

## UM Metropolitan Ministry Report To GR District Conference

February 7, 2010

*The Mission of UM Metropolitan Ministry is to inspire and equip United Methodists to serve Christ in transforming the Greater Grand Rapids area. January 2006*

### Metro/GR. District Partnership

**The Urban Ministries Task Force** (Laurie Haller, Cathi Huvaere, Mary Lou Fassett, Greg Martin, Valerie Mossman-Celestin and Susan Hansen) continues to work closely with GR urban churches facing challenges that include burdensome building repair/maintenance, declining or impoverished membership and inadequate buildings.

St. Paul's UMC hosted a gathering for United Methodists interested in an **African-American new church start** in Grand Rapids on February 4, 2009. The Rev. Dr. Eugene Blair from the Detroit Conference led us in a helpful discussion. Since that time the Task Force has decided to put this initiative on the "back burner" because of urgent challenges facing existing urban Grand Rapids churches. We received two very helpful Grand Rapids demographic studies prepared by Percept Demographics. These are posted on the Metro Ministry website: [www.grmetroministry.org](http://www.grmetroministry.org).

On February 7, 2009, Metro coordinated a Saturday morning "**Clusters Gathering**" at First Place to take a closer look at Dr. Robert Linthicum's model for cooperative churches. We were able to identify some weaknesses in the model for Grand Rapids, so found an alternative in UM-based "Communities of Shalom". This led to a "**Shalom Workshop**" on April 15, 2009, with a Communities of Shalom National Trainer from Drew University, Dr. J. P. Duncan. The workshop was held in the evening at Trinity UMC and 60 persons participated.

As a result of interest generated at the April workshop, by early October 2009 three GR area Shalom groups were approved by Drew University as official **Communities of Shalom**. Those sites are: The Plainfield Corridor, Trinity UMC and the Burton Heights Group. The Initial Consultation is scheduled for Friday, February 19, 2010, 7-9 pm at Plainfield UMC. The first of five all-day training sessions will be on Saturday, February 20, 2010, at the same location, from 9 am – 4 pm.

Five persons from Grand Rapids attended the **National Shalom Summit** in Columbia, S.C. in late October 2009. Almost 300 persons gathered for four days of networking, worship, workshops and inspiration. The team is grateful for the grants from the Peace w/ Justice Community, Conference Emerging Ministries Fund and others that made it possible.

Funding for local Shalom projects may be available through the new Metro-administered **Greater Grand Rapids Urban Ministries Fund**. The Fund consists of monies generated from the sale of the former Oakdale UMC parsonage and church building, and is invested at the UM Foundation.

The Second Annual **GR Metro Worship Service** was held on Sunday, May 17, 2009. The worship service and meal were hosted by Wyoming Park UMC. Benton Heisler, Director of W. MI Connectional Ministries, preached on the theme of "Hoarding or Helping?" We are planning a new "**ReThink Event**" on a Saturday in August of 2010 instead of hosting another GR Metro Worship Service. Watch for news regarding this exciting initiative!

The **West Michigan Conference Hispanic/Latino Task Force** is seeking new life. On October 6, Laurie Haller, Susan Hansen, Jorge Rodriguez and Lea Tobar from W. MI, plus representatives from the Detroit Annual Conference, gathered for a meeting to discuss future collaboration. It was a very helpful meeting that is leading the group in new directions.

### **Community Sustainability Partnership (CSP)**

Since May 2008, Metro had been convening an **Interfaith Sustainability Group**. Our purpose was to create a sustainability event or project that would positively impact the GR community. We collaborated on an **Electronics Recycling Drive** on Saturday, June 20, 2009, at Hope RCA. Together with CompRenew, we recycled almost 14,000 pounds of electronic waste that day!

### **Metro Forum**

The Metro Forum has, for several years, organized occasional gatherings for area UM clergy and area leaders around one table for a catered lunch and conversation. Our next speaker will be the **Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson**, General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America, on Wednesday, **February 24, 2010**, from noon-1:30 pm.

### **The Ron Fassett Fund for Justice**

On November 10, 2009, Metro formally launched the Ron Fassett Fund for Justice. It was created to honor the ministry and legacy of former Metro Executive Director, the Rev. Ron Fassett, and his passion for justice. The Fund currently has almost \$12,000 invested in the UM Foundation, and grants are available to individuals and organizations conference-wide for justice-related programs or projects. The Fund brochure and grant application are available online at: [www.grmetroministry.org](http://www.grmetroministry.org).

### **JustFAITH (JF)**

Three United Methodist Churches in Grand Rapids offered JF in 2008/2009: **Wyoming Park UMC, Genesis UMC and St. Paul's UMC**. Beginning in the fall of 2009, **Aldersgate UMC** is partnering with Bethlehem Lutheran to offer JustFAITH to their members.

### **North Central Jurisdiction Urban Network**

Metro Ministry has been a member of the Steering Committee of the NCJ Urban Network for many years. Susan Hansen was elected serve as **Vice-Chairperson of the Urban Network for the 2009-2012** quadrennium.

The annual **2010 January Event** took place in East St. Louis, IL, and was called "Hospitality: The Unopened Gift – Recognizing and Receiving the Gifts of All". The keynote speaker was the **Rev. Vance Ross**, Deputy General Secretary of the General Board of Discipleship. The event preacher was **Bishop Gregory Palmer** of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

### **Ongoing Metro Partnerships**

North Central Jurisdiction Urban Network – Vice Chair  
NECM, SECOM and UMCH – Member Ex-Officio, Boards of Directors  
Conf. Bd Global Ministries & GR District Board of Missions – Board Member  
Annual Conference Program Committee – Member and "Host" of AC

Thank you for the abundant prayers, generous gifts of service and faithful financial support which make the work of Metro Ministry possible.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan J. Hansen, Executive Director