

Messenger

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August



Coming Events

August 26 Gathering
Boiling Springs UMC
Lexington, SC

Board Meeting
September 12 @ 7
Windsor UMC

September 23 Gathering
Trinity UMC
Sumter, SC
Meal @ 7 Worship @ 8

Board Meeting
October 10 @ 7
Windsor UMC

October—Walks
Men's 13-16
Women's 29-23

November
No Gathering

December Gathering
Wightman UMC

The Community Lay Directors Desk

What a blessing to see our Community grow. Growth and change go hand in hand. The saying, "Hindsight is always better than foresight" is very true. So as we look back and forward at the same time, we find it is necessary to evaluate our Emmaus walks and also plan for our future walks. One important tool we use is the "Handbook" because The Midlands Community has signed a covenant with "The Upper Room" to conduct our Walks according to the Emmaus model. This assures us that the Emmaus experience enjoyed by our Pilgrims will be very similar in content to any other Walk put on by any other community. That "quality control" is critical to the success of Emmaus.

The Board of Directors has made some recent assignments that will take advantage of the experience and competence of the community members you have elected to the Board. The Midlands Community has appointed Thad Hinnant to the new Board position of Training Coordinator with the goal to remain true to the Emmaus model and allow the Holy Spirit to do its work through that model. The Emmaus model has been tested over thousands of Walks, with thousands of Pilgrims at hundreds of sites and, as we can all attest, it is an anointed tool of the Holy Spirit when used properly. Everything done on the Walk--and at Candlelight--is held up to the model and is done with the Pilgrims in mind.

In addition, Bobby Sandifer will assume the charge of Music Coordinator. I know that I speak for Bobby in recognizing that this community has been blessed with talented vocalist and musicians. Please contact Bobby via the Web site and let him know that you are willing serve.

Also, Dorothy Longshore, currently Agape Coordinator, has assumed the task of searching out and recording all Reunion groups. It is critical that if

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you are part of a Reunion group that Dorothy has the opportunity to hear about your unit so that new pilgrims will have a place to continue their Fourth Day.

Regarding Candlelight. Certainly the community and the team are a critical part of the evening but the Candlelight experience is for the Pilgrims. The fact is that the Midlands Community is a bunch of huggers!! While that is a blessing to most of us, the fact is that many Pilgrims, particularly the ladies, are not comfortable with receiving hugs from those they don't know during the Candlelight service. For this reason, keeping the Pilgrims as our focus, we are asking that the community refrain from having contact with the Pilgrims during Candlelight. The point is that we don't want to make the Pilgrims feel uncomfortable. So, hug all you want at the Closing and the Gatherings! One reminder is the way we choose our seats for Candlelight. In fact, this is a blessing--not a problem. The fact is that our community has now grown to the point where we cannot have everyone on the aisles to personally greet the Pilgrims. So that we might make sure the Pilgrims get to see their spouses, sponsors or close friends, we would ask that the community allow those closest to the Pilgrims (spouses, sponsors, etc.) the front spot in the line.

We are serious about our commitment to "The Upper Room" and to our Pilgrims. Everything we do as a community during the Walk will be viewed from the Pilgrims perspective. Rest assured that it is **not** our intent to limit the joy of the Walks or to limit the work of the Holy Spirit. God has blessed this Emmaus movement and has blessed the Midlands Community. One major reason for that is that the members of this Community are truly committed to bringing an authentic, caring, loving Emmaus experience to our Pilgrims and to our community. We thank you for that commitment and for your love of the Lord and this Emmaus experience.

Charles

Update from the Registrar

Vacations are over, school is back in session, and everyone is settling into the fall routine again. Hopefully you have had a wonderful summer and are looking forward to cooler weather! I know that I am!

Please remember that October is just around the corner and both the Men's and Women's Walks are scheduled. Pilgrims are needed for both walks, and you are invited to prayerfully consider sponsoring someone to experience this journey with Christ for 72 hours. At the moment we have only 8 men and 12 women who have submitted applications. Please, please be much in prayer for our lay directors, the teams who are being put together and for the pilgrims who might not even know at this point what God has in store for them. God needs all of us to participate in this process of putting on walks for this community. Thank you for your continued support and prayers!!

Carolyn McLean—Registrar

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A report from our Emmaus communities around the world



The *East West Church & Ministry Report* has issued a special theme edition examining the impact of the current Ukrainian crisis on the church and ministries in Ukraine and Russia.

Freedoms

Even before Armenia proclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union on 21 September 1991, its Parliament set about revising laws in force during the Soviet era.¹ The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations (17 June 1991) provided for genuine freedom of religion. However, Armenia's religious leaders were uncertain how best to respond to the new freedoms.

Nevertheless, during the first years of the post-Soviet period, congregations were able to engage in mission work without hindrance. In the summer it was easy to gather a crowd in a village. Evangelistic efforts were organized using a van equipped with loudspeakers, microphones, and music synthesizers. Loudspeakers announced the showing of the "Jesus" film. Outdoor meetings were held and sometimes auditoria were rented. Because of these efforts, new churches were registered without government restrictions.

Restrictions

However, in 1993 legislation was signed that discriminated against Evangelicals and other religious groups in favor of the traditional faith, the Armenian Apostolic Church, which claims the allegiance of perhaps 90 percent of the population. This late-1993 law required that a new church seeking registration have a minimum of 50 members, instead of 20 as was previously required. As a result, in 1994 only three new churches were able to register.

Arrests and Protests

In April 1995, several government officials organized an attack on churches that were not Armenian Apostolic. Soldiers sent by these officials arrested a pastor who was a member of a church in Yerevan, for leading a home-based service. He was imprisoned for eight days. After a Sunday service on 16 April 1995, soldiers also entered another church and interrogated the pastor in his office. They confiscated the church van and transported approximately 20 young men from the church to the

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other side of Yerevan, perhaps originally intending to imprison them. Soldiers released the young men the same day but kept the van for two additional days.

In defense of new freedom, church leaders sent letters of protest to the government. The police and a representative from the president's office issued apologies, but not the government officials responsible for the harassment.

Increasing Restrictions

On 9 June 1997 the National Assembly of Armenia passed a new law on religion that stated: "Only the Armenian Apostolic Church is acknowledged as the National Church for Armenians for their spiritual life [and] national identity." As a result, other churches faced additional state discrimination, such as the requirement that Protestant congregations now have 200 baptized members in order to obtain legal registration. Increasingly since 1997 Armenian authorities have excluded Evangelical Christians-Baptists from active participation in public life, considering the denomination in the same category as such non-Christian sects as Jehovah's Witnesses and Hare Krishna.

Growth in Spite of Limitations

Even though these laws place limits on activities, the church has seen great increase since 1998. Whereas in 1991 denominations could count only two registered churches in Armenia, by 1998 had five registered churches and 33 mission centers, and by 2004 it had eight registered churches and 92 worship centers.⁸ The church's mission goal is to receive official registration from the government for all these worship centers. However, at present, it is almost impossible to register additional churches because of the increase in membership requirements from 20 to 200. Nevertheless, as a religious organization, certain rights are assured according to the law, including the right to carry on theological education.

Defining Proselytism

Another issue that causes concern is Article 8 of the 1993 law which expressly forbids proselytizing.⁹ How is this term to be defined? A good working definition is the attempt "to persuade someone to change his/her religious identity by the offer of money or other material benefit or by dishonest representation of religious beliefs." In an effort to stop evangelistic efforts that are legitimate, people may accuse some Christians of proselytizing. But Armenia has obligations as a new member of the European community to uphold its citizens' right to proclaim, as well as hold, their religious beliefs. When Armenia became a full member of the Council of Europe in January 2001, it obligated itself to uphold Article 9 of the law of the European Council for Human Rights (ECHR) which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship."¹⁰

Evangelical Christians are grateful for this affirmation of religious rights. They regard it as important to be recognized as a traditional group. But regardless of state action, the church's goal is to continue its historic mission to make new disciples for Christ, train them, and send them out as witnesses. Evangelical Christians thank God for the level of freedom they enjoy and pray that they will be able to continue planting churches in Armenia in this new era.

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BOARD ELECTIONS

Board Nominees Sought: Emmaus of the Midlands will hold board elections this Fall. Who would you like to see in leadership roles?

Without the support and participation of the Community membership, we would not be able to do what we do. Each and every walk requires coordination and leadership. Our routine business requires coordination and leadership. Functions such as team selection, walk registration, and data collection all require coordination and leadership. Now is the time for you to become involved. Please consider if you or someone you know would be willing to serve on the Board of Directors.

Elections will be held later this year for the class of 2017. In addition, several at-large positions are in need of filling. Please pray and then respond to the needs at hand. Contact any Board Member for information.

Trinity United Methodist Church (located on the corners of McNulty, Boney and Blythewood Roads) would like to invite all to "An Evening with Dawn Smith Jordan" on August 25th at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary. Dawn intertwines a combination of music, testimony, humor and God's Word in her presentation.

Dawn, a former Miss South Carolina and Miss America Runner-up, has performed and ministered in thousands of churches in the past 25 years. She has been featured on the Billy Graham Crusade, the 700 Club, the FBI Profiles on the Discovery Network, In Touch with Dr. Charles Stanley and numerous other programs.

The community is invited to hear Dawn's inspirational message and beautiful music! This free concert and reception after in the Fellowship Hall are sponsored by the United Methodist Women of Trinity.

**Thank you for all the well wishes and prayers during my resent surgery.
Grace and Peace Karen Hartman**

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www.midlandsemmaus.com

August 26 Gathering
Boiling Springs UMC
Lexington
Meal @ 7 Worship @
[map](#)