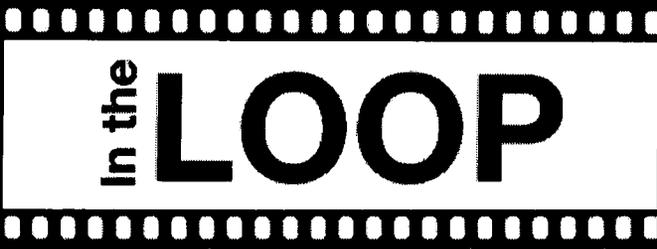


Joseph Carson

From: Larry Trotter <catherine@concordumc.ccsend.com> on behalf of Larry Trotter <larry@concordumc.com>
Sent: Friday, June 24, 2016 12:54 PM
To: jpcarson@tds.net
Subject: In the Loop



In the LOOP

I would like to alert you to an issue. One of our members has an ongoing workplace dispute with the Department of Energy in Oak Ridge. This person came to Concord 11 years ago as a visitor and subsequently asked for a meeting with me to discuss the issue. After providing me with some background on the dispute the member asked that the church write a letter to DOE rebuking them in the name of God for ongoing institutional evil. I explained that writing such a letter did not fall within the church's biblical and denominational mandate to make disciples for the transformation of the world. Moreover, because we have several members who work in some capacity at DOE facilities I felt like I would have to hear from them as well before the church could fairly take a position. This person then visited with the Senior Pastor, Brent Hall and the other Associate Pastor, Catherine Nance. After receiving, essentially, the same message I had given, the person pursued other avenues within the denomination. Over the years this person has sent emails containing articles germane to the issue and made comments about our church's "bystanding" of institutional evil.

The person asked to join the church last summer and we received both the person and spouse, into full membership. This past fall the new member suggested that if I initiated misconduct charges the member could then ask for a church trial and, thus, have a platform from which to continue the complaint against DOE. Alternatively, the member suggested bringing me up on charges for failing to preach the gospel by not addressing the allegations of institutional evil toward DOE. At that time I stated very plainly that, after counsel with local church and denominational leadership and a search of my own conscience, I did not agree with his premise that this was a church issue and would not participate in any activities that would manipulate the policy and polity of the United Methodist Church to further a personal agenda. The member subsequently tried to bring me up on charges and, when the resident bishop failed to

find any grounds for the charges, the member attempted to bring the bishop up on charges, which were also found to be groundless.

That catches us up to the present. The member recently threatened to contact members of the congregation via email, newspaper articles, and flyers under windshield wipers during services and ask that you withhold support, financial and other, to the church until the member's demands are met. My standing position, having been vetted and confirmed at the highest levels of our denomination, remains the same. As Senior Pastor of Concord UMC, I will not manipulate church policy and polity or redirect the God-directed mission discerned by our church to advance a personal agenda. My responsibility is to Jesus' mandate to go and make disciples for the transformation of the world. As long as I'm here, that will be my guiding vision. I do have a favor to ask. If you know this person and find yourself in conversation, please remember Jesus' primary command: to love one another. Everyone must be treated with dignity and respect, even if we disagree.

Moving on, I'd like to share a preliminary report from Missions Director Jane Currin from our mission team's phenomenal week of ministry in Plymouth, NC. This is a text from Jane:

"CROSS Ministries - (Christians Reaching Out in Sacred Service) is a ministry of Plymouth UMC. Pastor Jay Clark called the group miracle workers transforming homes and lives. The 5 teams worked on 4 projects that included roofing, kitchen makeover down to the joists, bedroom ceiling, two newly replaced roofs and a variety of repairs to a home that had had a house fire - partial roof along with soffit and fascia boards. The 5th team served our team - preparing wonderful meals to keep the team moving. We had 38 youth, 18 adults, 56 total. Grand total of hours serving this week is 2027. That would equal 50 work weeks for 1 person. Heading to the beach now, finishing the day with a seafood supper and hotel stay. No more air mattress and cots on church floors. Home to Knoxville Sat."

It is so inspiring to see our church's ministry footprint continue to expand as more and more people decide to embrace the call to discipleship, a call Jesus extends to each of us. Pray for safe travels home for our team.

And speaking of discipleship, Wil and I had a wonderful time with 50-plus Concord kids and 100 others from area churches at Camp Wesley Woods this week. It is a rich blessing to be a part the kids' faith journeys as they share their stories, questions, and energy. Camp always reminds me of why Jesus pointed to kids as examples of how to enter the Kingdom. Their enthusiasm, honesty, and willingness to move out of their comfort zones represent lessons we all need to hear on a regular basis.

I want you to be in the loop.

Larry