

## **North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **North Georgia United Methodists Focus on 'Shalom'**

North Georgia Conference United Methodists and guests gathered June 16-18 at the Athens Classic Center with Bishop B. Michael Watson presiding—his first annual conference session since becoming the resident bishop of the North Georgia Area. The theme "Shalom: Christian Disciples Transforming the World Through Health and Wholeness" was weaved throughout the worship and business sessions of the conference.

The Hope for Africa Children's Choir from Humble Place United Methodist Church in Uganda brought the conference to its feet as they performed at the June 12 opening worship service and at the mission service. "Let it be known that the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church is dancing," Watson said.

Bishop Daniel Wandabula of the East Africa Conference was guest preacher and led two moving worship services including the service of ordination and commissioning and the mission service. The conference also heard from the Barte Family, missionaries in Cambodia, and watched video reports on retired pastors who will benefit from the Central Conference Pension Initiative.

More than \$500,000 dollars were given during the conference. At the mission service, annual conference members brought offerings from their local churches to the Central Conference Pension Initiative. Their gifts totaled \$272,000 in cash and checks and \$231,000 in pledges. Prior to annual conference, \$544,000 had been given in cash and pledges from the North Georgia Conference to the initiative, bringing the total gifts from North Georgia to \$1,017,000. Two offerings were taken for the Hope for Africa Children's Choir totaling more than \$20,000. An offering toward the expense of annual conference totaled approximately \$6,000.

The conference commissioned 18 provisional members, ordained four full connection deacons and ordained 20 full connection elders. North Georgia also recognized 20 retiring clergy members representing 514 years of service. Twenty-five clergy and clergy spouses and six lay people who died in the last year were remembered during a memorial service.

The conference also:

- Approved a budget of \$25,910,000 for 2010;
- Approved a revised spending plan for 2009 with a reduction of \$1,023,000;

- Voted on 32 proposed constitutional amendments, only seven of which received affirmative support from North Georgia Conference members: II, VI, VIII, XV, XVII, XIX, and XXII;
- Took to the streets of Athens in the Annual 5K Run/Walk with proceeds going to the Hope for Africa Children's Choir;
- Volunteered with the Athens Mobile Food Pantry distributing 10,000 pounds of food including fresh produce;
- Collected supplies and assembled 856 complete Emergency Kits for UMCOR;
- Emphasized health initiatives resulting in more than 230 people taking ProCheck Health Screenings at annual conference;
- Approved the continuation of the Conference Young Adult Task Force to encourage young adult participation in annual conference and development of ministry to young adults in local churches.

The North Georgia Conference paid \$22,540,120 in apportionments in 2008. Payments to Conference and General Advance Specials and to special offerings totaled \$2,063,560.

Membership stands at 354,094 up 4,007 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 130,870 down 2,304. Church school attendance was 18,447, up 3,747. There were 6,670 Professions of Faith, up 186.

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*The North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church consists of 12 districts and more than 900 churches with approximately 350,000 members. The Conference offices are located in Norcross.*