



Inside This Issue

Reflections From Ron 1

Mission News From 5R 2

August Calendar 3

Youth In Service and Growth 4

Birthdays and 5R Prayer Calendar 5

Bishop's column on Youth 6

Reflections From Ron

Hello Friends and colleagues,

It seems like we've just gotten into summer and our new conference year and already we're off and running. The nature of our work seems to formulate during the summer as we prepare for the fall rush. People will be returning from vacation, but not yet. It seems that some of us will just be leaving in August. Children, youth and young adults (college age) will all be preparing to get back into the habit of going to school again. Some of us will be preparing for the fall preaching schedules, even though summer is far from over. All of that is pretty much routine.

There will be some things that continue to be routine for all of us as we live into our future as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our work together, first and foremost, is cultivating Christian discipleship among one another. I'm certain Christ has called us to do this work. Not to proof-text (I hate proof texting) but I am trying to put flesh on Paul's word to us from Ephesians 4:11-13:

"And to some, his 'gift' was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teach-

ers; to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ, until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself." (New Jerusalem Bible)

However, I prefer Eugene Peterson's translation which says (same text):

*"He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor teacher to **train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.**"* (The Message, Eugene Peterson) [*bold, italics and

underlining, mine]
And while I hate proof-texting, I can't seem to get away from the reality that if we are to embody Christ's presence among us, we are both called and invited to develop our skills of Christian ministry (our gifts) within the body of Christ (the church), whatever our call is, so that we might become more mature and Christ like. I pray our work together this year will lend itself to accomplishing that mission, whether in our local churches, in the district, or in our personal lives. It would make a profound difference to people wherever we happen to be on our journey.

Agape and Shalom
Ron

"It is for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to our tasks, to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel toward our distant goal."
Helen Keller 1880-1968

Mission News from Five Rivers 7/18/07 by Marvé Ralston

Having met Shirley Edgerton for the first time several months ago, I want you to share in her excitement at her future mission assignment with her husband Joe. She has been called to serve in Haiti and emits such enthusiasm at the prospect that she makes you wish you could find a way to serve in some capacity as well. The article below is information about the upcoming trips from Shirley.

Haiti Interim Team,

A team of 4 from Kansas East Conference will be leaving for Haiti on Aug 1st and returning Aug 10th. The primary focus will be to inspect the (hopefully) newly installed satellite system in Source A Philippe on La Gonave. They will be taking a couple of computers to set up so that the Edgerton's will have communication when they begin their two year appointment, October 1st. The team will also do some repairs on their living quarters (like screens and nets) and on the guest house so teams can be received soon. Ken Sokol and Alicia VanWalleghem, trip facilitators, have been to Haiti a number of times and hope to once again recruit regular VIM teams to resource the project on La Gonave.

The village is without electricity, except for a small generator which is infrequently used due to \$15.00 per gallon cost of gasoline. They have 2 panels of a solar energy system but the team hopes to find access to an inverter and a couple of new batteries. These are best purchased in Haiti.

They will be taking the over the counter meds that were donated at Annual Conference (thank you very much) and many that have been recently collected by Central UMC in Lawrence (thanks for their support and involvement). The clinic pharmacy in SAP had no medicines when the Edgerton's were there in May. A pharmacy formulary has been developed and hopefully a physician will soon make a regular visit so that much needed medicines for malaria and other health problems can be added.

A year ago the Methodist Church of Haiti abandoned the project centered in Source A Philippe due to severe lack of funds and loss of teams from the US. The political situation and the difficulty of the journey had reduced the number of UM teams to Haiti for several years. When the Haitian church discovered the Edgerton's were willing to live and work on the island for an extended period of time, they issued an invitation to GBGM for volunteer project directors.

The Edgerton's hope to recourse the badly needed projects of the Haitian Church and the communities they serve in several ways. To recruit and serve VIM teams from the US. VIM teams provide funds for supplies for locally prioritized projects and team members work with the local workers. They will be seeking grants for health and sanitation, communications, and vocational and environmental training for young people. Communicating with other agencies and denominations working on La Gonave, they will focus on establishing intra-island communications and sharing of resources. Shirley will be working with the lay speakers who serve the local churches. Attendance of Lay Speaker Training on the mainland is difficult.

Individual Long Term Volunteers receive no stipend from either GBGM or the host. It is a journey of faith; in God and faith in God's people to "make a difference" in the lives of the poorest people in this hemisphere. Prayer support, VIM teams, supplies and equipment donations are critical to the success of this ministry.

Individuals or churches can provide financial support by sending checks to: Central UMC Advance Special #982465-6 (add: Edgerton on the memo line.) The church is located at 1501 Mass, Lawrence, 66604.

August 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
				School of Congregational Dev.		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Appointive Cabinet at COR				
School of Congregational Dev.						
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	District Youth Coordinators Meeting 6:00 p.m. Garnett UMC					
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
DS Bootcamp at Lake Junaluska						

Youth In Service and Pursuit of Spiritual Growth In Our District

By Eva Durand (Baldwin 1st Youth Director)

On June thirtieth, thirty-one youth and adult sponsors from Baldwin City 1st UMC and Worden UMC traveled together to Keansburg, New Jersey to join about 400 other teens from across the U.S. to participate in a week-long GroupWork Camp. Their assignments ranged from painting, repairing porches, building wheelchair ramps and weatherizing. They worked in teams of 6 people per residential assignment. While providing ample time for the youth group to spend together, they are intentionally assigned work crews with campers from other churches, denomination, and geographical locations. This helps foster new friendships and a broader understanding of the Christian faith. Although some youth were initially hesitant about meeting new friends, it quickly became one of the highlights of the week!

While serving others is a priority at each camp, the number one mission of GroupWork Camps is for teens to grow closer to Christ. In the evenings they worship with live music, drama, scripture reading, and interactive programs. This program is open to other denominations. These differences in how other churches practice their Christian faith and Group encourage a celebration of what they have in common.

The group that traveled from our district, stayed in Keansburg High School in the classrooms. They slept on the floors with sleeping bags and some brought air mattresses. They showered “corporately” in the locker rooms... sometimes cold water, and sometimes extremely hot water. They chartered their own bus and bus drivers to make the 25-hour one-way bus ride.

Group Publishing Company created Group WorkCamps Foundation in the 1970's. Each year Group works closely with local churches, health and human service agencies and others in the communities served to discover where the real need exists. Often those being helped are elderly, disabled, or people with financial or social hardships. This is the third consecutive year that teams of youth have gone on a Group WorkCamp mission trip from Baldwin 1st and the second year they have partnered with Worden's youth group.

“The youth that go to WorkCamp return home with a new, matured sense of purpose. They are stretched outside of their comfort zones and in turn, they grow. They grow as they see what they are really capable of - - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They grow physically as they realize that they CAN accomplish a huge home repair task - - they can learn and succeed at caulking, painting, and hammering! They grow emotionally as they leave their parents and families for a week and actually thrive! They also grow emotionally as they befriend their work crew and resident—some of them making lasting friendships that continue well beyond the week of camp. And, they grow spiritually as they reach out and help other - - complete strangers - - in Christ's name.” Eva Durand

For more information about Group WorkCamps go to www.groupworkcamps.org.

You helped this mission trip by way of our district DCOM (District Committee on Ministry.) They voted to give a \$1,500. grant to the two groups to help with their *tremendous* undertaking to fund this trip.

The district DCOM has included a major increase in their youth budget this year to devote to helping promote growth and programming with our district youth.

“The church is always trying to get other people to reform; it might not be a bad idea to reform itself a little, by way of example.”
 Mark Twain
 (American Humorist, Writer and Lecturer. 1835-1910.)



August Birthdays

Abuena King	8/05
Harriett Bechtle	8/16
Bill Driver	8/16
Marti McDougal	8/28

District Prayer Calendar

Please remember these churches, clergy and spouses in your daily prayer time.

Aug.5 Ottawa:Union Chapel-Princeton

Pastor Jada Hodgson

Aug.12 Uniontown-Redfield

Pastor Joel and Sharon Dunn

Aug. 19 Plum Creek

Rev. Beth and Willis Hodgson

Aug. 26 Hiattville

Pastor Andrew Smith

Along with these clergy, please remember the Mission Team leaving for Haiti in August. Also begin joining with Lawrence Central in holding up Joe and Shirley Edgerton in prayer as they prepare to leave for Haiti

“Pray, and let God worry” *Martin Luther*

“God loves us the way we are, but too much to leave us that way” *Leighton Ford*

“Prayer is when you talk to God; Meditation is when you listen to him.” *Diana Robinson*

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Loving youth evangelistically taken from Bishop Scott Jones's column on the Kansas East website **Published:** 7/20/2007 (Read more of Bishop's blogs and columns at www.kansaseast.org)

When I was writing my book on evangelism, "The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor," I worked very hard on the opening sentence of the first chapter. I ended up writing this:

"To evangelize non-Christian persons without loving them fully is not to evangelize them well. To love non-Christian persons without evangelizing them is not to love them well. Loving God well means loving one's non-Christian neighbor evangelistically and evangelizing one's non-Christian neighbor lovingly."

This is especially true about relating the gospel to youth. If you don't love them, they won't really listen to you about Christ and the way of discipleship. If you do love them, you will find out where they are on their spiritual journey and make your contribution to them becoming Christian or growing in the faith.

This summer, I am spending two weeks in two places with groups of young people as well as preaching at both sessions of the Kansas East Conference's Institute. All of these gatherings have different activities and several different worship styles. The youth will be different from each other.

But I think there are several key aspects that make each of these ministries successful. I think that to have a successful youth ministry you must do the following:

- Show them you care.
- Listen to them attentively.
- Learn to communicate in their idiom.
- Do not underestimate them.
- Challenge them with the whole gospel—faith and works, justification and sanctification, worship and small groups.

Care about all of the youth in your community, not just the members of families already in the church.

A number of years ago my son, Arthur, was in high school, and we were talking about how youth related to adults. He said at one point, "Dad, it is obvious to us when an adult cares about us. And most of the adults just don't care."

A church that cares will make sacrifices for their youth. They will not be judgmental about inessential things, even the most irritating ones like music volume, body piercing, hair color and clothing choices. Instead, they will care deeply about spiritual realities like faith, hope and love. They will spend hours just hanging out looking for that five-minute, life-changing conversation that comes only when a trusting relationship has been established.

This ministry is costly, not in terms of money, but in terms of time that adults are willing to spend with kids. Money may well be involved, but young people know that time and the effort to understand and listen are the more valuable commodities.

What is your congregation doing to evangelize youth lovingly? To love them evangelistically?

Comments? Send e-mail to office@kansaseast.org © 2007, Kansas East Conference of the United Methodist Church