

LAKE JUNALUSKA ASSEMBLY

Two thousand and eight (2008) has been filled with events that I believe have the possibility of being direction-changing for Lake Junaluska. Added to all the external and internal changes within the United Methodist Church and Lake Junaluska have been the financial challenges of a weakening economy.

The 2008 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference set a new direction for the entire jurisdiction. It called for Lake Junaluska to be one of only three agencies and did away with the Administrative Council that had been Lake Junaluska's governing board. Along with looking at the new future of Lake Junaluska differently, it also set us in the direction of being more financially self-sufficient.

The new Board of Directors afforded Lake Junaluska the opportunity to have persons who have a deep abiding commitment to the ministry of Lake Junaluska as board members. As we moved away from the Administrative Council, which was a broad and representative board for the entire jurisdiction, we now can see a future with a smaller board which can take a well-defined vision and mission and build a stronger Lake Junaluska Assembly.

These changes offer, for the first time, the possibility of living and working as one organization. Lake Junaluska can be an agency that provides Christian hospitality with its campus, housing, services, etc., along with disciple-making and equipping ministries. This big change makes it possible to alleviate our age-old problems of competition between the conference center and ministry.

Building this new organization has required us to look closely at our ministry focus. Our focused ministry will be built around offering our events based on research that meets the identified needs of the church and individuals. To a larger degree, these ministry offerings will need to be self-supporting, thus requiring us to be more realistic in our financial charges to participants.

All of these changes and challenges have given us the opportunity to take an in-depth look at our financial needs and budgeting processes. As we have prepared to move toward 2013 and started to build a business plan, we focused on the 2009 budget process to inform us. We have looked closely at every area from ministry to housekeeping to determine a realistic understanding of our real costs.

In 2008 we celebrate an entire year of using the new Bethea Welcome Center. The building is being seen as a tipping point for the Lake Junaluska campus. It has inspired us to look closely at our hospitality needs, our facilities as its design has challenged us to have a more architecturally coordinated campus, as we plan for buildings in the future. The new golf course clubhouse that opened in the spring is a wonderful example of this new architectural influence.

There are many staff persons who make the ministry of Lake Junaluska possible. I am privileged to work with all of them and share a brief synopsis of the work of the executive staff.

The Conference and Retreat Center struggled in 2008 under the escalating price increases of petroleum, surcharges for products, and uncertain economic times. We were able to provide an air-conditioned Stuart Auditorium which not only pleased our guests but established the fact that we can successfully air condition Stuart as we build into the future. This year considerable progress has been made upgrading our facilities at the west end, Terrace Hotel, and Lambuth Inn. We have been challenged in providing enough staff to offer guests a quality experience because of budget constraints. Our exit evaluations from guests still remain high at 93 percent willing to return/willing to recommend.

We're implementing a new training program for our staff built around the "delivery of a quality Junaluska Experience to every guest". This program will be provided under the Workplace Discipleship Program. It will include orientation for all new staff and existing staff around providing Christian hospitality in every job on the Lake Junaluska campus.

The Ministry Event Development Department has made progress establishing a new direction and focus that totally incorporates ministry into the Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center. Working with the Marketing Department and the Business Office, the ministry area is using new marketing processes with the Lake Junaluska ministry events. We are proud of the partnership with Alban Institute and are pursuing partnerships and initiatives such as "Chautauqua Events" and establishing the Center for Racial Ethnic Ministries.

The Marketing and Communications Office has made significant progress this year. We have generated 180 stories on Lake Junaluska; had a significant increase in visits to our website; have begun on-line reservations for lodging rooms; and continued our e-newsletters. The conference coordinators and sales staff are giving concerted efforts to reaching as many persons as possible who will use the facilities and services of Lake Junaluska.

The Development Office continues its work with capital needs and the annual fund. We have developed a strategy that will move our annual fund to the next level with the Pacesetters of Lake Junaluska Program. The goal is to increase our donor giving to the operating budget. We continue to solicit gifts for the Jones Cafeteria improvements.

Residential Services has progressed in 2008. We have had many accomplishments and challenges since moving under the North Carolina Utility Commission, which now sets our water, sewer, and fire protection rates. We have moved to a new security firm. We are pleased with the support of Lake Junaluska residents to the ministry of Lake Junaluska and appreciate all their financial and volunteer support.

Yes, 2008 has been a good and challenging year! As God continues to bless us as we strive to offer our unique ministry to The Church we appreciate your prayers and support.

Jimmy L. Carr, Executive Director