

## North Georgia Annual Conference 2014

The theme of the 2014 annual conference was "Together We Make Disciples". We in the North Georgia Conference are all ages, but we are all one United Methodist family working together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. There was an emphasis on children, youth and young adults this year. They took part in devotions, prayers and sharing how the UMC has affected their lives. A group of young laity stood on the stage with their children and answered the Bishop's question, "How are you going to raise up your children in the faith and uphold your baptismal covenants?"

The North Georgia Conference is the largest conference in the US and has one of the most active laity who serve with clergy in all aspects of ministry. This year at the ordination service we saw our new associate, Maria Bower, be ordained at the inspiring worship and ordination ceremony led by Bishop John Holston and then our delegates welcomed her at a reception for new ordinands.

There was a very touching service on Thursday when the retiring ministers passed the mantels on to the new ordinands. Each new ordinand received a stole from a retiree.

One of the resolutions that caused a lot of controversy was one that asked that no one will be authorized to bring a firearm onto the grounds or into the facilities of the churches and institutions of the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The singular exception to this policy shall be in on-duty law enforcement officers. After much discussion for and against, a motion was made and carried that it be tabled for future study and clarification until next year. We voted to table.

We tried out the new electronic voting system and it went well. This will save many hours when we have elections for candidates for general conference next year.

Simpsonwood was back in the news when a delegate from Camp Glisson and North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries unexpectedly reported that they were conducting a feasibility study to utilize the 45 acres on the Chattahoochee for camping. Camp Glisson needs to enlarge and Simpsonwood would be the best property for them and would also be in line with Mrs. Simpson's request. The trustees were surprised as they had been given the go-ahead to sell the land by the conference and the courts and try to retire the 6 million \$ and growing debt. Since no money would be required from the conference, we voted to let them continue with their feasibility study and also to authorize the trustees to continue to seek a buyer who would best satisfy Mrs. Simpson's wishes. The trustees hope to have Simpsonwood sold by its closing date, December 31, 2014.

One of the highlights of the conference was a introduction of the PET carts-personal energy transportation-to be used by people who have no use of their legs. In poor countries where motorized wheelchairs are not affordable, these tricycle-like vehicles are powered by hand. They are wood and metal and not expensive to assemble. These carts are a project of the United Methodist Men.

A new church will be started this year in the LaGrange District (Newnan). It is being mothered by one of our fastest-growing new churches in another district. It will be predominantly African-American. The Korean church is going rapidly in the LaGrange District and also in the Atlanta area. It is exciting to see these new places of worship and outreach!

We heard many reports from different agencies and committees of the North Georgia Conference. We were informed by the committees, inspired by the worship sessions led by Bishop Jonathan Holston and excited about the new leadership of laity and clergy that will carry the banner forward for the coming generations of the United Methodist Church. It is a blessing to be a delegate in this great conference!!

In His service: Tricia Fountain, Joe & Peggy Chambless, Mike Fuller