

North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North Georgia United Methodists Meet in Athens

Nearly 3,000 North Georgia Conference United Methodists met June 17-20 at the Athens Classic Center under the theme "The Heart of the Matter." The Conference focused on John Wesley's Three Simple Rules: Do Good, Do No Harm, and Stay in Love With God.

Throughout the week, delegates were filled with a spirit of giving. Two fundraisers brought in \$10,544 for Our Daily Bread soup kitchen in Athens. A friendly challenge to Bishop Lindsey Davis to shoot a basket with a basketball given to him by the General Conference delegation led to an outpouring of cash and pledges for Nothing But Nets. By the end of the week, more than \$10,000 in cash and \$115,500 in pledges were received. In honor of 12 years of service of Bishop and Mrs. Davis in North Georgia churches gave \$57,000 each to Hands to Honduras and Venezuela Now. After hearing the testimony of 17-year-old Ibriham Dandaji, a resident of the Child Rescue Center in Bo, Sierra Leone, a spontaneous offering was collected totaling \$13,000 for the Center.

Maxie Dunnam, Chancellor of Asbury Seminary, was guest preacher and led moving worship services including the Service of Ordination and Commissioning and the Evangelism Service. Ray Buckley, Interim Director of the Center of Native American Spirituality and Christian Study, spoke at the Laity Worship Service.

The conference commissioned 27 probationary members, ordained 2 full connection deacons and ordained 11 full connection elders. North Georgia also recognized 33 retiring clergy members representing 958 years of service. Thirty two clergy and clergy spouses who died in the last year were remembered during a memorial service.

The North Georgia Conference Board of Church Development reported that three new churches and nine new missions were chartered this year. Among the starts are a Korean Mission and a Vietnamese Mission. There are 24 congregations that offer worship services in Spanish or Portuguese and 1,725 Hispanic/Latino members of the Conference.

Two resolutions were passed to encourage more young adult participation as voting delegates to Annual Conference in the future. One asks that the bishop amend the meeting days of annual conference from Tuesday - Friday to Wednesday - Saturday beginning in 2010. The other calls for each district to elect two at-large delegates between the ages of 18 and 40 years old.

The conference also:

- Approved a budget of \$26,252,000 for 2009.
- Created a Sexual Abuse Response Line.
- Approved recommendations to change “The Office of Church Development” to “The Office of New Church Development” and moved existing church development programs to the Office of Connectional Ministries.
- Collected supplies and packed more than 1,000 school kits for UMCOR.
- Celebrated the ministry of Bishop G. Lindsey Davis and Jennifer Davis and thanked them for their 12 years of service in North Georgia.
- Heard a report from the Episcopal Residence Committee that a new Episcopal Residence was purchased near the United Methodist Center at Simpsonwood.
- Passed a resolution calling for every district to elect a Disaster Response Coordination Committee and that by 2009 a minimum of 2,500 laity and clergy be trained and registered with the Conference Disaster Response Committee.
- Emphasized health initiatives resulting in more than 300 people taking ProCheck Health Screenings at Annual Conference.

The North Georgia Conference paid \$22,423,831 in apportionments in 2007. Payments to Conference and General Advances and to special offerings totaled \$2,325,528.

Membership stands at 350,087 up 1.2 percent from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 133,174 down 2.2%. Church school attendance was up 11%.

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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.