

May 2008

Please forward this newsletter and/or print out copies for your local church bulletin board and for distribution.

Congratulations to the following for outstanding achievement and/or service.

~ Spencerville's Polar Bears on their first place finish at the North American Division finals of the Pathfinder Bible Achievement program last month at Andrews University.

~ Elder Kumar Dixit, associate pastor of the New Hope church, upon the conferring of his Doctor of Ministry degree.

~ Dean Boyer, a student at Southern Adventist University and member of the Frederick church, who will spend two weeks in Guatemala doing evangelism with *Share Him*.

Health Evangelism was the focus of a two day pastors' meeting held this week in the conference auditorium. The guest presenter was Vicki Griffin, health educator/evangelist from the Michigan Conference. The pastors found her approach not only balanced but personally intriguing and beneficial. Vicki was a presenter at camp meeting last year and the impact of her presentations was the catalyst for bringing her in to work with the pastors. Ask your pastor if this approach to health evangelism might not be just the tool for your church to make a greater impact in the community.

If you visit the conference office the last of May and early June you may encounter some parking challenges as the entire parking lot is being replaced. The association board voted to replace the entire lot rather than patch and seal as has been done in years past. The board felt that after forty some years it was time to redo it completely and correct some of the grading problems that has caused water to drain toward the building. The expense is being covered from monies already set aside in the Plant Fund through depreciation funding.

The Executive Committee took actions recently related to districts in the western region of the conference.

~ voted, to make Middletown Valley church a single church district while they are completing their new sanctuary and to ask Elder Dick Thomas to continue to give leadership to the church and the building program.

~ voted, to align the Catocin View and Charlestown churches in a district relationship and to call Elder Jim Zeisner to serve as the pastor. Elder Zeisner has been teaching Bible at Spencerville Adventist Academy and we are pleased to have him join the ranks of our pastoral team. Jim and his wife, Sharon, have been assisting the Catocin View church and Elder Thomas for the last couple of years and they have also attended the Charles Town church in the past.

The church planting initiative in the northern/northeastern quadrant of Baltimore is set to move forward in June. An initial meeting is being called for June 21 at the Towson Holiday Inn, 1100 Cromwell Bridge Road, from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. Elder Sedley Johnson will be the leader in this new initiative and we are asking mission minded members who would like to assist with this mission project to attend this meeting. The basic strategy calls for working territory on Sabbath afternoons to develop interests and to aid us in determining the best location for the new church plant. It will be an initiative based upon prayer and hard work and we hope to organize the new church plant by the end of the year.

The evangelism strategy being used in the western region this summer has gotten off to a good start. Evelyn Griffin, Bible Worker at the Williamsport church, has been contracted with to provide training of area church members to assist their pastors in following up interests created by the team of student literature evangelists who will be spending 10 weeks this summer in the region. Some of the churches will conduct reaping meetings later this year. Others are waiting until 2009 for major campaigns. All of the churches felt a new approach was needed to create a large pool of interests to work rather than simply relying on the response that a mass mailing of handbills generates. Our Evangelism Committee is hoping to see other areas within the conference take up a similar challenge.

Highland View Academy news of note.

~ work has commenced on what will be a renovation and capital maintenance project that totals nearly \$700,000. The cost for the work is being covered by a partnership of the conference, the Commonwealth Foundation and HVA

and its donor base. When completed the project will have addressed renovation needs to the dorm bathrooms, the dorm HVAC system, the windows in the dorms, the re-roofing of the administration building and the installation of gutters and downspouts, the creation of weather barrier entrances on the ad building, the renovation of the gymnasium bathrooms, and major repairs to the sidewalks connecting the campus buildings.

~ the academy went through an evaluation by the North American Division just recently and the visiting team is recommending to the NAD Office of Education that HVA receive a full six year term of accreditation with an interim visit. The only higher status is the six years without an interim visit. The major recommendations coming out of the study came as no surprise and are issues the board is currently addressing. The administration, faculty and staff should feel good about the report of the visiting committee as it underlined the high quality of education being offered at HVA and the strong spiritual tone that exists on campus.

Word is slow to get around regarding changes to the traditional camp meeting program within Chesapeake. As reported in previous issues of *Currents* and the May issue of *The Visitor*, the traditional four-day camp meeting at Highland View Academy has been replaced by a series of single-day convocations that will be held in various areas throughout the conference. The first such meeting will be held in Hagerstown on September 20 featuring Ron Halverson, Sr., and the singing group Ponder, Harp and Jennings. The venue for this mission conference will be the Hagerstown Community College gymnasium (across the street from the Hagerstown church) and then shift to HVA in the afternoon. The afternoon/evening format will include instructional seminars, more preaching by Elder Halverson and a concert by PH&J. Progress continues on the mission conferences to be held in the other regions and details will be published soon.

Chesapeake's Prayer Ministries team is organizing a conference-wide Prayer Emphasis Weekend for November 7-8 in the Wilson Auditorium of the Columbia Union Conference office. Jerry and Janet Page from the Central California Conference will be our featured presenters. Elder Page serves there as president and his wife, Janet, as Women's Ministries coordinator. They are highly sought after presenters around the NAD for these Prayer Emphasis weekends. Please mark the date on your church calendar's as we hope to draw representatives from every church within Chesapeake. A \$15 registration fee will be charged to each participant to cover the meal and materials expense. More details on the weekend and registration process will be published in a later edition of *Currents*.

The Annual Financial and Statistical Review conducted by the Executive Committee in March revealed a number of Chesapeake's strengths.

~ our tithe base increased by 3.75% in 2007 and although it was less than our average of 4.80% over the past five years it was the strongest gain within the Columbia Union. Our support of World Missions to the tune of more than \$400,000 was also a leading figure within the Columbia Union.

~ our tithe per capita of \$1,143 remains one of the strongest in the North American Division. We are ranked in 5th place among the 58 conferences.

~ our Chesapeake Advance Program (CAP) brought in \$180,234 that went to assist evangelism, Mt Aetna and HVA capital maintenance needs, church and school capital development projects and our church planting initiatives.

~ we continued to live debt free.

~ our membership grew to 12,771 and our additions by baptism and profession of faith totaled 405 – our best year in some time.

While taking some measure of satisfaction in the solid condition of our finances and church growth there are some indicators that not all is well within Chesapeake.

~ 24 of our 67 church groups had no additions by baptism or profession of faith. That represents 35% of our groups.

~ 36 of our 67 church groups had 2 or less additions representing more than 53% of our organized groups.

~ only 15 church groups (22%) had double digit growth in these additions.

~ attached to this edition of *Currents* is an Excel spreadsheet with several pages that gives a statistical overview of the tithe and additions and pastoral budget allocations throughout the conference. The most interesting pages are the ones ranking churches by baptisms or by church size or by region. It will give you a good overview of the conference dynamics of growth and financial strength and reveal also challenges we must face if we are serious about our mission.

~ a review of the growth patterns over the past 10 years showed a large number of churches in a stagnant or declining position. It is apparent that maintaining the status quo is not an option and that we must be proactive and intentional in all of our endeavors. The Conference Administration will be wrestling along with the Executive Committee to find ways of helping our churches discover the joy of receiving new members.