

Lives Transformed on Holy Grounds

by Mike Huber, CCRM Director

Listen Up! Listen to this! Listen, Listen, Listen! Listen to your Mother! – Have you ever noticed that for all the talking about listening we don't do it real well?

“One who gives an answer before listening, that is one's folly and one's shame.” Proverbs 18:13 NIV

Newspaper headlines are filled with stories of people crying out to be heard. Kids are feeling that their parents are not listening to them. Spouses are saying that they are not being heard. People on opposite sides of issues often feel as though they are not being listened to.

Our compartmentalized lives are working against us in the effort to really listen to each other but we must be willing to learn the skills of active listening. I spent a week in Mexico visiting a friend a number of years ago and found that I had to focus very diligently on the person that I was speaking to since we were speaking

different languages. I experienced a similar challenge in Guatemala a few years ago while on a mission trip. In April I helped to host 30 deaf college students on retreat at Aldersgate and again felt that I needed to be more attentive to my listening skills in order to communicate. In none of these experiences did my hearing play much of a part in our communication. What was important was that we made good eye contact. We were able to express our own needs and were attentive to the other's needs.

One of the strengths of a camp or retreat experience is that individuals live in community for a period of time that fosters communication. Many of the daily distractions are eliminated from the environment. We often find ourselves in a group of people that we are not usually with on a daily basis. In order to co-exist and accomplish a common goal we must practice good listening skills.

In the hiring process for summer camp we find ourselves listening for the spoken and unspoken messages from the candidates. We want to hire the best staff possible and listening to them allows us to make the basic decision of hire or not hire, but in the case of the hire it also allows us to put together a plan to support and encourage the staff person. After an orientation and training period counselors and program staff are better equipped to listen to the campers that come with so much to say, spoken and unspoken.

On the Holy Ground of Casowasco and Aldersgate we have the opportunity to teach individuals that we should listen as we would want God to listen to us. We also create an environment where participants can listen for God's still small voice. It may be in the sounds of the natural world that God speaks to a retreat guest or through the high energy youth focused worship service that a summer camper

hears God. It may be around the campfire or in the cabin during devotions, on a sail boat or a horse. Summer campers may hear God while cooking over an open fire, climbing a bouldering wall or hiking through the wilderness. God may speak through a process of resolving a conflict among campers or through the voices of others encouraging a camper or retreat guest as they try something new.

How are you communicating? Are you talking more than listening? Are you being attentive to others? Who do you need to listen to today? Where is your environment that allows you to listen for God?



Bishop's convo welcomes Lowes Watson

The Rev. Dr. David Lowes Watson will be the keynote speaker and workshop leader at the Bishop's Convocation.

The convocation is Oct. 13 to 15 at the Holiday Inn, Auburn.

Watson is a retired member of the Order of Elders in the Tennessee Conference.

A native of England, he was educated at Oxford University, Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, and Duke University. He pastored congregations in the Illinois Great Rivers and North Carolina Conferences, and served as executive secretary for Covenant Discipleship and Christian Formation at the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church.

For the last seven years of his active ministry he served as director of the Office of Pastoral Formation for the Nashville Episcopal Area of The UMC.

Watson has written extensively in the fields of Methodist history and theology, evangelism, and congregational life and mission.



Dr. David Lowes Watson.

“Save the date,” says Convocation Dean the Rev. Wilson Jones, pastor of Avon UMC in the Western New York Conference.

More details will be included in upcoming issues of *Connections*.

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four conferences and constituted a single New Area/Conference Team to lead the conferences forward. This team consists of 18 people: the two presiding Bishops, three members at large from each Annual Conference, and each conference's Director of Connectional Ministry.

The Northeastern Jurisdictional Boundaries Committee, meeting on Feb. 13, 2008, unanimously endorsed this request and forwarded it to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference meeting July 16 – 18, 2008 for action. The Northeastern Jurisdictional Vision Table, meeting on February 14, 2008, acted to support the recommendation to the 2008 session of the jurisdictional conference, along with recommendations for jurisdictional financial support for the transition.

In order to facilitate continued discussions between the four conferences and prepare for a union of these bodies, should the Northeastern Jurisdiction concur with the afore mentioned recommendation, the New Area/Conference Team will initiate, facilitate, and coordinate conversations among a variety of groups in the conferences. These discussions will include, but are not limited to, vision, mission, financial, property, pension, credentialing of persons for ministry, and leadership concerns

Be it therefore resolved that the North Central New York, Troy, Western New York, and Wyoming Annual Conferences authorize the New Area/Conference Team to engage in discussions necessary to form:

1. A vision for this new area/conference that will lead forth into the coming decade
2. A plan of union for the new conference in 2010
3. A proposed design to facilitate the initial union of the conferences, and a process to develop the necessary structure which will support the vision and mission of the new area/conference

Be it further resolved that the New Area/Conference Team shall present an interim report to the 2009 Session of the Annual Conferences. The plan of union and accompanying initial structure recommendations shall be presented to the first session of the New Area/Conference in 2010 for adoption and implementation

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