



The United Methodist Church, Florida Conference
North East District

Rev. Timothy Smiley

Dear Colleagues in the ministry of Jesus Christ:

Online, along with this letter please find the Fall 2009 Charge/Church Conference schedule with the date, time and place of your cluster conference. I have kept the same format in place as the previous year, and for three reasons: (1) a majority of you are familiar with the schedule and format, (2) the district staff know what to do, and (3) this DS can get with the plan! Please plan on a maximum of ninety minutes for worship, community and the conference.

Worship and Celebration! We will come together as a connectional people to worship and to celebrate.

- We will worship as led by the host church and as cluster leaders determine in consultation with me;
- I will bring a message;
- As a response to the word I will invite all present to join in a renewal of baptismal vows.
- I want you to invite a person or persons to share an experience of transformational grace; a living witness to the prevenient, justifying or sanctifying grace of God. After all, isn't this really what "The Methodist Way" is all about! Has someone come to saving faith in Jesus Christ? Has a family found healing and new life through the ministry of your church? Has your congregation launched a new mission of mercy or justice in your surrounding community? Did someone in your church or community have a transformational experience of God's grace through participation in Celebrate Jesus or Celebrate Recovery? Was someone healed of illness through prayer? Like God's grace, the possibilities for sharing (and celebrating) are endless! I will email you more about this, especially about how to structure this sharing.

Fellowship. Refreshments are "optional," however, I really hope churches in a cluster will step up and assist a host church in providing refreshments so that, at least for a brief time, people from our churches can greet and connect. I hope to meet many of the members of your church in this informal setting.

The Charge/Church Conference. This is one of the few times in the life of a United Methodist Church that the people DO get to have a say and to vote on matters that effect congregational life. Yes, a lot of it is scripted, but don't discount the value of discernment and a vote. I have always asked for and received permission to hold a church conference (§248, the professing members of the congregation have voice and vote) rather than a charge conference (§246.2). I understand that this has been the practice of the NE district now for several years. So, unless I hear from you with a specific request and rationale for a charge conference, I will authorize a church conference.

To facilitate the work of the conference, each church should prepare a packet for distribution to your members which will contain the following materials: (1) a list of 1st, 2nd and 3rd readings of members to be removed by church conference action; (2) the report of the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development for election of 2010 leaders; (3) the recommendation of the SPR Committee/Church Council regarding pastoral compensation; (4) a list of persons being recommended (or to be renewed) for candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry; and (5) a list of persons being recommended (or to be renewed) as Lay Speakers. Each congregation will vote on each of these matters as applicable. ***Call me if you have any special concerns or needs for the conference.*** Any business beyond the five actions indicated above, such as a proposal for a property purchase or to approve a loan, a foundation meeting and election, etc., we can handle by a special gathering, either thirty minutes before or after the cluster worship and conference. ***Such matters need to be discussed with me well in advance of your cluster conference day.***

Key documents. **All reports are due into the district office by October 1, 2009, except for the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development report.** An agenda with a detailed outline of the essential elements of each conference is posted on the website along with the other church conference forms. Read all the materials, start early preparing what is necessary, and help your leaders and congregation be ready. Please call Faye, Debbie, Kathy or me in the district office with questions or concerns. Please call if you need help. We will do our best to support you in your preparation and completion of what is required for your conference.

Yours in faith, hope and love,

Tim Smiley, Superintendent
The North East District