in an elementary school for over 6 years.

Bethany UMC in Summerville is helping birth a new congregation at the conclusion of annual conference in June. Bethany's commitment of both people and resources is a major step forward in how we should start new churches in our conference. When an established congregation births a new church the possibility of success is greatly enhanced. Any church that has interest in sponsoring a new faith community is urged to contact our office.

Esperanza UMC in Greenville is a Hispanic mission congregation that has the support of several churches in the district. The former Arrington Church on Old Buncombe Road is the site of this new church start, and it promises to be a significant ministry among the large Hispanic community in the Greenville area. A pastor will be appointed there at this annual conference.

Our ability to start new churches and strengthen existing congregations is affected by the resources we receive through our conference apportionments. We received \$16,600 less in 2008 than we did in 2007. As with all conference programs, the impact we are able to make is directly related to the support of our apportionments. This year we were able to make four grants to local churches for a total of \$112,922.

John Wesley in Lamar, and Edisto Fork in Orangeburg are two local churches we have worked with in developing new church campuses. The ministry opportunities for both churches are very exciting.

Many of our churches have a vision of the Kingdom of God that continues to grow. They are receiving new members by profession of their faith in Christ, and the possibilities are limitless. May all of our churches understand that the church exists for the sole purpose of helping people meet, know, serve, and share Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

Rusty Taylor, Director