

Communications Advocacy Committee meeting with Larry Hollon 1-11-10

- I.) Following a brief opening Larry Hollon shared the current state of conversations and movements taking place at the highest levels of the General Church that may impact or be impacted by Communications Ministry
 - A.) Call to Action- Council of Bishops, Connectional Table, and others asked to think about what the church should look like in the 21 century
 - 1.) What should the General Church look like
 - i.) What does a global staff look like
 - ii.) How does the Connectional Table operate globally
 - 2.) What should Annual Conferences look like
 - i.) How does the Conference help the local church make disciples
 - ii.) How does the Conference feed into the General Church
 - 3.) How do we speak to younger generations
 - B.) Interfaith dialogue- how does this impact the UMC
 - 1.) Primarily Ecumenically focused
 - 2.) Open Communion with Presbyterians and Lutherans
 - C.) Ministry study- What does the role of deacons, elders and lay leaders look like
 - D.) How do apportionments fund ministry globally
 - E.) What might General Conference look like in the future
 - 1.) Special Session
 - 2.) Structure and timing
- II.) Following a brief on the conversations that are taking place Larry Hollon explored what they mean to Communications Ministry and shared that we all need to be on the same page, using the same language, and telling the same stories
 - A.) Theological Basis- Communications is an expression of ministry
 - 1.) We are created as a result of God's desire to communicate (with the word God created all things)
 - 2.) Communications is a theological act and keeps us connected
 - B.) Too often communications is seen as a cost not as a ministry
 - C.) Leaders fail to see the value as a strategic asset that helps us frame the narrative
 - 1.) The church is still structured for a "print" world (command and control, one way push, control the story, top down, one source of information...)
 - 2.) We are living in a post modern digital world
 - i.) Many voices
 - ii.) We can grab pieces of truth through bits of information
 - iii.) As our structure stands we are not well suited to adapt to digital culture
- III.) Larry Hollon and the Advocacy Group then cast a vision of where we need to head together
 - A.) We must start reflecting the church as a community

- 1.) Share stories up and down the connection because it is mutually beneficial
 - 2.) We must not be gate keepers
 - 3.) Stories must be accessible in every way possible (by every means necessary)
 - 4.) We are no longer the primary source of stories, we manage and care for a network that keeps us connected
- B.) We are a source of global information that allows context of faith
- C.) Rethink Church days of impact are a great example of the relationships that should exist on all levels of the church
- 1.) Media buys are of secondary importance of to the networking that takes place
 - 2.) Work together to move into the community where we can then narrate the role of The UMC
 - i.) Imagine No Malaria is a great example of how we can work in the 21 century
 - ii.) The Central Conference Communications initiative is another great example of how we can work together
- D.) We must become a global network of communities with a missional focus and we must relearn how to and why we tell our story
- E.) Communicators at all levels of the church must become partners speaking from the same page, with the same values, and supporting each other
- F.) We will work towards more seamless ways of conference stories becoming general church stories and vice versa
- IV.) The group then discussed action steps
- A.) We must particularly target Bishops and DCMs to advocate for the crucial role played by strategic communicators and communications ministry
- 1.) We will work to identify communications friendly bishops to support our work
 - 2.) We will seek the chance to speak at the annual gathering of DCMs
 - 3.) Other Conference leadership should also be strategically targeted- Treasurers, common table chairs, and General Conference Delegates were specifically mentioned
- B.) We need to make use of the massive networks controlled by communicators in order to spread the message
- 1.) UMAC and UMCom both have networks that we can push op/ed, feature stories, blogs through
 - 2.) We can specifically ask members of UMAC to push these pieces through their networks
 - 3.) Larry Hollon will begin writing opinion pieces that can be shared in whole or in part throughout the church
 - 4.) Members of the Advocacy group and others need to begin writing pieces on communications ministry that do not appear to be self serving but share the importance of communications ministry and strategic communicators

- C.) We will continue to develop best practices for communications departments and communicators by putting together a survey and appropriate analysis
- D.) We must change the way that Communications is perceived by leaders and even communicators around the church. Communications or telling our story is what we do as Christians going back to the very first disciples. We must hold leaders and even our own counterparts accountable when they do not view what they do as ministry or they are unwilling to adapt to share our story in a way that can be digested by the current culture. We can only adapt to the culture. It will go on with or without us!

*Additional Notes: following the meeting we agreed that we would hold our next phone meeting at the end of January or early February to work on a timeline and a more action steps. Highlights of this conversation were shared with the executive board of UMAC on January 12 they fully support the action steps moving forward and will also look at how to make Communications Advocacy a key part of the Annual Meeting.