

## *INTERPRETATION OF MAKE MINISTRIES FIRST ASKING*

To offset the large increase required to underwrite our Conference pension needs (\$1,500,000 additional funding for 2004), the original askings to support the ministries of our annual conference were reduced by \$1,355,296. To help restore support for vital ministries affected dramatically by these reductions, the members of the 2003 WNC Annual Conference approved a special asking for 2004 of \$1,355,296 in addition to the askings for conference funds through the main budget. That fund is called “**Make Ministries First**” and is located in the “Other Apportioned Funds” section on the Charge Conference Acceptances for 2004-Page 1. The purpose of this asking is to encourage, from those churches that are willing, the designation of a fund specifically for the enhancement and development of ministries. In our struggle to deal with fixed costs and dramatic increases in pensions and health care, conference ministries are confronted with significant challenges. Funds received through the “**Make Ministries First**” provision will be disbursed on the same formula as regularly apportioned funds. The recommended amount for each church is given on Page 1 of the Acceptance Form.

This process will enable those churches desiring to support ministry needs beyond the main conference budget to do so. Recipient ministries include: Health and Human Service Institutions (e.g. The Children’s Home, the three retirement centers (Aldersgate, Arbor Acres and Givens Estates), the three counseling centers (Methodist Counseling and Consultative Services, the Potter’s Touch and the Greensboro Counseling Center), Duke Chaplaincy Services and UMAR; Conference Benevolences through the Conference Ministries Advisory Council; United Methodist Colleges and Universities in the bounds of the Conference; Campus Ministries; Board of Ordained Ministry; and pastoral support in new churches.

A large part of the rationale supporting the approval of this asking is the acknowledgment that significant economic change is in our future. This will doubtlessly impact our philosophical, theological, denominational and economic policies and procedures. Our bishop has appointed a Quadrennial Budget Planning Committee whose purpose is to provide the annual conference with a number of strategic choices in the next quadrennium that will address challenges and changes looming on our denominational horizon. “**Make Ministries First**” is the approved way that our conference has chosen to preserve the core functions of our conference and to maximize the effectiveness of every dollar given at this point in our ministries together. Without a compelling and unifying vision that is focused on education, discipleship, children and benevolence, the transformational realities exhibited through the church’s program and extension ministries that define her reason for being, will diminish. “**Make Ministries First**” is a response to that challenge.

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