

MINUTES
Rural Communities in Transition Initiative Committee
May 22, 2006
Bethel UMC

ATTENDANCE

Present: John Varden, Scott Marlow, Kristy Bradley, Laura Stern, Jack Page, Renee Burnette, Alan Sasser, Susan Dunlap, David Girod

Absent: Bill Gattis, Joe Wilburn, David Grissom

REVIEW OF RCITI FINANCES (copy attached)

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES FROM INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. How do we as pastors help our churches to grow?
2. How do we increase the church's diversity?
3. What are resources for human/social services?
4. How do we create web pages for our churches?
5. What resources are available for members of congregation to commute to work in Greensboro and/or Chapel Hill?
6. Could we get information regarding the types of grants that are available and how to write the grant requests?

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

Resources for commuters: TTA (Triangle Transit Authority) and PART (Piedmont Area Regional Transit). Perhaps we could let commuters use the church parking lot to meet for vanpools or carpools. Alamance County has a transportation system available for \$5 per ride.

Host a fair with representatives from groups like food pantries, homeless shelters, Social Services, Mental Health Services, etc.

It would be nice to have an electronic list of contacts supplemented by a contact person who can tell you who to talk to- whether it is better to send an email or to call the correct person.

Dan Hahn is the director of DSS and a member of Cedar Cliff. The DSS had a big layoff recently. Perhaps the churches could find out what they could do for DSS.

UNC School of Social Work may have information about the contacts and services in each county. RCITI could possibly get a Social Work intern to develop lists of appropriate contacts for Alamance, Caswell, and Orange Counties. Duke also has a joint masters program for divinity and social work.

Can people in the church provide continuity for incoming pastor? The Conference has a list for information from the outgoing pastor to the incoming pastor. Primary contacts within the church are part of the list.

GUEST SPEAKER

Carol Buxton Hamon, M.Div. from Duke, offers Spiritual Care and Creative Strategies in Times of Loss & Change.

She spoke on Walter Brueggemann's The Message of the Psalms. The book illustrates a cycle of change based on the Bible.

People think if I can risk going through this time, maybe I can make it. Hope comes in our ability to adjust to change. Churches are in a state of identity change.

1st move of faith is the loss of God as we know Him now.

2nd move of faith-He is greater than we ever thought.

A huge risk is required to move from a "stuck" place. Most people are afraid of change, so they do not want to take that risk. People react at the survival (fear) level. We have to recognize the fear and help them to move past it. How can the people get what they need and still make the shift? Sharing stories is an important component.

The key is that you don't get anyone to do anything. Suggest that you try it together and you can decide together whether you like it or not.

It would be beneficial to have more long-term pastorates in rural areas. Once the pastor has time to feel like one of them, he/she has to move to a new church.

Susan Dunlap said that Brueggemann also wrote The Spirituality of the Psalms which is very similar to The Message without the complicated languages.

It would be helpful to bring information to the group about books that we have read that are relevant to rural issues. When Things Fall Apart by Pema Chodron (the book has good points, but since he is a Buddhist, there will be differences in religious beliefs) was suggested by Scott Marlow.

Celebration of the Rural Church and Community will be held September 22-23, 2006 at Cedar Grove UMC.

The group thought the speaker and discussion were helpful. It was good to have a faith-based foundation as a basis for change.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, June 22, 2006 at 11am at Friendship UMC.