



SOUTH WEST DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Rev. Dr. Rinaldo Hernandez, District Superintendent
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March 2013

God send missionaries to a broken world

“Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: “Don’t go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, ⁶ but only to the people of Israel—God’s lost sheep. ⁷ Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!” Matthew 10:5-8 (NLT)

In Matthew 10:1-16 we find what I would call “an intensive and concise missionary training workshop”, a teaching on how to carry on God’s mission in a broken world.

To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ means we have been called to be God’s messengers to the world. We accepted to be Christ’s followers out of our own free will. But once we accepted Christ’s free offering of grace, we entered into a relationship where there are privileges and responsibilities. One key responsibility we have is to “go out into the world and make disciples of all nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18).

Our responsibility and privilege is to carry on God’s mission into a world that is in desperate need of good news. That make us “missionaries”, people entrusted with a mission, going to places where the good news of freedom, restoration and joy in the Holy Spirit are shared with people who are suffering.

In the first list of “missionaries” we find fishermen, tax collectors, members of different political and religious parties. Jesus called common people and leaders, poor and rich, people with or without academic formation, because in God’s economy everyone can be an instrument of God’s mission and God’s purpose of salvation. God uses ordinary people to accomplish an extraordinary goal.

Why is it that Jesus asked this first group of missionaries not to go to Gentile cities? Jesus came first to the Jewish nation and his missionaries went first to all the towns and villages in Israel, but as they were refused, they went on to share the good news to all of the Roman Empire, including Rome, the capital. Gentiles came to Christ and were baptized in water and the Spirit. The Scriptures declaring that salvation was designed to be a privilege to all nations were fulfilled: Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 25:6, 56:3-7, Malachi 1:11, Acts 10:34-35, Romans 3:29-30, Galatians 3:28.

The Jewish people were waiting for a Messiah who would come to restore the original glory of the Kingdom of Israel. But Jesus was teaching about a bigger, larger, wider type of Kingdom. And we,

missionaries, have been entrusted with the task of sharing the good news that the Kingdom of God has become nearer through Jesus Christ.

Jesus offered several practical principles to be applied as they were going out to the world to share the message:

- **Give as freely as you have received!** We have received an abundant, extraordinary, immeasurable blessing of grace and mercy by receiving Christ as our Lord. The same should be offered to others, giving ourselves with the same generosity that Christ offered himself for us. We should be generous and limitless in offering our time, commitment, gifts and resources for the sake of the Kingdom and the fulfillment of our mission.
- **Don't carry a traveler's bag:** Missionaries have to live by faith, believing the One who sends them will take care of all their needs, needs of the body, mind and soul. Often times we won't accept challenges or go to places until we have assurance that all of our needs will be covered. Missionaries live by faith, not by sight!
- **If a household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave:** This is a symbolic action. When the Israelites visited a Gentile city, they would shake the dust from their feet as a sign of separation from their rebellious ways towards God. Jesus' orientation to the missionaries is to spend time with the ones who were willing to hear, but to separate themselves from people who were resisting the Kingdom message. In my view, we spend too much time trying to convince people who have already decided not to be convinced. We must shake the dust from our feet in situations where people are closing their ears to the vision for a better future.
- **Beware! You will find opposition:** Missionaries need to understand that their message is not popular. One of the evils I have seen in the prevalent culture is churches and preachers that really want to be popular in order to attract more people and have more income. We have been entrusted with a mission and a message that is counter-cultural, hence unpopular. To face that challenge, Jesus asks us **"to be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves"**, neither cynical nor stupid. Cynicism has become one of the greatest obstacles for the Church to be more effective and vital. We must resist that in the name of Jesus!

To be a Christian in a culture of death must be seen as a challenge and an opportunity for the Church of Christ to be truly the Church, and for God's mission to be fulfilled in a world that is desperate for genuine and honest people living what they preach and preaching what they live out in the world.

The Church of Jesus Christ is by definition a missionary agency. The reason why we are the Church is to proclaim the name of the One who gave us life abundant. If that Church exists for reasons other than the ones mentioned, it simply has technically ceased to be the Church. It is already closed, although we are stubborn enough to continue opening our doors.

God's mission is framed in the history of God's people and the covenants made with the Living God. It was reaffirmed and relaunched through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. God communicated with us through Christ to achieve reconciliation. We are entrusted with the mission of communicating Christ's grace and love to a suffering, broken world.

This mission has been carried on by many people before us, and will continue to be communicated by others after us until the consummation of times. We need to remember that our missional task has no material guarantees, reason for us to trust God by looking what God has done in history and through history.

The reason why we are Christians is the fulfillment of our missional task. It is not just that the mission is the reason for the Church to come to existence. It is the reason why we are Christians. Being a Christian means to be a person with a mission that is not ours, but God's and this mission has been entrusted to us, the followers of Jesus Christ.

Mission shouldn't be seen anymore by the old way: let's send someone to a pagan nation to make converts. As you have heard me say several times: "The nations are here". They are across the street from your Church. They are in our schools, and restaurants, and supermarkets. To fulfill the mission we just need to be more aware of who our neighbors are and to be able to share a genuine, concrete expression of our faith with them.

Our mission is primarily spiritual, but not just that. In order to address the needs of a broken world, we need to deal with the whole human being, not just the soul, but also the body and mind. We have been entrusted with a mission to deal with the human being in its entirety and complexity. Our call is to make disciples from a holistic perspective.

Finally, I have to share my own experience. Since day one when Bishop Whitaker first called me to be a District Superintendent, I felt like I was called to be a missionary. The image of those Florida Missionaries going to Cuba back in the end of the 19th Century and sharing Christ with my family came to me in extremely vivid tones. They did not know the language or the culture very well. But they were genuine, authentic and honest about what they believed. They modeled Christ for us and we decided to embrace that model for ourselves.

More and more the world is becoming uncharted territory for the Church of Jesus Christ. We are not the Church anymore that was the pride and the paradigm of the culture. We are in the process of becoming a minority group. The challenge is great, as great as it was for the first Christians living their faith in a polytheistic, philosophically individualistic world.

Let's do it again! God-send missionaries, carrying out God's mission to a broken world!

Truly yours in Christ's service,

Rini

Rev. Dr. Rinaldo (Rini) Hernandez

Riverside Retreat

ENJOY A DAY APART AT RIVERSIDE RETREAT. Come away for a day to rest and renew your soul. Riverside Retreat is offering a day apart March 12, 10am—2pm. This program will be devotions interspersed with crafts. You will enjoy making crosses from found (and supplied) objects, spending quiet time in nature and sharing time with friends. Our world is far too busy. Take time out to rest, relax, laugh, pray and receive a blessing from the Holy Spirit. Please call or email your registration so we can have enough supplies.

Bring a sack lunch. Water will be provided. Cost will be \$10/person. Riverside Retreat is located at 7305 CR 78, LaBelle, FL 33935. 863-675-0334 or mpierceriverside@yahoo.com. We will meet in the small pavilion.

CLERGY - MARK YOUR CALENDARS & REGISTER NOW FOR THIS ALL DAY EVENT!!!!

The forms can be found on the Conference website (www.flumc.org). Select the "2013 Reports Due" at the bottom of the website under "FORMS & REPORTS". Scroll down until you get to the month of March.

If you have any questions, please contact the District Office at (941) 371-6511. Thank you to the churches who have already submitted their forms



Appointments in a Time of Mission

The following is a post to the “Bishop’s Blog” on the FL Conference website

Posted by Bishop Ken Carter on February 23, 2013

As the appointive cabinet begins its work this winter, we welcome your prayers. We are seeking, in consultation with the clergy and laity leaders of our annual conference, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, to make assignments that will create the best matches, that will call forth our gifts, that will help the local church to resemble the Kingdom of God, and that will glorify God.

The following are a few core values related to the making of clergy appointments and itineracy in the Florida Annual Conference. These supplement the language found in the *Book of Discipline* (337-338).

1. It is all about the mission. The primary factor in making an appointment is the mission field. Mission-field appointment making is a first step in living into the newly defined role of the district superintendent as chief missional strategist.

These are the guiding questions in mission-field appointments:

Can this elder, deacon or local pastor lead the local church to make disciples of its existing members and form new disciples beyond the existing influence of the local church?

Where there is decline, can the pastor lead a "turnaround"?

Where there has been conflict or scandal, can the pastor be an instrument of healing and reconciliation?

Where there is a plateau, can the pastor lead a church to strengthen its witness and expand its mission?

And where there is growth, can the pastor help a community to dream even greater dreams?

We are sent into this mission by Jesus, who gives us the Great Commission (Matthew 28) and the Great Commandment (Mark 12).

2. Money is important, but it is not the driving factor: money follows mission. Existing salaries do not determine the next appointment. At a personal level, we seek to avoid reductions in salaries, but there is also a systemic reality of churches reducing compensation at times of transition. To the laity, we appeal to you not to devalue the pastoral office, unless it is a matter of required financial stewardship. To the clergy, we are reminded that our value is not measured in our financial compensation, but in our deeper identity as women and men created in God's image.

3. Graduating seminarian appointments are made first. We want younger clergy to begin their ministries in settings that will give them the greatest opportunity for success.

4. Itineracy is less about moving from church to church, and more about proclaiming the gospel in as many places as we can beyond our sanctuaries. Itineracy is moving to the places where the people are.

5. The *Call to Action* focused on the flow of resources to the local church, for the sake of God's mission. Faithful and fruitful pastoral leadership is crucial if we are to make disciples for the transformation of the world. At the same time, ministry that extends the mission of the local church in educational, camping, administrative and mission settings is honored and consistent with life and leadership in a tradition that has an extensive network of schools, children's homes, urban ministries, hospitals, counseling centers, justice ministries and camps.

6. Where the local church and the pastor are flourishing, longer appointments are appropriate and a sign of God's blessing. There are occasions when the annual conference has a compelling need to intervene when a pastoral transition has not been requested, but this is the exception. And yet it is also true that clergy

The Center for Clergy Excellence will not be able to make any exceptions for late candidates to join this group. Remember...before you ENROLL a candidate please make sure that they have been a MEMBER of a UMC church or campus ministry for at least a year, in addition to reading the 2 required books and completing their background check.



MONEY BACK FROM THE IRS? MAYBE. CHECK THIS OUT...

- Does your church have 25 or fewer employees?
- Do you provide health insurance for these employees?
- Are you paying more than 50 percent of the cost of those health insurance premiums?
- Are your average annual payroll wages less than \$50,000 per person?

If you can answer yes to all of these questions, you may qualify for a refundable tax credit for a percentage of the cost of the employer's share of the health insurance premiums.

Yes, we said "refundable," as in money sent back to you from the Internal Revenue Service. The Credit for Small Employer Health Insurance Premiums was part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed by Congress in March of 2010. It was intended to motivate smaller employers to provide health insurance to their employees.

So, if you answered yes to all of the above questions, follow the link below to find out how to calculate this credit for your church and how to file once you have finished the calculations.

Word of warning: The calculations sound complicated, but this link will walk you step by step through the process and get you successfully to the other side and a much-appreciated refund.

[Click here](#) for instructions and sample forms. [Click here](#) for Form 8941 and [here](#) for Form 990-T from the IRS website. For more information, email Sondra McPhail, Florida Conference compliance administrator, at smcphail@flumc.org



CHURCH EVENTS IN THE SOUTH WEST DISTRICT

SARASOTA BAY CROP HUNGER WALK 2013

Hunger and poverty are rampant in our world, and escalating in the current economic conditions. Something can and must be done about them. Our local CROP Hunger Walk is a great place to start. For a few hours and a few miles, friends and neighbors will be coming together to, in the words of I John 3:18, "...love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."

On Sunday, **March 3, 2013 at 2:00 pm** in the afternoon, at Saint James United Methodist Church located at 2049 N Honore Ave., Sarasota, the Host site, the Sarasota Bay CROP Hunger Walk will be held to show our love and active concern for neighbors in need near and far. The participants, ranging from newborns to nonagenarians, will be raising awareness and funds to change the world in real and measurable ways -- digging wells that will bring clean water to villages; providing seeds and tools so that people can grow their own food; helping communities and families rebuild after disaster. Whether it's responding to flood and tornado damage in parts of the U.S., or helping to rebuild earthquake-damaged homes in Haiti, CROP Hunger Walks are making a difference.

CROP Hunger Walk funds will benefit the overall work and ministry of Church World Service -- working around the world to help those in need help themselves through refugee assistance, self-help development programs, advocacy, and disaster relief. And, it's important to note that 25 percent of what we raise will help All Faiths Food Bank in their important work here in the Sarasota Bay area.

So please mark your calendars and join us, whether as a walker or sponsor. Together -- with your family, group, or congregation -- we can change the world, one step at a time.

You can register online today and begin gathering sponsors at www.crowwalkonline.org. For additional information or to volunteer, please contact your local church or St. James UMC, 2049 N Honore Ave., Sarasota, 941-377-6180.

BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL CELEBRATING A CENTURY FOR CHRIST!

Grace United Methodist Church, Olga Ft Myers Shores campus, is celebrating 100 years of Methodist ministry in their community with a bluegrass festival on Saturday, March 16th from 3-8pm on the church grounds! There will be food available for purchase, and there is no charge for admission to the festival. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and join us for the celebration! Sunday, March 17th, the festivities continue as our District Superintendent, Rev. Rini Hernandez preaches at our Sunday morning services at 10 and 11:30. A potluck dinner will follow, with games and much more! Everyone is invited to join us! Grace Church is located at 14036 Matanzas Blvd, Ft. Myers, Florida 33905. Questions? Contact the church office at 239-694-2797 or lj Jarvis@egracechurch.com. See you there!

UNITED METHODIST MEN: 2013 Men's Boot Camp

Men mark your calendar for you will not want to miss this gathering of men ages 18 and up together as the Body of Christ. You will receive GREAT TEACHINGS, GREAT SPEAKERS, GREAT FELLOWSHIP & GREAT FOOD!

Check-in Thursday April 11, 2013 at 3pm

Conclusion Sunday April 14, 2013 early afternoon

Where: Riverside Retreat, 7305 County Road 78, LaBelle, FL 33835

Cost \$225.00 per person

Register and make payment at www.inglewoodumc.net. Follow Retreat instructions on website. We need payment by March 1, 2013. Contact Steve Kennedy skennedy@surecretedesign.com or 941-474-5588 with questions.

Come and share this experience with Christian men along the banks of the Caloosahatchee River at this beautiful Riverside Retreat. The teachings will be based on the message of Wild at Heart by John Eldridge. Sign up now to reserve your place. Space is limited to forty-eight.

Two ways to share the exciting events at your church!

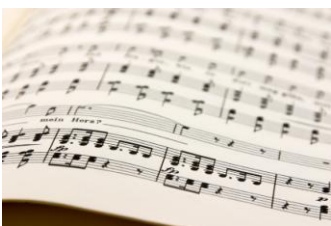
Have an exciting event going on in your church that you want everyone to know about?

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?"

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.whatareumcdoinq.org>

YOU CAN VIEW ALL LOCAL CHURCH EVENTS ON THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE – SELECT “LOCAL CHURCH EVENTS” UNDER THE ‘QUICK LINKS’ SECTION

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CHORAL FESTIVAL WORKSHOP

Noted composer and concert pianist, Joel Raney will be featured in a choral festival workshop on Saturday, March 2, from 9:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. at Christ United Methodist Church, 5512 26th St. W, Bradenton. Interested singers may call the church to register at 941.755-2722.

On Sunday, March 3, at 2:00 p.m., singers and Mr. Raney will present the festival concert at 2:00 p.m. at Christ United Methodist, 5512 26th St. W, Bradenton, FL. The public is cordially invited . A love offering will be taken. Contact info: Shelby Fullerton, Director of Music, Christ United Methodist church, Bradenton, 941.650-8258 or shelbyfullerton@mac.com

McCurdy's Comedy Club in Sarasota is promoting their Clean Comedy Series in the month of March. March is spring break month and they know that Sarasota families struggle to find affordable quality entertainment for their families to enjoy together. They hope this might be a great alternative for your families to consider. Every Saturday in March at 4:00 pm will be "PG 13" show at McCurdy's.

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The 2013 Annual Report is now due. To file your Annual Report, simply go to the Division of Corporations' website, www.sunbiz.org and file online.

All Corporations, Limited Liability Companies and Limited Partnerships must file an Annual Report to maintain "active" status and avoid administrative dissolution or revocation. Instructions are available on the website, and you may pay by credit card, check, or through a sunbiz account.

Do not be misled by similar websites. Go to www.sunbiz.org and you will see a banner at the top of the screen stating 'Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations.'



New Year's resolutions may have come and gone, but the goals set for our local churches should be able attainable through the strength of the United Methodist Connections!

Change the World is a denomination-wide event that focuses on the ministries of the church beyond the sanctuary during one particular weekend, so that change is palpable and noticeable. Just imagine, if every United Methodist church in your surrounding area were outside the walls of their buildings, helping one another and enacting social change. People would take notice.

So...are you ready to take the Change the World Challenge?

1. Identify the outreach missions you'd like to highlight in your church and its surrounding community during May 18-19, 2013. Set an achievable goal for expanding the number of people serving and being served through the mission.
2. Begin planning an event to highlight your mission opportunities on the weekend of May 18-19, 2013.
3. If you are planning something, but don't have the details yet, [click here](#). If you are planning something, and are ready to show it to the world, [click here](#).
- 4.

Go to www.umcom.org/rethinkchurch to learn more about how we can help you grow your ministries



HELP WANTED & CLASSIFIEDS....

- **Part Time Organist Wanted:** Christ UMC Lehigh is looking for a part time organist 8-10 hours a week. Please send resume to admin@christumclehigh.org. For more information, please call the church at 239- 369-1433
- **Ministry Help Wanted:** El Shaddai Haitian Ministry in Fort Myers is collecting gently used or new shoes and folding chairs to send to Haiti. They are also collecting money to fund toilets in impoverished areas in Haiti. Contact Pastor Max Pierre at max.pierre@flumc.org.
- **2013 Summer Mission Interns (Paid Positions) - Summer Day Camp Program - June 1 – August 10:** A collaboration between the FL Conference United Methodist Church and Grace Place for Children and Families. Looking for College Students and Young Adults (ages 19-28) with high-energy for fun Summer Day Camp program for at-risk elementary and middle school children including:
science, reading, math, writing, music, arts, dance, drama, games, sports, hobbies, character, and service projects, field trips and swimming.
Leadership and Career Skills: Help plan, teach, coordinate, and lead activities with a team of non-profit professionals, teachers, and volunteers. A \$2,000 stipend is awarded to each intern for their 10 weeks of service (plus housing if not a local resident).
WHERE Grace Place, 4300 21st Ave. SW, Naples, FL 34116 (Golden Gate city)
Placements also available in Winter Haven, Miami, LaBelle, Orlando and Lake Worth.
WHY "Being a Summer Mission Intern is a great opportunity to be Christ's hands and feet, in service to a hurting world," said Rick Bennett, director of Justice and Outreach Ministries for the Florida Conference. "The focus is on service in communities experiencing poverty, but the program includes time and support for reflection on vocational and spiritual goals."
Training is provided to the interns at pre-summer retreat (the first weekend in June) as well as in-service training by the agencies. Supervision and mentoring is provided by conference and agency staff throughout the summer.
The application is available online at <http://www.flumc2.org/2013internapplication>
Applications are due online by April 12; however, send in your applications early because we will be interviewing and hiring as applications come in. For more information about Mission Intern program, contact rbennett@flumc.org, or 800-282-8011, Ext. 504.
For information about the Grace Place site and program, contact stephaniecampbell@graceplacenaples.org or 239-455-2707. www.graceplacenaples.org

Don't forget to check the Conference website (www.flumc.org) to find job postings, items for sale, donations, etc. Just select "Classifieds" on the left side of the homepage.

CALENDAR NOTES:

Mar 21 – dCOM. Location: First-Punta Gorda

Mar 29 – Conference & District Office Closed in observance of Good Friday

Apr 16 - **ALL DAY** Clergy Team Meeting. Location: Boca Grande UMC (9:30am-3:30pm)

May 5 – Announcment Sunday

May 9 – SW District NCD Meeting, Location TBD

May 23 – dCOM. Location: First-Punta Gorda

May 19 – Pre-Conference Orientation: Nuevo Pacto UMC-Sebring (3pm-4:30pm)

May 21 – Pre-Conference Orientation: Christ UMC-Venice (6:30pm-8pm)

May 23 – Pre-Conference Orientation: Estero UMC (6:30pm-8pm)

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

BISHOP KEN CARTER TO HEADLINE 2013 STEWARDSHIP SUMMIT ON MARCH 9



Florida Conference Bishop Ken Carter will headline the list of speakers and presenters at the Florida United Methodist Foundation's annual Stewardship Summit, Saturday March 9, from approximately 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Orlando.

According to Foundation President Wee-Li Tan, the Stewardship Summit – open to all laity and clergy conference wide – provides a unique opportunity for the Bishop to share his vision of stewardship and the role it plays in the life of the local church and Annual Conference.

According to Tan, Bishop Carter has demonstrated a passion for stewardship throughout his ministry. "Bishop Carter has been a frequent speaker on the topic of stewardship at denominational meetings during his career. Now that he is the spiritual leader of the Florida Annual Conference, we have asked him to share his vision for how we should practice and promote stewardship in our local churches."

"This will be a wonderful opportunity for all of us to come together to learn and share with one another effective stewardship ideas and practices that can be incorporated into our ministry plans for the coming year," Tan said.

Bishop Carter, who was elected to the episcopacy in July, is a native of Georgia and a member of the Western North Carolina Conference. He is a graduate of Columbus College (B.S.), Duke University Divinity School (M.Div.), the University of Virginia (M.A.) and Princeton Theological Seminary (D. Min.). He was awarded an honorary D.D. from the United Methodist University of Liberia.

He has served small and large congregations throughout Western North Carolina, including Providence United Methodist Church in Charlotte, which was featured in historian Dianna Butler Bass' book, *"Christianity for the Rest of Us."* Immediately prior to his election as bishop, he was the superintendent of the Smoky Mountain District of the Western North Carolina Conference, which includes 69 churches in the seven westernmost counties of the state, all within the region of Appalachia.

Bishop Carter is the author of eight books, most recently *"Pray for Me: The Power in Praying for Others"* (Upper Room 2012). His books reflect on topics related to practical ministry such as stewardship, spiritual gifts, baptism and the Wesleyan means of grace and intercession.

The theme for the 2013 Stewardship Summit is *"Foundation of Discipleship: Responding to God's Grace."* In addition to Bishop Carter's keynote address, attendees will have an opportunity to participate in morning and afternoon workshop sessions on such topics as:

- Integrating Spirituality and Stewardship
- Donor-Driven Stewardship in a Competitive Market: A Challenge for the Institutional Church
- Telling Your Stewardship Story Through Traditional and Emerging Media
- Capital Campaigns – What, when, how and why?
- Microcredit: A Step Beyond Building Teams and Construction
- Conversation with Conference Leaders: How We Creatively Respond to Property Changes Over the Next Ten Years

Information and online registration for the Stewardship Summit will be available on the Foundation website, www.fumf.org, or, you may contact the Foundation toll free at (866) 363-9673 or by email at foundation@fumf.org.

Florida 5 Day Spiritual Formation Academy is March 10 - 15, 2013

The academy for spiritual formation is...

- a time to fill the deep spiritual hunger that characterizes many lives;
- an opportunity for intentional spiritual growth in a disciplined, accepting community;
- a place where community silence enhances personal prayer and reflection;
- a time of spiritual renewal and discovery through academic presentation, personal reflections and communal sharing;
- a sharing of spiritual growth in covenant groups;
- a time for healing to continue.

The presenters for this year are: Dr. Norval I. Brown and Dr. Joe Howell. [Click here](#) for more information and to download a brochure. [Click here](#) to register online.