

NATIVE AMERICAN COMMITTEE

What is the message in the Book of Micah? Micah 7:18-19 states, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

In February, Cathy Nelson (our vice chairperson), provided a summary of the ***Giving Our Hearts Away*** training. This course, targeting women, takes a look at the tragic history of the American Indian including the role the church played. We were made aware of concerns about presenting this training. We believe this training is vital and does not create division when presented in the proper manner.

The past is the past. None of us have the ability to change what happened. It is history, it is what it is. Yet, we have the opportunity to learn from our past ensuring we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. In order to accomplish this, we must learn the true facts of what happened and acknowledge what occurred.

I am often asked if I am angry about what happened to American Indians in the past and how they were and are treated. I believe the message of Micah answers this question. God provides forgiveness and he tells us not to keep our anger. He will tread our sins of the past underfoot and throw them into the depths of the sea. We must take the lessons of the past and use them to promote unity and harmony among all God's people. Anger serves no purpose. We are one people bounded by the blood of Christ. Indian people have long referred to ourselves as the human beings. What greater lesson than to acknowledge that we are all human (God's creations) regardless of race, color, gender or any other division of our own (man's) creation. This is the message that I wanted to provide for reflection as I write this annual report.

Building on 2007, 2008 has been one of the most productive years for our committee. Once again, we increased the number of churches having Native American Ministries Sunday. This is a great accomplishment; yet, we are still only reaching about one quarter of our conference. Although Native American Ministries Sunday is April 19th (the Sunday after Easter), our committee will arrange for this special Sunday anytime during the year. We provide speakers for this Sunday. **To arrange a Native American Ministries Sunday, please contact the chair, Zan Tracy Pender, 803-905-5672.**

In February, we conducted a seventh Native American Representative Training. There were 88 people in attendance. Some of these representatives have attended before and we welcomed them back. We were also encouraged by the number of new faces and new representatives. Our committee has completed a DVD taping of the 2007 training which was sent to all District Superintendents. If a representative could not attend the training, he or she can view the training. As a reminder, *The Discipline* requires that every local church at charge conference designate by nomination and election a minimum of one person per charge (without regard to race or ethnic origin) as a Native American Representative for that church.

Our committee provides the training and the local church Native American Representative works with our committee in assisting with our projects and programs as well as establishing Native American Ministries Sunday in his or her church. This year, our committee developed its own offering envelope for this special Sunday. It has our logo and provides a summary of our mission and objectives. If your church needs offering envelopes, please contact Gail Corn at the conference office in Columbia.

We strive to continue to be good stewards of the monies provided through Native American Ministries Sunday. Fifty percent of the offering remains in our conference. I am pleased to inform the conference that we have developed a detailed operating budget which will help us monitor and use our funding appropriately. We have designated line items for special funding, such as donations for elder baskets.

This year, we spent \$2,064 in scholarships sending South Carolina American Indian families to the annual Native American Conference at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina. We provided assistance to several tribes including repairs to tribal buildings, moving a tribal building, restoring traditional cultural dances, crafts and traditions, and even supporting a historically correct display about South Carolina Indian people in a local city museum.

We had a significant accomplishment at the Native American Conference in June. Beckee Garris was elected president of the Southeastern Native American Caucus (SERNAC). Charlotte Barker was elected secretary. This is a first in our conference. They will represent the Southeastern Jurisdiction to the national United Methodist Native American Comprehensive Plan (NACP) and Native American International Caucus (NAIC). Our chair was also asked to revise the SERNAC by-laws.

We were disappointed that we did not have a Native American Salkehatchie Camp last year. However, I'm pleased to announce that we will have one this year. We will be working with the Wassamasaw tribe. We are seeking volunteers to help with building and home repairs as well as donations of repair materials and monetary support. The camp will be in the low country, probably in Berkley County. **If you are interested in participating contact Rev. Sistare at 803-787-3058.**

We continued our Christmas Elder Comfort Basket project. We thank the conference churches for both the donations of elder baskets and the monetary support of over \$1,000.00 to purchase supplies to balance the donations in all baskets and to cover transportation costs to move the baskets to South Carolina Indian people throughout the state. We provided 128 baskets this year. A hearty thank you is sent out to Keepers of the Word who continue to work

with us in completing this project. They also provided drumming this year at our Native American Representative Training.

Once again, we will have our annual Christmas Elder Comfort Baskets. We will gather and make Elder Comfort Baskets throughout the year. We need small laundry baskets to be filled with non-perishable food items, laundry detergent, dish washing liquids, bath soaps, shampoos, hand/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 gas expenses for pick up and delivery of the baskets.

Sarah Sanchez continues to publish our newsletter. If you would like to receive a newsletter, please let me know and I will provide the information to Sarah. We are thankful to her for the job that she does.

We are seeking a volunteer to serve as our Native American Representative E-mail Group Manager. We want to improve our communications with our representatives. Our goal is to have an e-mail group where we can provide updates throughout the year. Yet, with the size of our committee, we need assistance. If anyone is interested, please contact me.

We have received two petitions from American Indian people in SC requesting that we establish United Methodist Native American churches within our conference. We are working with the conference in the hopes of establishing mission churches for at least two American Indian communities.

There is one area that we are requesting assistance from all churches. We need an accurate count of American Indian people in our churches. In many instances, there are American Indians attending our various congregations. However, they are not being identified in charge conference reports. Yes, it is easy just to guess or go by what has been sent in previously. However, we are asking churches to identify those Native American members of their congregations. Three of our committee members, who are American Indians, are not identified as Native Americans in their own churches. Thus, we have room for improvement.

One of John Wesley's major missions was outreach to the American Indians. Please continue your strong support and acknowledgment of our vital outreach mission which is a part of this conference and all of our churches. We have only just begun to "Make the Invisible – Visible." We walk a Good Red Road together led by our Creator and saved by the blood of Jesus. We walk, hand-in-hand, all races, in forgiveness and healing as the lesson of the Book of Micah teaches us. For that, thank you!

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

Zan Tracy Pender, Chairperson