

February 21, 2008

Dear Eastern North Carolina Friends:

Greetings of God's grace and peace during this time of Lent! As we move towards the cross with Jesus we know that change is inevitable. Change is happening here within the Southern Conference, United Church of Christ, pushing us to resurrection.

It is no secret that the Southern Conference has fallen on hard times and lived to view those difficult times through the lens of hindsight. We, staff and conference leadership, have discussed and deliberated for a time how we could find a path toward transformation in the life of the church and conference. The time has now come.

With a grant from Local Church Ministries and funds from our Live the Vision campaign, we can now be proactive in developing our Church Development program. We do this by equipping individuals and congregations in doing our part so that God can do what God wants to do with us. This change will affect the entire conference but most specifically the Eastern North Carolina Association (ENCA).

Effective March 1, 2008, Reverends K. Ray Hill and Phil Hardy will become Area Conference Ministers for the Eastern North Carolina Association. In this capacity, they will assume responsibility for most church and ministry concerns in the Association. Their portfolios will include but not be limited to the following:

1. Search and Call
2. Training
3. Mission
4. Ordination
5. Installation
6. Conflict Management
7. Situational Reviews
8. Fitness Reviews
9. Standing, and any other duties assigned by the Associate and or Conference Minister.

I will assume staff responsibility for Church Development within the Conference and round out the staff responsibilities within the ENCA. The new responsibilities will include but not be limited to:

1. New Church Development
2. Revitalizing Congregations
3. Congregations seeking to affiliate and
4. Challenging and strengthening healthy congregations in order for all of us to be inclusive in mission and evangelism.

Please know that you will not be losing support, involvement, or care from the Association. We will continue that tradition of fellowship and care by building upon the legacy passed on to us by our ancestors. Ours was a movement that made the mandate of Jesus a reality. We are to share the good news of Jesus the Christ, now as they did then, with all of God's people. We stand on the shoulders of those men and women who were not afraid to "see that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God" (Contemporary English Version, Micah 6:8).

I have enjoyed my work with all of you and look forward to working with you in the future in the same and also in many new ways. We will begin to develop new covenantal relationships and make stronger existing covenantal relationships. God is calling all of the people of God to work together in unity for the peaceable kingdom here on earth.

Let us cast our nets out into the deep for great catch that is there. For this is where our adventure with Jesus begins.

I continually pray for you and the ministry that we do together. May God richly bless all of us.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend Vertie Powers
Associate Conference Minister
Eastern North Carolina Association