

## CHARGE CONFERENCE 2010

The 2010 Charge Conferences will have the theme “How is it with Your Soul?” continuing on the theme of the last several years that a charge conference is a time to assess the state of our soul, as an individual or a congregation. Each charge conference will follow up on your charge’s ongoing work with the *Healthy Congregations* materials introduced three years ago. The plan is for each conference to be a dialogue—something like our forebears would have known—where there is actual discussion and discernment. Therefore our emphasis on a health congregation, making disciples of Jesus to transform the world, remains in the forefront to your leaders and is a way to review where your charge is in its work. Different churches are at differing places in their ability or even willingness to think of themselves in this way so the conference will be different on a church-by-church basis.

In that spirit, each conference will open with Gray asking for lay and clergy people to answer the questions in the conference agenda attached. The answers would typically talk about disciple-making in terms of spiritual growth opportunities, worship, evangelism (including numbers of persons coming to faith), missions, etc. The goal is for the church to be having these conversations already. Work with your laypeople so that they understand what will be happening and so that they will be ready to use this opportunity. The testimony should include goals, numbers received and specifics about outreach to have meaning and to honor the intent of the conference.

This year we will hold the charge conferences in a format just as last year’s, with most charges partnered with another. We will hold two charge conferences together in the following way:

I have made pairings of two charges, trying to pay attention to distance, historic ties in some cases, and to ministry relationships (where I know of them). I have maintained the same arrangements used last year in every case where possible; last year’s “guest” is this year’s host; last year’s host is this year’s guest,

1. The “guest” charge will hold its charge conference first, dealing with the business agenda attached. Then both charges will gather for a joint worship service. Then the “guest” charge conference members can leave and the “host” charge will remain to conduct their business. To make this work well the business session for the guest charge—which meets first—needs to be held in a room near the worship space but separate from it. The host church can remain in the worship space for their business session which will follow the worship service. A sample schedule, assuming that the evening begins at 7:00pm, goes as follows:

7:00pm. . . “Guest” charge conference business session convenes and transacts its work. Adjourning at approx. 7:45pm to worship

7:45pm. . . Joint Worship Service concluding at 8:15pm Members of guest charge free to leave.

8:20pm. . . Host charge conference business session ending at approximately 9:00pm.

This means that the “guest” Charge Conference members attend from 7:00-8:15pm and that the “host” Charge Conference members attend from 7:45-9:00pm.

The pastor of each charge simply announces that the charge conference will begin at either 7:00pm or 7:45pm depending on which charge, guest or host, you serve.

If your charge conference starts at another time (say 3:00pm or 5:00pm) please adjust the schedule accordingly.

2. We made the commitment to partner charges together for at least two years. This is the second year of that process so almost every charge will have been both guest and host.
3. A member of the Durham District Board of the Laity will attend each charge conference session and will participate in the worship service and perhaps, as they are led, in the conference itself.

Please either have hymnals or songbooks available for your people as well. The host pastor should choose the hymns and recruit a musician for the service.

Because the conference will be a dialogue that is no need for many (probably any) additional oral reports. During the discussion we should hear about your charge’s evangelism efforts, mission and goal setting ministries, and any new or special ministries you think should be highlighted. The “business” of the conference will happen after the discerning conversations conclude. At that time we will need the written reports of The Committee on Nominations & Lay Leadership which you as pastor would ordinarily give, a report concerning Lay Speaker(s) if any (in writing and orally), the pastor(s)’ report(s) (written only), and then someone to recommend the pastoral compensation package(s).

Please go on-line to [www.nccumc.org](http://www.nccumc.org) to the conference’s data collection site and fill out the forms you find there. The only paper forms necessary at the conference are:

1. The attached order which can serve as the conference’s minutes once the appropriate blanks are filled in and the order signed by your recording secretary and myself;

2. An attendance roster, one ideally circulated for sign-up during the conference or taken silently by the recording secretary during the business proceedings;
3. A list of the Committee on Lay Leadership's nominations. A copy should be available for everyone present at the business session;
4. Local Church Officers list with titles and complete contact information including email addresses (if available). (Use the form available at the NC Conference online data system.)
5. Budget information sheet
6. Pension worksheet(s)
7. Lay Speaker(s) reports (if any)
8. Parsonage Checklist (Available from online data system.)
9. A written Trustees' Report
10. Written report of the Pastor(s) with supplemental sheet (Available online data system.)

If you serve a charge with more than one church, you will need to indicate that on the form by listing each church's apportionment, share of pastoral support, etc. separately. No other paper records are needed.

Again, the 2010 Charge Conference will have the same focus we have used for the past several years: how is each charge planning for increasing effectiveness and impact in Jesus' ministry. This "holy conversation" as Mr. Wesley would have styled it, should help us put the emphasis on the actual needs and goals of your church(es).

You will receive your 2010 apportionment figures soon. Please explain and highlight to your people that this is, in reality, one of the principle ways, if not the way, in many cases by which our churches impact the broader world for Jesus. It is essential that our people and our lay leaders connect this basic responsibility with the direct outcomes in people's lives and destinies. Thank you for helping them do that.

The 2010 Minimum Salary Figures are:

Full-Time Pastors

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Salary    | \$ 40,319.00  |
| Utilities | \$ <u>2,400.00 (budgeting at least this amount)</u> |

plus Travel, minimum \$4,000 by voucher

Student Pastors

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Salary    | \$ 26,207.00                                       |
| Utilities | \$ <u>2,400.00(budgeting at least this amount)</u> |

plus Travel, minimum \$4,000 by voucher

These figures represent no salary increase over 2010 and were approved by the 2010 Annual Conference. Remember that as of January 1, 2010, all IRS recognized utility expenses were to be borne by the charge with the utilities in the charge's name. The

minimum set by annual conference action therefore simply is a budgeting minimum. (IRS defined utilities are electricity, heat, water/sewer, trash pick-up and local telephone expenses. There is currently pending legislation to expand this list but this is the list as of now.) Many of our churches have expanded this list to include at least some means of internet access (and some proposals before Congress would establish this, as well as, a cell phone as a legitimate business expense). It remains the prerogative of the local church to include these if they wish; I will be happy to talk to anyone for you to point out the value to a local church in so doing.

The Durham District Work Fund is 4% of pastoral compensation (including all appointed deacons and elders). [Pastoral compensation includes cash salary, housing allowance paid directly to or indirectly for the pastor, utility allowances (use the figure the church budgets) and all other cash allowance, exclusive of travel, paid to or for the pastor by the charge.] These monies are sent to the NC Conference Treasurer, so noted on the remittance forms already being used.

Health and life insurance costs remain unchanged for next year; the figures, if you need them, are available at the conference website and through the Treasurer's Office.

If you need documents for housing exclusion allowances, or their calculation, please call the district office. Have the amount of the housing allowance separately recorded in your financial report/pastoral compensation records.

I will be sending a letter to your S/PPRC Chair next month discussing salary recommendations, merit increases, etc. If you do not want such a letter sent, however, please notify me by July 23, in which case a letter about salary increases will not be sent but one explaining our spiritual life retreat will. The letter will point out that despite the recession many churches may want to give some sort of a cost-of-living increase, as well as, a merit increase, especially since minimum salaries are not increasing.

Again, every S/PRPC Chair will, however, receive a letter detailing to them information about our Spiritual Life Retreat, February 2-3, 2011, with Maxie Dunnam at The Trinity Center. The letter will explain that the retreat is neither vacation nor continuing education time, but actually what the time will be: a spiritual life retreat with our brother and sister clergy. Our churches received the 2009 retreat with enthusiasm. I will be sending other communications about the retreat but I wanted you to know of this first one (as you will the others)!

Should there be other business at your conference, please let me know that fact in advance. I understand that you may have questions. If so, please call and I'll enjoy working with you toward answers. If you encounter any difficulty or surprise, alert me, and we will work on it together. I am truly looking forward to this year's charge conferences. I look forward to enjoying holy conversations with you and your leaders!

Blessings!