

June 18, 2010

Kansas East Annual Conference
June 9-12, 2010
Theme: Eradicating Poverty
Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas

Report for Valley View UMC church members and staff
Submitted by
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1. Key points follow from Bishop Scott Jones' state of the conference address having a focus on what is our mission and how are we doing?: (That mission is being alive spiritually, growing, and living fully)
 - a. New churches or programs in progress: Life Bridge in western Shawnee, the Argentine area of KCK, Living Water UMC at 115th and Leavenworth Road, and the addition of a Hispanic ministry in Holton
 - b. Overall church attendance in Kansas East was down 1% which the bishop considered not bad considering a hard winter and difficult economy
 - c. Growth in campus ministry was experienced, particularly Washburn, Emporia State, and Kansas State
 - d. More emphasis on receiving members by profession of faith is needed (the unchurched)
 - e. Apportionments were down from 89% to 78.9%, with a goal of 95%
 - i. 228 churches gave 100% last year, 23 gave greater than 100%, and one gave 45% over its share. The conference asked that churches not giving their full amount try to increase giving by 20% this year.
2. The first plenary (general assembly) speaker was Pamela Couture of Saint Paul School of Theology. Key points regarding her topic of poverty are summarized as follows:
 - a. Child poverty in Kansas is at about 15% of all children. This ranges from 5.4% in Johnson County to 27.9% in Wyandotte County
 - i. Poverty is best summarized in one word: *hunger*
 - b. How can local churches respond?
 - i. use the resources in your church that have knowledge of the local community and know the diversity demographics in your own community
3. The second plenary speaker was Rudy Rasmus, co-pastor at St. John's UMC in downtown Houston. He has helped turn a nine person homeless group into a 9000 member extremely diverse congregation, of which 3000 are still homeless. His main points included:
 - a. Re-think the church by taking it to the community, that is, get out of your comfort zone and into the local community
 - b. Provide unconditional love for all persons who come through your doors
 - c. 80% of the money for ministry in our churches comes from people over 55
 - d. 18% of 18-28 year olds regularly attend worship
 - e. The challenge is we have to be culturally relevant to younger people
4. Kansas East, Kansas West, and Nebraska will all be served by one bishop beginning in 2012. Teams have begun analyzing how that conference or conferences should be structured. Input was asked to be provided by all churches/members on the following three questions related to possible reorganization:
 - a. What is the missional purpose of the annual conference?
 - b. How do we best develop lay and clergy leaders for these three conferences?
 - c. What factors should we all think about with regard to going forward configuration?

5. Reports were given by spokespersons from the following organizations, all of which are funded largely through apportionments of the Kansas East Conference
 - a. UMC Youthville – primarily a foster care provider for youth across Kansas
 - b. Asbury Park - retirement community in Topeka
 - c. Black Colleges in America, Camp Chippewa, Hispanic and Korean ministries, Mount Sequoyah retreat center in northwest Arkansas
6. Kansas East has formed an alliance with the Methodist church in Haiti to provide ongoing support from the devastation caused by the earthquake in that country.
 - a. Work teams from Kansas East, which have been working in Haiti for the past 35 years, have already deployed for specific earthquake relief operations
 - b. \$516,000 has been raised by Kansas East for Haitian earthquake relief
7. The Financial report stressed strongly that children’s care programs may no longer fall under a church’s tax-exempt status but must stand on their own
 - a. It is our understanding this is being addressed by VVUMC
8. The Diversity and Advocacy committee stressed several points, which included:
 - a. Be sensitive to the “unearned privileges of being white”
 - b. Are your churches bulletin boards, web sites, toys, etc., expressing diversity?
9. A petition concerning support for young and/or adult women who don’t have the means to bring their child to delivery was discussed. An amendment was passed that stated that local churches could provide emotional, spiritual, and financial support for those having such a need.
10. Valley View UMC was given special mention during the recognition of “welcoming churches” as a “certified welcoming emeritus” for having been recognized in this category for the fourth time
11. Most people felt the change of venue from Baker University to Church of the Resurrection (COR) went well. The conference approved to meet next year at COR
12. Bill Hemmen was officially re-appointed to serve Valley View as senior pastor and Nancy Pauls was appointed as the associated pastor in a part-time capacity
 - a. Former Valley Viewer Caren Loper was ordained as a full elder and will move from serving as an associate pastor under Fritz Clark at Countryside UMC in Topeka to Horton UMC
 - b. Former VV associate pastor, Doug Brown, was remembered during the opening night memorial service
 - c. Don Bakely, formerly the head of Crosslines, was recognized for what amounted to a lifetime achievement award for his work with that caring for the poor organization
13. We encourage members of Valley View to attend some sessions of next year’s annual conference. It is a great learning experience, enhances our connectional relationships, and gives one the chance to visit with many former Valley View clergy.