

## Reflections on the Fairway District

For a little more than a month I have had time to reflect upon the name of the new district that will encompass what is now known as the Sanford District. I have been assured that, like Moses; I will not be with you as the District Superintendent to see this “promised land.” Nevertheless, I know that I have a responsibility to prepare you, the lay and clergy members of the Sanford District, for this exciting transition—this crossing over to a new paradigm. That is what I am attempting to begin with these reflections.

Although I am an avid golfer, I neither suggested nor supported the name “Fairway” for our new district. But I am a team player and believe that God works through the cumulative efforts of all of us, including the Transition Team which has lead us in a magnificent manner. Therefore, I have begun to ask myself, “What is there in this name that can inspire and challenge the United Methodists in this new configuration to be more effective disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?”

As a golfer I know that the “fairway” is the place to be as one progresses from the tee to the green. The best and better golfers try always to hit the fairway. Statistics are kept on the number of fairways hit during a round. The very best “ball-strikers” lead in this statistic. This leads me to my first impression—**the Fairway District is the place to be.** I am not implying that those who are in the other districts are “in the woods,” or “in the rough,” or even “in a hazard;” however, I know that the Fairway District is a good place to be. Of course, we are all challenged to work diligently to make it an even better with God’s help.

The second thought I had is that one cannot make a score in golf by staying in the fairway. One has to get the ball on the green and into the cup. Now, what can this possibly mean for us? I believe that it is a challenge to those in the **Fairway District** to become more missional and not to be complacent about who we are or where we are located. We must be moving forward to the goal to which Jesus calls us “**to make disciples of all people.**” We must be striving to serve our respective communities with transformational ministries. Being in the fairway put us in a great position to “score well,” but we must keep our eye on the goal, the flag.

Enough of the golfing image because the “Fairway District” has much more meaning than that. In fact, we have to be careful that the name does not imply that we are particularly privileged as in “the country club set.” The word,

“fairway,” can be divided into two words—“fair” and “way.” It is here that I became particularly inspired in my reflections. Although I thought I knew what each word meant, I took the time to “Google” the words. This is what I found:

- Fair**— 1) free from bias, dishonesty, or injustice  
2) legitimately sought, pursued, done, or given—proper  
3) moderately large, ample  
4) neither excellent nor poor—tolerably good  
5) marked by favoring conditions, likely, promising.

- Way**— 1).manner, mode, or fashion  
2).characteristic or habitual manner  
3).a method, plan, or means for attaining a goal  
..4).a respect or particular  
5).a direction or vicinity

Let’s begin to look at these words and at what they might mean for us. We can more perfectly reflect the image of fairness in all that we do. We can show the world through our respective congregations that we are “free from bias” and that we will work together with others to right the injustices that impair our culture. Honesty and integrity will be our bywords, our way, because they are God’s way. We will pursue our goals with righteousness, a right spirit. We will strive to see that no person is hurt by our actions—“do no harm.” We will see our mission and our ability to serve as “likely” and “promising.” To be **fair** is to be excited when I look more deeply into what it means. It is inspiring.

The early Christians were known as followers of the Way. The Way for us, as it was for them, is to follow Jesus our Savior. It is a manner of living that is marked by love—love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. Love is a noun, but it is also more powerfully a verb. To be in the **way** is to love in all that we do. That is our “method” and our “plan.” It is also our “means for attaining our goal.” Our way in the **Fairway District** will be and must be the way of **love—love for all.**

We will surely be blessed as the Fairway District if we dare to live into the full meaning of our name. My prayers will be with you as you embark on this exciting new journey. I will be with you in spirit. The **Fairway District** will be a good name if we all live into the full implications of its meaning.

Reginald W. Ponder  
District Superintendent  
Sanford District