

Faith & Generosity

A quarterly newsletter for Foundation partners and friends

OCTOBER 2021

From David Snipes

How do we minister in the midst of...*this*?

As I sit down to write this reflection, I cannot help but lament recent events in the world around us.

The Dixie and Caldor fires rage on the West Coast. Floods from Hurricane Ida stretch from the Deep South to far reaches of the Northeast. A 20-year war ends in Afghanistan. Senseless shootings in our schools, a fourth wave of the pandemic, political unrest, and denominational uncertainty...

All of it has many clergy asking themselves: "How do we minister in the midst of...*this*?"

In talking with colleagues and friends, I am constantly reminded that we've never been "here" before. Therefore, responses do not come readily.

Several weeks ago, past participants of the Reynolds Academy for Ministry Management gathered to discuss the nature of effective ministry at a time when the world throws new challenges at us daily.

Continued on next page

NEWS & STORIES IN THIS ISSUE:

**3 - A visit to
New Story Church
in Winston-Salem**

**5 - Mount Shepherd in
Asheboro celebrates
successful summer camp
season**

**7 - East Asheville UMC is a
small church with a big
heart**

**9-10 - Remembering
Harley Dickson and Royce
Reynolds**

**11 - Foundation board
gives thanks for milestone**

Continued from previous page

How do I minister in the midst of...*this*?

Here's some of what I heard:

- Many clergy and staff members are frustrated and just plain tired – they need a break.
- Many, if not most, church members are done with COVID and just want to get back to “normal” – whatever that is.
- We are all in this together – no one is immune, yet alignment seems almost impossible.
- The Church needs to BE the Church and not just act like it.

These points in no way represent all the takeaways from the gathering, but they do give a good snapshot of current realities. So what are we to do? How do we minister in the midst of this when we are tired, frustrated and divided?

One response may strike you as overly simplistic. Yet is at the core of who we are as the Church. We pray our way through.

Jennifer Davis, a Foundation board member and WNCC Lay Delegate to General Conference, constantly reminds me (and anyone else who follows her on Facebook!). Yet simply praying words are not enough. Praying our way through difficult times means we have to have faith that God is with us...that God hears our prayers...and that through God, we will get to the other side of the obstacles that are before us. Hopefully, we'll be better for it.

Please know that the board members and staff of the Foundation continue to be in prayer with and for you. You are not alone. We look forward to being the Church with you as we navigate through today and whatever comes next.

David Snipes
Foundation President



MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS, MODELING GOD'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

How creative outreach can sustain vital ministries

WINSTON-SALEM – Scott Osterberg describes conditions in the Waughtown neighborhood around New Story Church as “thirty grit sandpaper rough.” One in two children live below the federal poverty line. A church staff member was once hit by a stray bullet while helping lead Monday night worship.

Try adding a public health crisis to the mix of dynamics.

“This pandemic has created so many questions,
but not a lot of good answers.”

“The people we work with are struggling more than most,” Scott said. “We’ve had a tremendous number of people in recovery who have relapsed because times have gotten so tough. We’ve had people lose their jobs, lose their places to live.”

In the age of social distancing protocols, Scott and his team have had to get creative to sustain outreach efforts in Waughtown, a community afflicted by joblessness, high student dropout rates, gang activity and a legacy of disinvestment.

“This pandemic...forced us to not just think outside the box,” Scott says, “but kind of destroy any box there was.”

Continued on next page

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MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS, MODELING GOD'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

Much of the shift involved taking the church to the people. Staff and volunteers mobilized to deliver meals. A prayer team fanned out to share blessings with people on the street. A group stayed after worship to pack teacher appreciation bags for nearby Forest Park Elementary.

The church hosted pop-up clinics and a COVID-19 vaccine event with Spanish language outreach.

“As a United Methodist mission church, New Story relies on outside contributions to underwrite its work. In Waughtown, the average income is lower than 94 percent of U.S. neighborhoods, according to real estate database NeighborhoodScout. The church also has a campus called Peters Creek on Trademart Boulevard.

“About 70 percent of our church is in poverty,” Scott said. “For them, to give a dollar a week would be a tremendous amount.”

The Foundation provides financial support for the church’s medical and dental clinics, homeless shelter, clothing closet and feeding ministry.

Scott has taken part in leadership development courses through the Foundation’s Reynolds Ministries. He’s needed every bit of it to respond to the needs of his congregation.

A banner out front proclaims “Everyone is Welcome Here.”

“So many people at New Story are new to the faith,” Scott said. “This pandemic has created so many questions, but not a lot of good answers.”

“I’m very hopeful that whenever the pandemic comes to an end, we’ll take a lot of the things we learned and use them to reach even further out than we already have.”





ONCE STRUGGLING, METHODIST CAMP SEES BRIGHT FUTURE

Inside the turnaround at Mount Shepherd

ASHEBORO – Generations of young people recall encountering God for the first time at Mount Shepherd, a summer camp nestled in the pines of Randolph County.

Just a few years ago, financial troubles left the camp on the brink of closing. But God's grace, committed leadership and a timely land conservation agreement have led to a remarkable turnaround.

"Places like Mount Shepherd exist to be holy, set apart places where people encounter God."

This summer, Mount Shepherd welcomed 530 campers – its highest number in the past 10 years.

"We have turned a corner," says Executive Director Josh Britton.

On a recent tour of the 543-acre property, Josh took a visitor past Mount Shepherd's climbing tower, high ropes course and pond that features a 100-foot slide, zip line and inflatable floating platform.

The camp gets its name from nearby Shepherd Mountain, the second highest peak of the Uwharrie Mountain chain from which hikers can see Pilot Mountain, Hanging Rock and the Sauratown mountains, in addition to the cityscapes of Greensboro, Winston Salem and High Point.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

ONCE STRUGGLING, METHODIST CAMP SEES BRIGHT FUTURE

Campers spend their days exploring the Uwharrie National Forest.

All of it almost came to an end. With few updates since its 1961 founding, the camp experienced a decline in the mid-2010s due to changing relationships with churches and competition from more modern summer camps.

“There was some real concern for how we were going to pay the bills,” Josh said.

A lifeline came in 2017 in the form of a conservation easement, an agreement to place part of the property under the care of a land trust. Mount Shepherd used the proceeds to open a managed investment fund with the Foundation. Favorable earnings have enabled camp leadership to renovate facilities, add new programs and hire a full-time staff person to oversee activities.

The land agreement coincided with the arrival of Josh, an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church with a passion for camp and retreat ministry. During his tenure, Mount Shepherd has taken a more intentional approach to fulfill its mission as a Christ-centered place of discovery.

Scholarships welcome youth from economically challenged backgrounds. A partnership with the nonprofit Prison Fellowship makes it possible for children of incarcerated parents to attend a special session of camp. A more ethnically, culturally diverse staff of counselors serves as the heartbeat of the program.

“Places like Mount Shepherd exist to be holy, set apart places where people encounter God in ways they just can’t at home,” Josh says.

“God’s been faithful all along...especially in these last couple of years.”





SMALL CHURCH, BIG HEART

When rain left a trail of destruction, congregation gave generously

The floods came. Then the good people of East Asheville UMC did what they've always done: Figured out a way to help those in need.

The church's Administrative Council called a meeting and quickly voted to withdraw a significant amount in earnings from its Foundation-managed investment accounts to put toward local and national storm relief efforts.

Anyone familiar with this 110-member congregation wouldn't be surprised.

"When you've got that kind of heart, you want to share the love of Christ any way you can."

Mission is core to the identity of East Asheville UMC, located in the Parkway Forest neighborhood near Tunnel Road. The church delivers meals to veterans, volunteers with elementary school children and hosts a coat drive every winter.

"I've been around a lot of smaller churches over the years, and I've found they have a heart for the community," said Pastor Phillip Hurst, a retired Methodist minister who serves in a part-time capacity.

"When you've got that kind of heart, you want to share the love of Christ any way you can."

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SMALL CHURCH, BIG HEART

Giving with joy

The remnants of Tropical Storm Fred dropped more than 10 inches of rain on Haywood County. Flooding killed six people and left the community of Cruso devastated.

WNCC Mission Engagement and the Committee on Relief are working to assess the damage. Thus far, WNCC Disaster Response has been able to deliver flood buckets, PPE and a shower trailer.

East Asheville UMC exemplifies the importance of vital, sustainable local churches. With in-person worship brought to a halt, church leaders quickly assembled equipment to host their first ever livestream service. The parking lot soon became a gathering place for outdoor worship.

Worshippers even came up with an alternative to Passing of the Peace. They call it Honking of the Horns.

“It really just thrilled people to be in the parking lot where they could see each other,” Rev. Hurst said. “You would have thought they were back inside the church, as much joy as there was.”



REMEMBERING HARLEY DICKSON

SERVICE INFORMATION: A memorial service for Rev. Dr. Harley Dickson is Saturday, Sept. 25 at 1 p.m. in Memorial Chapel at Lake Junaluska. Members of the Foundation staff will be in attendance. In addition, the Foundation will make a memorial gift to the Northern Haiti Mission Partnership.

Below is a remembrance shared by the Foundation:

Please join our staff and board in giving thanks for the life of Harley Dickson, whose leadership enabled the Foundation to reach higher in its mission to build God's kingdom.

Harley passed away while in the presence of loved ones, and under the care of Hospice, at his home in the Givens Estates community in Asheville. He was 92.

Harley is survived by his two sons, Chuck and Ken, and many loved ones. His wife, Inez, passed away in January 2020.

An ordained Elder in Full Connection in The Western North Carolina Conference, Harley's service dates back to 1951 when he took his first appointment in parish ministry at Coleridge. Through the years, he served Aldersgate in Shelby, Main Street in Albemarle, First in Wadesboro, First in Lexington, Providence in Charlotte and West Market Street in Greensboro. He also had two appointments as District Superintendent in Waynesville and Greensboro. His last full-time appointment ended in 1997 as the Executive Director of the Foundation.

Always committed to the ministry of the Foundation, he returned in an interim capacity in September 2001 until the arrival of David Snipes, our current president, in February 2002.

Harley was instrumental in the late 1990's in bringing "The Reynolds Foundation" under the umbrella of the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina. In retirement, he served in a part-time contractor role as the Director of the Reynolds Fund, now known as Reynolds Ministries & Programs. He was instrumental in creating one of our most successful programs: The Reynolds Leadership Academy for Evangelism & Discipleship. Most recently, he served as an honorary board member of the Foundation.

Harley's contributions to United Methodism in western North Carolina are immeasurable. As a board and staff, we owe him a great deal of gratitude for the successes we have experienced.



REMEMBERING ROYCE REYNOLDS

SERVICE INFORMATION: A memorial service for Royce Reynolds is Saturday, Oct. 2 at 11 a.m. at West Market Street UMC in Greensboro. The service will be livestreamed on the church website. Please click on the LIVE WORSHIP button.

Below is a tribute that appeared in the Foundation's annual report:

Mr. Royce Reynolds grew up in the 1930s on the family farm in east Tennessee. Determined “not to lead an average life,” he put himself through college selling Bibles door-to-door. In 1959, he traded Bibles for cars, eventually purchasing a Pontiac dealership in Greensboro, which he re-opened as Crown Pontiac. Over the next 25 years, he expanded Crown Automotive Group to include 10 additional dealerships selling 20 makes of new vehicles, a finance company, and a used car auto mall. Mr. Reynolds proudly exhibited a passion for Christian evangelism and a dedication to “the Great Commission” that led him to establish the Royce and Jane Reynolds Ministry Fund of the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina. Created in 1998, the fund supports leadership development programs for clergy and annual ministry grants.



“Royce was always keen in his conviction that many leadership lessons and skills he had gleaned in the car business could translate into clergy leadership,” said Rev. Tom Latimer, chair of the Reynolds Ministries Team.

Hundreds of clergy have been shaped, challenged, and blessed by the generosity of Royce and Jane Reynolds through their participation in the Reynolds Program in Church Leadership, the Reynolds Leadership Academy for Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Reynolds Academy for Ministry Management. Over the years, millions of dollars have been distributed from the Reynolds Ministry Fund to innovative ministries around the globe that demonstrate a clear intention and ability to create disciples of Jesus Christ.

In a year filled with fear and uncertainty, the fruition of a planned gift following Royce Reynolds' death in May 2020 ensured that Christ's message of hope will be shared with a world in great need. The bequest from the Reynolds serves as a lasting investment in endowing the Reynolds Ministry Fund for generations to come.

“Royce would be gratified, as is Jane, to know his passion and conviction are now carried on by the Foundation and our Western North Carolina Conference,” Latimer said. “From a generous distribution of mustard seed has come a mighty plant!”

The staff and board members of the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina mourn the loss of Mr. Royce Reynolds yet celebrate his incredible legacy and remain dedicated to carrying out his vision.



BOARD GIVES THANKS FOR MILESTONE

This summer, the Foundation passed \$300 million in total assets

The August Board of Directors gathering may have looked like a typical meeting – except for the balloons and Bundtini treats that added a festive feel to the room.

Board members had a special reason to celebrate.

Just four years ago, the board held a cake-cutting for surpassing \$200 million. Few could have imagined the next milestone would come so soon.

"We have risen to heights that many of our founding partners never imagined."

"It's a testament to the dedication shown by staff and the board of directors," said Board Chairman Tom Jordan. "In a time of instability within our denomination, there is a greater need for steady leadership. We are blessed to be in a position to provide it."

The celebration was brief because the board had a full agenda. Connected by screens and microphones, the board elected officers, approved new endowments and heard updates on the Foundation's ministries and partnerships. Among the highlights:

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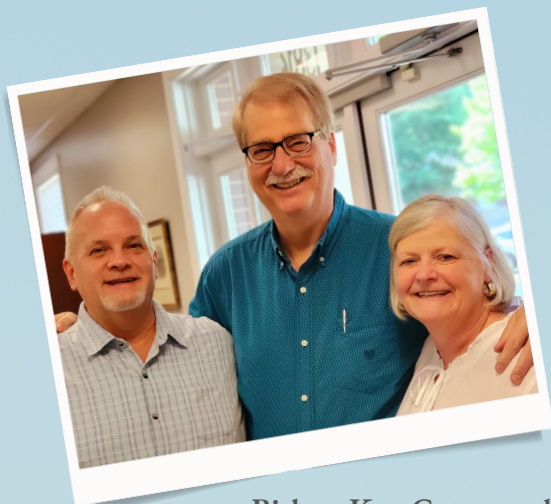
BOARD GIVES THANKS FOR MILESTONE

- The UMF Development Fund has 46 loans in service to help churches make renovations, acquire property and refinance existing debt.
- The Reynolds Ministry Fund awarded 48 grants totaling almost \$500,000 for disciple-making initiatives. The Reynolds Program in Church Leadership will welcome the Class of 2022 for a launch on Aug. 23.
- And the Clergy Debt Reduction Loan Program is now accepting applications from pastors seeking to pay off student loans and become debt free. Since 2016, clergy have refinanced over \$4.6 million in collective debt, saving the average participant \$350 per month.

“Our task, made more challenging by the pandemic as well as the uncertainty within the denomination, is a call to action,” said Foundation President David Snipes. “Because of the faithfulness of our leadership, as well as the trust that our constituents have placed in us, we have risen to heights that many of our founding partners never imagined. For this we give thanks and praise!”



Foundation Happenings



Bishop Ken Carter and his wife, Pam, visited the Foundation to greet staff and tour the building with David Snipes.



What a blessing to be part of a grand opening at Light of Christ UMC's new worship center building in Ballantyne.



A Foundation staff retreat was an opportunity to step away from day-to-day routines and grow more connected with ourselves and one another.



The Reynolds Academy for Ministry Management brought together senior pastors in the Western NC Conference to talk about ministry in the COVID-19 era.



The WNCC Department of Equity and Justice Ministries received a \$20,000 grant from the Reynolds Ministry Fund to strengthen Black churches in the WNC Conference.

Good news is happening in your ministry. The Foundation can help you share it.

At the Foundation, we believe in the power of storytelling to engage, inform and inspire.

Contact Matt Garfield, Communications Specialist, at MGarfield@umfwnc.org or 888-450-1956, ext. 1500 to discuss how we can partner to share your news.