



October 6, 2010

To Our Brothers and Sisters in the Order of Elders
From your Brothers and Sisters gathered at the Wesley Center October 6, 2010:

The Book of Discipline describes an order as a covenant community whose purpose is to “seek to respond to the spiritual hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers during this stressful time of change in the Church, and for a deepening relationship with God” (BOD ¶306).

During our October 4-6, 2010 retreat, we recognized and confess that we often fall short of these ideals as elders in this annual conference. We tend to live out our vocations in isolation instead of connection. We struggle to be a community that is “one in spirit and purpose.”

In line with our Wesleyan heritage, we believe that one of the most effective ways we can grow as a covenant community is by taking part in regular peer/covenant groups together. To that end, it is our desire and expectation that all elders in the Louisiana conference, beginning with ourselves, participate *at least monthly* in peer/covenant groups.

The purpose of these groups is:

- To pray for and with one another
- To keep each other accountable in areas such as spiritual growth and physical wellness
- To ask the historic question, “How is it with your soul?”
- To support one another by sharing ideas and using one another as “sounding boards”
- To have the “covenantal sharing” necessary for the order of elders
- To be a catalyst to draw others into covenant
- To build trust and promote healing

While these groups should be clergy-only groups, they do not need to be comprised of elders only.

If you are in an existing group which is in alignment with this purpose, we encourage you to continue meeting with that group and ask you to consider inviting other clergy to share in your gathering. If you are not in a group, we encourage you to find one or create one with peers in your area. Tools, resources, and a database of existing groups can be found at the order website at www.la-elders.org.

If you are unable to participate in a peer/covenant group, a monthly meeting with a spiritual director is an acceptable alternative.

Paul writes, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Phil 2:1-2).

Our intention is not to add one more thing to our already long to-do lists, but to utilize the gift of covenant community, to grow together in Christ, and to be united in spirit and purpose as we seek to fulfill Christ’s mission in the world.

May God bless you and the ministries to which you are called.

In Christ’s love,

Karl Klaus
Roger Lathan
Cheri Godwin
Clifton C. Conrad, Sr.
Wayne Evans
James A. Graham
Richard H. Humphries
Terrence S. August
Richard Cockburn
Ken Norton
Katie McKay Simpson
Jeff Duke
Ted Freeland
Walter Parker, Jr.
Doug Cain
R. Don Ross
John Cannon
Heather Leyland
Carole Cotton Winn
Ray Varnado
Shawn Anglim
Daniel Hixon

Joe Donakey
Joseph Awotwi
Steve Stephens
Monica G. Monk
Lyndle Bullard
Leslie Stephens
Juan Huertas
Jaqueline Z.C. King
Jonathan King
Stephen Fleming
Steve Berger
Mark Strickland
Barry Hoekstra
Donnie Wilkinson
John Higginbotham
Ellen Alston
Simon Chigumira
Eunice Chigumira
Angela Cooley Bulhof
Ramonalynn Bethley
Irvin Boudreaux
Brady Whitton