

Hinton Rural Life Center
Celebrating 60: Embracing Our Roots & Sharing the Fruits

Reflections . . .

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"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything." (Jesus)

-- John 15:5, CEB

We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way; by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.

-- Colossians 1:10, CEB

I'm Margaret Freeman, a United Methodist deacon from the North Georgia conference, serving in western North Carolina at First United Methodist Church in Franklin. I have the pleasure of living in the mountains, just a few miles down the road from Hinton. As Hinton celebrates 60 years in ministry, with the theme of "Embracing Our Roots and Sharing the Fruits," I can't help but think of what Hinton means to me personally, as well as how I've seen Hinton's roots and fruits in the community and beyond.

Hinton has so many aspects of its ministry: reaching out to clergy and laity, helping those in need in the community, and by being a place that is welcoming and celebrates God's creation.

The Hinton Center and its staff have played a part in cultivating my faith and helping me to grow. Just the beautiful setting of Hinton on Lake Chatuge in the midst of the mountains is a place of solace and renewal for my soul. Every time I drive onto the Hinton property, I can feel the relaxation and peace that is a part of being in that place. Spending time in prayer in the chapel. Sitting in the lakeside worship center at the Easter sunrise service and watching the sun rise slowly over the lake, while hearing the Word proclaimed. Enjoying the delicious food while having meaningful conversations around the table.

And I know of so many others who have experienced that as well: the "hermitage" cabins that provide a quiet getaway; clergy coming year after year to read and reflect and plan sermons; a friend who comes several times a year with all her children's choir music to make plans for the

seasons; lay people who enjoy sitting in the rockers on the porch; the adults in my church who are looking forward to the next VBS for senior adults.

Hinton is a place where I have benefitted from clergy retreats, leadership trainings, and prayer experiences. In addition, our church has benefited from consultations that have helped us in visioning and long-range planning, as well as other trainings for both clergy and laity.

I also see the roots and fruits of Hinton through its mission outreach. On a regular basis in the local Clay County newspaper, there are articles of how Hinton is reaching out into the community and beyond. There are programs like the firewood ministry, mental health first aid trainings, and partnering with local churches and organizations to make this part of the mountains a better place. And youth groups and adult groups come from all over to help with home repair in a rural area that is often overlooked. Several times I've been a part of orienting youth group leaders to their week of mission at Hinton, and I'm always energized by their excitement about helping others and being a part of leading their youth in understanding what mission can be.

When I think about Hinton and its many ways of both serving and empowering others to serve in ministry, I am reminded of two scriptures:

John 15:5 (CEB) – "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything."

Colossians 1:10 (CEB) - We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.

Hinton is a place that helps me remain (or abide) in the Lord, replenishing and renewing my soul, especially in a world and in a time where so many things can pull us away from God.

It is also a ministry that provides opportunities and equips both clergy and laity, and people of all ages, to put their faith in action by serving others.

As Hinton celebrates its 60th anniversary, I give thanks for the variety of ways Hinton has served so many over the years, and I look forward to what lies ahead!



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