



SOUTH WEST DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Rev. Dr. Rinaldo Hernandez, District Superintendent
Julie Bullerdick, Business Administrator
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April 2013

The Transformative Power of Resurrection

“Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect”, 1 Corinthians 15:7-9 (NIV)

Dear Friends –

I have been following some of you and your churches on Facebook during this Holy Week and have seen so many wonderful things you have done to celebrate Christ’s upmost sacrifice and glorious resurrection which affirms the power of life over death, and how the power that brought Christ from the dead continues at work in the lives of many in our communities. I am very proud of you all!

During the past few days the Apostle Paul has been on my mind. He considered himself an eye-witness of the resurrection. His experience on the road to Damascus was such a powerful transformational experience in his life that he considered himself one of the living testimonies of the reality of the Risen Christ.

Re-reading the Bible passages where Paul recounts his conversion experience and connecting Paul with Wesley and his quest for “the faith that saves”, I was reminded of my own need for continued renovation, transformation and resurrection. It is not just that I had an experience of conversion, of being brought from darkness to light. It is that I have had that experience multiple times during my Christian journey and still need that some more.

My first resurrection-type experience was at age 11 during a Youth Camp in August 1967, when I first was deeply moved by the Word of God and answered my first altar call ever. That day is marked in my calendar as the day when I first met the Living Christ and experienced the power of his resurrection.

Later on, I experience the power of the Risen Christ in December of 1977 when I heard God calling me to ministry and the power of the Holy Spirit had to do some real work on me before I accepted the challenge and surrendered unconditionally to God’s purpose.

Once again I was deeply touched and empowered by the Resurrected Savior in October 1979 when I had a personal experience with the Holy Spirit that marked a before and after in my Christian life. I experienced at that time what John Wesley called “the second blessing”.

Again I felt that power at work on me during my experience in the sugar cane fields from September 1980-August 1982. Only because of that power and that grace poured out on me was I able to endure and come out victorious from that experience.

And after that, I feel like I have needed a transformational experience in the power of the Christus Victor every time I was called to serve six different appointments in local churches in Cuba and two in the United States.

It has been said in psychological circles that a person needs to “re-invent” him/herself every certain number of years in order to get ready for higher endeavors. We preachers also like to use the image of the eagle, needing every 40 years or so to hide itself in a high mountain to experience a complete renewal of its feathers and even to repeatedly hit his beak on the rock until it comes out and a new one is born.

In Greek mythology there is the narrative of the Phoenix, a bird with colorful red, yellow and orange feathers, which dies every 500 years to come alive again from its ashes. Thus the expression: “reborn from its ashes, like the Phoenix”.

All of that could be used as to affirm our spiritual need for continued renewal and transformation, particularly as we face the challenges of ministry in a broken world.

My suspicion is that so often we refer to our experiences of re-birth or resurrection as something pertaining to the past, just as I did a few minutes ago. We could easily refer to a moment of healing; an unexpected answer to prayer, a completely closed situation we were living in that only through divine intervention was opened and transformed by the power of God.

Could we testify of something really eye-opening and transforming that has happened recently in our lives? Has anyone been recently almost dying spiritually or even physically and only because of a miracle in his/her life was renewed and transformed?

When we are having difficulty to pray, when we feel spiritually dry and lacking inspiration for our preaching or vision for our next step in ministry, we would probably need the real power of the resurrection to operate in us in such away that we can testify like Paul did: “He (the Risen Christ) appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born”.

By the grace of God, my friends, I am what I am. But I would do everything in my power for that grace to continue to bear fruit in me and through me.

As we celebrate Easter, let’s ask God to intervene in our lives and bring new life to our dried out bones. Let’s ask the Risen Christ to visit us like Paul on the road to Damascus, to give our lives new meaning and purpose. Let’s invite the Holy Spirit to revive us again, filling us with that presence that will continue to empower us to be the leaders God has called us to be.

Happy Easter!

Truly yours in Christ’s service,

Rini

Rev. Dr. Rinaldo (Rini) Hernandez

CLERGY - REGISTER NOW FOR THIS ALL DAY EVENT!!!!
Whether you are full-time or part-time....Register and let us know if
you WILL or WILL NOT be attending.

CLERGY TEAM RETREAT & CLERGY SPOUSE GATHERING – APRIL 16, 2013

This meeting will be from 9:30am until 3:30pm

Guest Speaker: Bishop Dick Wills

Retreat Location: Boca Grande UMC

(You will need **\$6 cash** for toll bridge)

[CLICK HERE](#) to register

Thank you to the following people who have already registered letting us know if they WILL or WILL NOT be attending: David Ames, Glenda Brayman, Brian Brightly, Barb Bryant, John Bryant, Curtiss Cain, Cherie Chapman, Lori Cotten, Ralph Cotten, Jeanne Davis, George Dzyndra, Patrick Elmore, Tom Fuller, Victoria Guthrie, Amy Harper, David Harper, John Hicks, Denman Jones, Kim Joyner, Shari Lacey, Mike Loomis, Nancy Metz, Jerry Milner, Lisa Milner, Jim Mitchell, Tom Moore, Wes Olds, Doug Pareti, Vince Price, Dan Prine, Shani Prine, Brian Russell, Ted Sauter, Clarice Setser, Brian Smith, Marion Sortore, David Stauffer, Bob Suter, Roy Terry, Jay Therrell, Jerry Van Dyken, Jim Wade, Duane Waters, Charley Watts, Larry White, Rebecca White, Peggy Wilkins, Vic Willis, Chet Zarzycki

**Clergy Team Meetings are mandatory for all full-time clergy.
Part-time clergy are encouraged to attend.**

YOUTH LEADERS

Report from Mike Edwards, SW District Youth Coordinator

We had 8 youth leaders from 6 SW District UMC churches meet in Collier County in March. We discussed our summer mission trips and ongoing programs. Chelsea Hernandez from Riverside Retreat gave us an update on the summer camp plans as well as several other exciting programs they are offering. Did you need wilderness first aid training or your lifeguard certificate? If so, contact Chelsea at chelsyl.anderson@gmail.com. Terry Hand from North Naples UMC presented info on the Youth 4 Orphans (Y4O) program his church is spear heading. Watch for more info on that in your emails. I am still trying to pin down a date and location for a meeting in April, and I will send out an email once I have something definite.

We are looking at a district wide youth lock-in in the fall. The date and location are still in the works, so stay tuned. At our last district lock-in, we had over 100 youth with 18 or so adults from 8 UM churches. If you would be interested in being on the design team for this event, or even hosting it at your church, contact me at medwards@faithum.com.

After 25 years as a Methodist, and 13 years working with Methodist youth, I am attending my first Annual Conference this year. I am staying at the Hyatt and would love to put faces with names if you are attending. Joel Pancoast, the Conference Youth Coordinator, is hosting a lunch on Thursday for all youth leaders. You need to register with him at ipancoast@flumc.org for that though.

Your servant in Christ,

Mike

Contact info: Mike Edwards, FLUM SW District Youth Coordinator

Youth Director, Faith UMC, 15690 McGregor Blvd., Ft. Myers FL 33908 -- medwards@faithum.com.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

2013 Annual Conference will be held at The Lakeland Center from June 13 - 15, 2013

South West District Pre-Conference Orientations:

Sunday, May 19th - 3pm: Nuevo Pacto UMC, 5535 Hwy 27 S, Sebring FL 33870

Tuesday, May 21st - 6:30pm: Christ UMC, 1475 Center Road, Venice FL 34292

Thursday, May 23rd - 6:30pm: Estero UMC, 8088 Lord's Way, Estero FL 33928

Telling Our Stories

An Invitation from Bishop Ken Carter.....

During our Annual Conference meeting this June, the agenda will include "Telling Our Stories," which will feature conference members telling their stories about how they are becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.

We want stories about who we are and what God is doing in our lives. About how we are ordinary people trying our best, with God's help, to point our feet toward being Jesus' disciples every day. And, how we don't get it right every time, we aren't perfect, and we also have mountaintop experiences. Those are the details that provide inspiring, rich and diverse stories about our lives and our faith.

For those storytellers who attend the Annual Conference, we ask that you share your stories on the stage during our plenary sessions. For those who can't take the stage, we will attempt to produce a video of you telling your story to show during Annual Conference.

Check the conference news page (www.floridaconferenceconnection.info) on April 4 for all the details on how to tell your story.

"A Million Reasons" to Stop Hunger Now

"A Million Reasons"—a year-long Florida Conference mission to pack 1,000,000 meals to fight hunger—will be launched at Annual Conference in June with a Stop Hunger Now meal-packaging event.



The goal during the AC event is to package 100,000 meals with volunteers on Wednesday and Thursday before the business sessions begin. "We will need many hands and feet of Jesus Christ to join in packaging meals to launch "A Million Reasons," Janet Kelley, administration assistant for the East Central District said. "We invite our AC members, local church groups and our youth groups to help make "A Million Reasons" happen." Information on how to sign up and details about the event will be available shortly, she added. Janet, along with our other district AAs are helping coordinate the event with our Bishop's wife, Pam Carter, and they are calling on us all to lend a hand to fight hunger.

"I can think of "A Million Reasons" to pack Stop Hunger meals this year," Pam Carter said. "And, here's my personal reason: a girl I met six years ago in Haiti wasn't getting a midday meal. Now she and the other

Have an exciting event going on in your church that you want everyone to know about? You can now advertise your local church events on the FLUMC website. Click [here](#) to access local church events. Click [here](#) for steps to post local church events.

What Are Umc Doing? is the local church video community created by the FLUMC for churches to learn how other local churches are impacting their communities and to share what you are doing in yours. To submit a video, go to <http://www.whatareumcdoing.org>

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The image is forever embedded in my mind; in a banana orchard with four poles and tin roof, dirt floor and one fluorescent light was their church. In this dimly lit location were sixty to seventy people, just days ago totally unknown to my wife and I, were gathered for worship. Now they are friends, true brothers and sisters. As I closed my message Pastor Alex and his family came forward with hugs of love and appreciation. In parting he asked the congregation to circle around us and they laid their hands on us. As the congregation crowded in just to touch us something happened. Never before had the presence of Jesus Christ been so dominate in a location, I know He was there, I could feel His presence. There is no doubt in my mind one of those hands was Jesus. As the tears rolled down my face I realized why I was in Cuba. It was not to teach the Cuban people about Jesus Christ, they knew about Him, it was to teach me. God had completed his transition. Yes, God works in mysterious ways.

Dan Christopherson
South West District Cuba Coordinator

Jun 13 – SW District Ice Cream Social at Annual Conference. FL Southern Alumni Center (8:30pm-10pm)

This newsletter gives an overview of some of the activities of the South West District and the Conference. Please make a note of these events and encourage your lay ministers and church members to participate.



Happenings in the Conference

57th ANNUAL CHURCH MUSIC WORKSHOP

The Florida Chapter of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts is pleased to announce that our 57th Annual Church Music Workshop will be held from Sunday afternoon, June 16th through Friday noontime, June 21st, 2013, at the Life Enrichment Center in Fruitland Park (Leesburg). Anyone involved in church music or worship planning, both traditional and contemporary, adults or youth, are invited to join us. This year's theme, **"Sing for Joy: Songs of Grateful Praise"** is based on Colossians 3:16. Clinicians for the workshop will be Adult Choral Clinician Jeff Faux, Director of Sacred Arts at First Presbyterian Church in Bonita Springs and artistic director of the Fort Myers Symphonic Mastersingers; Youth Clinician Andrew Minear, Director of Choral Activities at Dr. Phillips HS in Orlando; Advanced Handbell Clinician Rick Holdsworth, Director of Music at Pine Shores Presbyterian Church in Sarasota and founding director of the "Ring Sarasota" Community Handbell Ensemble.

Our Annual Church Music Workshop is for adults and youth (College, High School and Middle School) and has a variety of seminars to meet everyone's music ministry needs. We invite you to take this opportunity to connect with other church musicians and worship leaders and be renewed. For more information and for registration information, please visit our website at: www.floridafellowship.org or contact Joan FitzGerald, Workshop Chairperson, at joan.fitzgerald@verizon.net or Registrar Dan Shorb at info@floridafellowship.org.