



FORWARD

Magazine

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Dec. 13-15, Dallas, TX

2012 Congress on Evangelism

Jan. 3-6, Nashville, TN

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PO Box 985
Lake Junaluska, NC

1-800-737-8333

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2011 Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church Honored at Annual Banquet



"I could tell you all I know about growing a church in 5 or 10 minutes...I decided to share with you about what I DON'T know..."

Dr. Ed Robb, Senior Pastor at The Woodlands United Methodist Church in The Woodlands, Texas (center)

As Dr. Ed Robb accepted the 2011 Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church award the evening of October 28, he told those gathered that, "I'm just a regular guy who happened to be appointed to a new church and that was 34 years ago...I'm still at it at the same church, still trying to grow it and still learning."

Robb, senior pastor at The Woodlands United Methodist Church in The Woodlands, Texas, has pastored the church since its beginning in 1979 and has seen the congregation grow from 30 to, on average, 4,200 in worship each week. The congregation funds over \$1.5 million in missions annually with 94 mission projects and 62 deployed missionaries.

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E.S.J. Professor Addresses Korean Theology Students

E. Stanley Jones Professor Achim Härtner of Reutlingen School of Theology (Germany) was a guest lecturer at the Methodist Theological University of Seoul during the second consultation between the Korean Methodist Church and the Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche (United Methodist Church) in the German-speaking part of Europe. Subsequent to his address entitled "Faithful Change: Perspectives on Mission and Evangelism in Western Europe" the Korean students and professors joined in discussion. During the conversation it became obvious how deeply the traditionally shaped church finds itself confronted with societal changes. Korea, an economically upcoming country which has been divided for more than 60 years, is increasingly exposed to Western impacts that leave their traces in church life also.



Prof. J.C. Clark (right) interprets for Rev. Achim Härtner (left)

The theological approaches and experiences from Härtner's European background were received with high interest. Despite the polite modesty of Korean culture there was an astonishingly open dialogue about existing fears of contact. The recognizable connecting

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Letter from the President



Rev. Neil Blair

As I begin my tenure as President of The Foundation for Evangelism, I have traveled widely to meet with donors, grantees, and Foundation friends to share my vision for the future. Together with the Board of Trustees, I am evaluating both short and long-term opportunities for the Foundation to continue its support of The United Methodist Church in fulfilling its mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ. We are in agreement that the Foundation is at a crossroads – a time of discernment and focus leading to a bright but challenging future.

Our commitment to supporting Wesleyan evangelism remains at the center of all we do. A major part of this focus has been and will continue to be our effort to be good stewards of the gifts we have so graciously been given. In addition to ongoing support of the E. Stanley Jones Professors of Evangelism (see story on page 1) and celebration of leadership excellence (see story on page 3), the Foundation looks to the future announcing its support of the Partner Church Ministry Project with a grant in 2012.

This cutting-edge pilot program of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (COR) will allow the church to work with churches throughout the country in an effort to renew The United Methodist Church so that we can more effectively change lives and transform whole communities through the power of Jesus Christ. The Foundation is pleased to provide grant support for the technological requirements for the three local churches selected for the pilot of this grand vision.

I am honored to be in this work with you and to have been given the opportunity to pilot the Foundation into the future. Thank you for your profound commitment to The Foundation for Evangelism and for your gifts which make all this possible.

Foundation Honors Outgoing Board Chair, Welcomes New Chair

After nine years of service as board chair of The Foundation for Evangelism trustees, Lane Rees has retired from the position. He will continue to serve on the board as a trustee. At the annual donor appreciation banquet, Rees was honored for his dedication and commitment to the board. New board chair, Mary Brooke Casad, presented a gift of appreciation from the board and staff of the Foundation to Rees during the banquet.

Mary Brooke Casad assumed the board chair position following the Foundation's annual board meeting in October. She is the executive secretary of the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church. She has served on The Foundation for Evangelism's board four years, and is the first woman to hold the chair of the board position in the Foundation's history.



Mary Brooke Casad, new board chair, honors outgoing board chair Lane Rees with a gift from The Foundation for Evangelism.

Professor (continued from page 1)

element during the discussion, however, was the fundamental trust in the God of the Bible concerning the evangelistic work of the Church everywhere.

(photos at right: students discuss with professors following the lecture)



An Interview with Rev. Neil Blair

The Foundation for Evangelism welcomes Rev. Neil Blair as its new President. Blair assumed his new role August 1 at the Foundation's Lake Junaluska, N.C., headquarters. He most recently served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, S.D. Prior to his tenure there, he served 19 years in development at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo. Rev. Blair is an elder in the Dakotas Conference and served eight years in the local church in the Missouri Conference.

In an interview with Rev. Blair, he shares how his past has prepared him for this new role, and what role he sees The Foundation for Evangelism playing in growing and strengthening The United Methodist Church.

What do you feel has most prepared you for this role with the Foundation?

My extensive background in The United Methodist Church, leadership as a youth, work done at two United Methodist colleges, two decades as Vice President at a United Methodist seminary, and eight years in the pulpit. I genuinely believe every step of change in life prepares you for the next opportunity.

What about The Foundation for Evangelism helped you decide to take the position?

It was the extraordinary opportunity to make a difference in the growth and strength of The United Methodist Church through The Foundation for Evangelism. The year I was confirmed was the year that The United Methodist Church began to decline, so I have always felt some responsibility to turn that around.

What are your goals for your first year at The Foundation for Evangelism?

To broaden the base of knowledge and support of the vision of the Foundation in order to grow and strengthen the Church and make disciples for Christ. I'd like to include



Rev. Neil Blair (center) pictured with former executive directors Paul Ervin (left) and Jack Ewing (right).

all of the Church in our efforts.

How do you think the Foundation can best challenge The United Methodist Church to focus more on Evangelism?

Through thoughtful, persuasive, creative ideas and initiatives that are centered in Christian faith, taking into account the cultural setting of today.

Where would you like to see The Foundation for Evangelism in the next 4 years?

I hope that we will have discovered and enacted a vision so compelling that individuals can do nothing else but join the Church with excitement and become leaders themselves in bringing others to Christ.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I would ask that all who are passionate about the growth and strengthening of the Church through Christ might show this passion through their prayers and gifts, and to join us in enacting a great vision.



Providing Opportunities in Unexpected Places

Denman Evangelism Award Recipient Dan Talbert Shares About God's Call to Address Poverty

I firmly believe that God selects places, times and communities for us, and in those special situations, opens our eyes for a season of discernment at which times, He expects a response to His call. I experienced such a season in my life during the spring of 2007. My friend, Ron Deloney, led a Disciple Bible Study (DBS) class from the new generation of DBS entitled, "Jesus in the Gospels." Only a few weeks into the daily reading, I knew the scripture was speaking to me! I heard a brave, assertive Jesus telling the establishment that law was certainly good, but it was insufficient. I heard a loving, understanding Jesus tell disciples that he had a mission for them that meant that they go from their comfort zone into an unknown world. The more I read, the more agitated I became. My prayers for solace seemed hollow. I kept hearing these bold action verbs, and they seemed to be addressed to me. "Go," "Do," "Work," "Teach," "Heal," "Pray," I realized that the Jesus to whom I had offered my life in exchange for His saving grace is a radical God. He expected me at age sixty-three to forget about retirement, forget about Rheumatoid Arthritis, forget about all the excuses that I had neatly arranged and filed under a bold capital "C" for Can't. I needed to select some action verbs and begin living them.

With the same agitation that the action verbs spoke to me, the need for inclusiveness in Jesus' Gospel spoke to me. The woman at the well, the leper, the demoniac, all found love and reason for existence in their lives because of their relationship with Jesus. They were the least, the last and the lost of His generation. Our generation also contains these same forgotten and downtrodden. We call them the ex-offenders, the addicted, the homeless, the veterans who left the service with less than honorable conditions, those entrapped in poverty for generations. God clearly told me that I needed to escape the comfort of my excuses and aggressively, even radically, enter the world of His action verbs that I was learning to cherish. I began studying poverty and the role of the church in the battle to end poverty. I realized that poverty was relational, real and I lived among it every day. James 2:14-17 began to resonate when I saw people counting change for grocery purchases, when I saw five young men digging through jeans to find two dollars each to buy a few gallons of gas, when I saw a man flying a sign, "Homeless Iraq vet Please help," when I saw two guys run for a discarded half-smoked cigarette just outside the public library, and when I saw a lady at the farmer's market putting her purchases in a Belk's bag and heard the sneer, "I always wondered who had the money to shop there." I knew God's message had to be delivered. The Great Commission, "Go...make disciples..." and my vision seemed to dominate DBS discussions.

Soon the idea developed that we needed to go further than



talk. My friend Ron Deloney told me he thought that we could make this happen with church support. He and I presented a proposal to the church council which was ultimately unanimously accepted. For four years, and hopefully well into the future, Midway UMC has funded the "overhead" expenses of Opportunity House as a budget line item. We find support for our various programs through grants from charitable foundations, UMC agencies and gifts from individuals. Things were moving quickly, and God was clearly in charge. We found a location for an outside-the-walls ministry, developed a mission statement which stated that we would be relationship driven, and lead people to escape poverty methodically with a hand-up as their friend in Christ. Our pastor, The Reverend Dave Cash, spoke of our plan during a breakout session at a district meeting. From that meeting, he initiated partnership talks with the local crisis ministry. They agreed to staff the ministry with a counselor, set up a computer lab, teach computer classes and provide ongoing instruction with resumes and interview skills. A local bank donated all the furnishing needed for Opportunity House. Dr. Rachel Ziaonz, the principal of our local elementary school, designed an English as Second Language program for adults. The congregation responded with volunteers to provide child care while parents learned English. We used the church van to transport parents and toddlers to the school. Midway UMC was now a church with a mission.

Simultaneously, we began our first after school tutorial program. My wife, Susan, designed lessons for three children that spring, and we worked on basic literacy skills twice a week. We now offer tutoring for close to forty children. Susan has since retired from her public school position as master teacher and continues to plan lessons for children twice each week.

From the start we saw the need for children to have school uniforms, warm coats and shoes which fit. Our clothing closet began with that narrow focus. We have since added to the point that it is a comprehensive clothing closet which serves as a relationship building tool. It consumes 800 sq. ft. of Opportunity House, and we joyously serve scores of people each month who begin their relationship with us.

In the summer of 2008, we offered our first children's Summer Enrichment Program. This program has proven to be extremely successful and popular both with children and volunteers. During the summer of 2008, Dave Cash came to me and introduced me to a retired UMC pastor who shared many of the ideas which formed my vision. He liked terms such as "church without walls," "finding the forgotten," and his favorite, "My heavens, where would I be without a second chance." The Reverend Charlie Davis and I held the same passion for the same people and felt the strong need for a worship service which would build a faith community among "the least, the last and the lost." We talked about what and how, prayed and listened and the calendar moved to autumn and we had no genuine clear direction. Dave Cash then introduced me to an Emmaus Community friend of his, Robert Jamerson. We began meeting each Saturday morning for discussion, prayer and discernment. Our circle broadened, my wife, Jim and Diane Ezzelle, and Ann Hill began to join us. Robert encouraged us to read Acts 2 and take the opportunity to establish a church which adhered to the Acts principles as closely as we could define them. Our reading, our prayer, our discussion moved to enthusiasm and Narrow Gate Ministries was born as the worship service of Opportunity House.

We intentionally recruited the addicted, the homeless, the recently released from incarceration and the marginally impoverished. God added to our mix the mentally challenged. We knew some pieces of a puzzle must be addressed if we were to be successful. We would need to feed a meal if

we were going to ask homeless people to miss their evening meal at the shelter. We decided this was our opportunity to serve the way Christ served us at the Last Supper. We try to make a special meal, like the old traditional, Sunday dinner. We never use a buffet; we serve a sit down meal from beverage through to dessert to everyone who joins us for worship. This number has grown from three at our first service February 9, 2009 to 193 at our most recent gathering.

We knew transportation was going to be another issue. Bus service ends in Kannapolis [NC] at 8:30. Besides bus tokens are not free. So we began picking a few people up in front of the library and at a public housing complex. Our volunteer who drove the van after only a month came in with a smile and announced, "We're so popular. I'm going to have to make two trips tonight!" We now use four vans for transport and several of them are, "so popular."

We recruited the ex-offenders through a contact at the Employment Security Commission. He asked about sex offenders. We learned that we needed to make a mandatory child care policy to ensure that a parolee's guidelines were not violated. We have childcare at a separate location with all children from infants through teens directed there. Thus no one's parole is violated and more importantly, children are in a safe environment. God works in both places.

Another essential which makes the Narrow Gate experience different is what we call our "Two Touch Approach" in which we attempt to reach each Narrow Gate participant by a team member each week. We do not think a faith community is built by a weekly worship service and the expectation of individual spiritual maintenance. "Two Touch" always involves service. Sometimes we are in service as listeners, as givers, as teachers or even counselors. But "Two Touch" is a two way street. It also involves work projects at either the Opportunity House campus or the church campus, gleaning for fresh produce through the St. Andrew's Society, working the food pantry, helping neighbors move or with minor repairs or working in the clothing closet. Bible Studies are also popular and well attended. A third study will begin in a city park at summer's end. This project is the result of several requests from homeless Narrow Gate members. We are not perfect with our "Two Touch" Approach, and as our numbers grow, the difficulty of reaching perfection grows, but the faith community knows that we always answer the phone, and while we cannot do everything, we will never be satisfied with doing nothing. It is crucial to every team member that as the faith community's numbers grow, we, the team members and participants alike, all grow spiritually by becoming stronger in faith, better disciples and become more readily accountable.

(continued on page 6)





Refresh Campus Ministry Gathering December 13-15 in Dallas, Texas

The Refresh Campus Ministry Gathering at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, Texas, will provide some new opportunities this year. Attendees will have the option of participating in one of two General Board of Global Ministries training programs including an Early Response Team training or a Volunteers in Mission training both held Dec. 12-13.

Keynote speakers for this year's event include author Ruth Haley Barton who will address participants on Tuesday afternoon while noted author and pastor Lovett Weems will speak on Tuesday evening. Author and producer Andy Crouch will be the keynote Wednesday evening, and SMU professor Hugo Magallanes will speak Thursday morning. Dynamic and spiritual worship will be led by the Richardson, Texas based band, Dutton.



Again this year, Campus Ministry Boot Camp will be held prior to Refresh, Dec. 11-13. Led by Creighton Alexander, the Boot Camp will help anyone wanting to take their campus ministry to the next level in order to be a thriving presence on campus.

Early registration for Refresh is \$99; Bootcamp is \$399 until Nov. 21. Register online at www.CollegeUnion.org/refresh

2012 Congress on Evangelism January 3-6 in Nashville, Tenn.

Under the theme "Catching and Keeping: Discipling in the Local Church" the Congress on Evangelism at Opryland Convention Center will present programs and workshops that focus on practical ways of attracting new followers and engaging them through various means of discipleship. Keynote speakers include Wade Paschal of First United Methodist Church, Tulsa, Okla.; Debi Nixon of United Methodist Church of the Resurrection; and Vance Ross, pastor of Gordon Memorial UMC in Nashville and former Associate General Secretary of the Discipleship Ministries Division of the General Board of Discipleship. Bible Study will be led by Stephen Gunter of Duke Divinity School.

Workshops tracks will again be offered including a new track for African American church leaders. Tracks will also be held for Certified Lay Speakers, Local Pastors, National Association of United Methodist Evangelists, and Hispanic-Latino leaders. New this year, an offsite workshop will be held for those wishing to tour the Upper Room Ministries in Nashville.

Cost is \$175 for a single individual or \$225 for a couple with discounts available for groups of 5 or more. For more information or to register go to www.CongressOnEvangelism.org.

Distinguished Evangelist (continued from page 1)

Robb recalled that his father, Dr. Edmund Robb, Jr., was honored with the original class of Distinguished Evangelists on the Foundation's 40th anniversary, nearly 22 years ago. "I could tell you what I know about growing a church in 5 or 10 minutes...I decided to share with you about what I DON'T

know about growing a church." He went on to say that it's impossible to grow a church without God's help, without passion, without casting a vision, without building a team, and that it's more than numbers - it's about growing spiritually. To hear Dr. Robb's address, visit www.FoundationForEvangelism.org.

Opportunity (continued from page 5)

We do plan and pray for God's direction as Opportunity House continues to establish itself in the local community and in the community of the Christian church. We have learned that our greatest successes have come from listening. Often God speaks through people new to us and new to any faith community. Harkening to James 2:14-17, and the hollowness of prayers which have no accompanying action, we are led toward the establishment of cottage industries which will provide income, teach people how to successfully perform in the workplace, and move them from homelessness into homes. We have received some seed money and other grants have been submitted. We firmly

believe that employment is the next piece of our relationship driven ministry.

The future is making demands on us which call for us to react to our continued growth while we further intensify our ministry. We need to feed many people each week; we need to have a meeting place that is safe and conducive to worship and we need to continually teach children to love to learn because as life-long learners, they can escape poverty. You are not at Opportunity House long before you realize that God has called you to a place and time for discernment.

With Gratitude in Our Hearts

In a year with so much change and economic uncertainty, we feel extremely grateful for the support and prayers of our donors. It is through your generosity that the ongoing work to impact the lives of generations of leaders with a passion for evangelism is possible.

We celebrate all donors to The Foundation for Evangelism, and we recognize Leaders Council Members who have given \$1,000 or more to the annual fund. In 2012, these members will become a part of a new giving society, the Wesleyan Council. Through this society we will continue to recognize those who give sacrificially in order to help the Foundation, and ultimately The United Methodist Church, reach its full potential to help all persons experience God's love through Jesus.

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This giving society recognizes those who have given one thousand dollars or more annually. It encompasses the Leaders Council, and further emphasizes our appreciation by honoring annual fund gifts at different levels. This sacrificial giving is so important for the ongoing success of the work of The Foundation for Evangelism.

While all gifts to The Foundation for Evangelism bring us closer to meeting our annual goals, membership in the Wesleyan Council makes a difference by helping the Foundation to fulfill the work for which it was established - raising up generations of leaders with a passion for helping others experience God's transforming love.

Wesleyan Council Giving Levels

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