

# Something to Pray About

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By Cindy Sears – July 2009

**"ALTAR CALL"**

"Awesome!" "That's the coolest thing I've ever done." "I just couldn't stop shaking." "It's time we Methodist stop concentrating so much on 'method' and returned to working on being 'holy', on being set apart for God." "I've got to sit down and breathe for a few minutes."

Those are just a few of the comments I heard on Saturday evening, June 13<sup>th</sup>, as we exited from the auditorium after Eric Lane's ordination ceremony. Those of us from Ebenezer who attended the ceremonies were thrilled to be able to stand up for Eric Richard Lane as he was called to the stage to be ordained as an elder in the United Methodist Church. We were prepared to be uplifted by this milestone in Eric's walk with the Lord, but we had no way of knowing that the Holy Spirit had greater plans for everyone in attendance and in the Western Conference of the UMC.

First our spirits were aroused by the sermon given by Rev. Hutchinson from Louisiana, who called on the members of the United Methodist Church to stop worrying so much about the methods, about the order of worship, and return to John Wesley's concept of 'holiness', of being set apart for God—for we are called to be 'holy as He is holy.' He had the whole auditorium full of people on their feet, clapping and praising God as he ended his speech. The atmosphere was electric.

Bishop Goodpaster then returned to the podium and they began the ordination rituals, first with the deacons, then with the elders. An emotional Eric knelt at the altar, with the hands of Bishop Goodpaster and other Bishops placed on his head. He was near the end of the last group. We thought the show was about over, but then Bishop Goodpaster moved to the center of the stage and paused.

When he spoke, we began to wonder what was happening, because he said right off that he "was breaking the order of the service." He referred back to Bishop Hutchinson's speech and then began to talk about deacons and elders and pastors. He felt that the Lord was asking some in the audience that night to make a commitment to begin the process of stepping forward for service in these positions. When he said that, half of our row of people leaned forward and looked at our own Jimmy Stone, who was leaning forward with an intense look on his face. Goodpaster continued to speak and the next thing we knew he was making an altar call—of people who felt that God was calling them to service as a pastor, deacon, or elder. Several people on our row leaned forward again and looked at Jimmy. When the bishop asked us to pray that God would call people to come forward, I closed my eyes and prayed that Jimmy would go forward if God really wanted him to do so. I prayed also that anyone else in the audience that God was calling would say "yes" and go forward—even if that included me ( but it did not; whatever His plans are for me, I now feel more willing and able than ever to do His will in this wonderful life He has given me!).

When I opened my eyes, an obviously emotional Jimmy was on his way to the stage. And other people from the audience had already made it there. More followed. It was amazing! We were all on our feet, clapping and praising God. By the time people has stopped coming to the stage, it was full! We saw Eric leap onto the stage to hug Jimmy and lead him over to our district superintendent, Fred Jordan.

After another prayer and song, the newly ordained deacons and elders exited the building first. We waited for a still shaking Jimmy to make it back to us. He had to sit down for a few minutes to recover. I went on outside to search for Eric and finally found him in the packed crowds gathered around the deacons and elders. After giving him a great big hug, I went back to lead the others to him.

According to Leonard Teague, who has been coming to these things for 50 years, this is the first time he has seen an altar call. Wonderful! Marvelous! I pray that this signals a new day for the United Methodist Church. Will we move forward from here into greater holiness? Or will we let this momentum die? Pray for a Great Awakening!

Pray that the power of the Holy Spirit that we felt and saw working on this night will grow and continue to wake up the members of our church, so that we can be “holy as Christ is holy.” Amen!