**Construction crew members fabricate concrete bricks with a machine. Once dried, these bricks will be used for the walls of the hospital wing at Ganta Hospital, Liberia.**

Macomb Wesley announced a $100,000 gift to fund the third wing of the new Ganta Hospital. See pages 2 and 12 for more stories and photos of the IGRC-Liberian partnership.

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**United Methodists looked outward, inward in ’07**

United Methodists called for justice, advocated for peace and assisted victims of both natural and economic disasters during 2007.

At the same time, the denomination looked inward, setting a focus for its mission and ministry and developing strategies to increase and strengthen its membership.

A crucial concern for justice has arisen in the Philippines. United Methodists continue to speak out about the estimated 800 extrajudicial killings and abductions that have occurred there since President Gloria Arroyo took office in 2001.

One of the most powerful United Methodist voices in 2007 was that of Philippine Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno, who held a summit in Manila on the extrajudicial killings, putting a spotlight on the nation’s human rights crisis. The summit included representatives from the judicial, executive and legislative branches of government, as well as scholars, members of the legal profession, the militant left, religious leaders and media.

On Sept. 25, the Supreme Court in Manila approved a Puno-supported court rule on the writ of amparo, under which the military or police cannot simply deny involvement in abductions or extrajudicial killings. Rather, they also must prove they are not involved and, under court order, open their detention facilities for inspection.

**Withdrawal from Iraq**

In November, the bishops of The United Methodist Church declared war “incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ” and called on leaders of all nations to begin an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The bishops also urged against deploying additional troops to Iraq and against establishing permanent military bases in the Middle Eastern country.

In addition to calling for the immediate safe and full withdrawal of troops, the bishops called on the United States and other coalition force nations to initiate and support a plan for the reconstruction of Iraq, giving strong priority to the humanitarian aid efforts.

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**Bishop Dyck to share on clergy wholeness**

Minnesota Area Bishop Sally Dyck will be the featured speaker at the 2008 Covenant Keepers which will be held Feb. 4-5 at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville.

Dyck will be speaking on Wholeness and Health: Body, Spirit and Relationships. Dyck, who is completing her first term as bishop after being elected in 2004, gained national attention when she developed a Spiritual Pyramid: A Guide to Holy Choices. Based on the nutritional food pyramid, it describes portions of spiritual practices that strengthen a life of Christian discipleship. Believing that God wants people to experience wholeness in all parts of their lives, she also encourages the faithful to take up disciplines of nutrition and exercise that support physical healing. Her two imperatives for faithfulness, vitality and fruitfulness also encourage the faithful to take up disciplines of nutrition and exercise that support physical healing.

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**Conference deepened its relations as part of the global church during 2007**

By Paul Black

Calendar year 2007 was a year in which the Illinois Great Rivers Conference deepened its place in the global church and in so doing, found an abundance of God’s blessings.

In a time of tight budgets, IGRC United Methodists opened their hearts and their wallets to the world only to find abundance at home.

Apportionment bills were leaner in 2007 due to the direct-billing of health insurance benefits. A trend which began in May 2006 has continued through November 2007 as monthly receipts continue to outpace the previous year and total receipts are the highest since the merger of the two former conferences.

The IGRC partnership with Liberia continued to rack up frequent-flyer miles as delegations of persons from the conference visited the west African country and several church leaders from Liberia have visited the conference.

“Our partnership is young, but it has brought new meaning to our people,” said Liberia Conference Lay Leader Rudolph Merab. “We can’t really express all that you are doing; I just want to say, ‘Come and see!’”

And many took Merab up on the invitation.

A delegation led by Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher attended the Liberia Annual Conference in February. The group included conference superintendents and directors and a work mission team that worked on a new administration building at Ganta Mission Station. The group also was among those who met...
Macomb Wesley finances new wing to Ganta Hospital

MACOMB — The Fellheimer Trust of Macomb Wesley UMC announced Dec. 10 a $100,000 grant for completion of a third wing of the new Ganta Hospital in Liberia.

The $100,000 check was received by Illinois Great Rivers Conference officials Dec. 15 and they notified Liberia Bishop John Innis, who was traveling in the United States.

“We are so thankful and appreciative for such a handsome gift that demonstrates love in action,” Innis said. “It is a sign of love, joy and happiness, but even more so, it brings healing to a lot of people and hope to the people of Liberia.”

Innis said the new hospital project, which will have seven wings, when completed will provide medical services for more than 100,000 people in Nimba County. Liberia’s two neighboring countries, Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea will also benefit from the new medical facility.

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher applauded the efforts of conference churches.

“This gift from Macomb Wesley for the ongoing construction of the Ganta Hospital will touch the lives of thousands of persons with the healing power we know in Jesus Christ. How grateful I am for the expansive vision and the deep commitment of the congregation’s members that moved them to offer this gift that will keep on giving for years to come,” she said.

“We are very appreciative of the great love that the churches within the IGRC continue to share with our ministry,” said Victor Doolakeh Taryor, hospital administrator for Ganta Hospital. “This donation will be used to construct the operating wing of the new hospital. This wing, according to the construction plan, will accommodate three operating theaters, a recovery room, central supply room, a nurse anesthetists.

Rev. Russ Smith, directing pastor of Macomb Wesley, noted that the gift was a result a trip of large membership church pastors in October.

“It was an eye-opening experience to travel to Liberia,” Smith said. “While Liberia was a land of devastation, I was greatly impressed by their helpfulness. It appeared that they were doing everything and anything to get back on their feet.”

One of the concerns which Smith raised was that given the history of the hospital being a target during the civil war, what assurances there were that the new hospital wouldn’t be destroyed.

“No matter who I asked, they quickly responded, ‘The fight is out of us. We want to live in peace.’ And when you see former enemy combatants as part of the construction crew making the concrete bricks to build the hospital, I decided it was worth the risk to ask my church to be a part of building a hospital wing. I am proud that the church stepped up to the challenge.”

Smith said he hoped Wesley’s contribution would encourage other churches, clusters and districts to become involved in the Liberia initiative.

“There may not be many churches that could fund a complete wing for $100,000, but it is my hope that this will keep the momentum for the hospital project going,” he said. “The second wing is under construction and now the funds for a third wing are in place to continue the work. Perhaps a district, a group of churches or a cluster can take up the challenge for the next wing and the new hospital can become a reality.”

The entire hospital project with its seven wings will cost approximately $1 million. Roughly $300,000 has already been raised. A large share of those funds has been raised by IGRC churches.

Peoria First has been a major partner in this effort, raising $100,000 for the first wing as well as sending more than $350,000 of hospital equipment to the hospital and a $250,000 electric generator.

Canton Wesley UMC has been another partner as the large-membership churches have joined together to make a significant impact.

“We are indebted to the leadership of Dr. Tim Bias and his congregation for their commitment to the hospital project and in bringing folks to Liberia,” Innis said. “We also thank Canton Wesley UMC and Rev. Paul Walles for its contribution that assisted in the building of the second wing.”

“It’s a wonderful response from a local congregation but another important step in our conference partnership,” said Bias, directing pastor of Peoria First UMC, who organized the October trip for large membership church pastors. “As persons from our conference travel and meet the people of Liberia and as our General Conference deals with the diseases of poverty – malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis – we have a wonderful opportunity as United Methodists to make a difference in the world by eradicating the root causes of global poverty. The completion of Ganta Hospital as a regional health facility can be a major step in that direction.”

Innis said he looks forward to the day the second wing is completed. “We are thankful to the United Methodist Church for the generocity of Luke Bryan and his wife who have joined the staff Nov. 26, working with Doug Stone in the print/mail area as part of the Finance and Administration team. Engelbarts started working with her local church in the northern Illinois community of Polo when her children were very small. In her lifetime, Linda has become very familiar with Illinois having lived in northern, western, central and southern Illinois.

She and husband Eric live in Springfield now with a very spoiled miniature beagle. A positive attitude and love of people are two reasons Linda likes the work she’s currently involved in. She said she is looking forward to meeting everyone at Annual Conference. Engelbarts has been employed as a controller as part of the Finance and Administration team Dec. 1.

“CCFA authorized the hiring of a controller as another step in our journey to provide IGRC members and local churches with transparency in our financial operations, assurance that we are moving toward the very best business practices, and resources for conference and local church ministries,” said the Rev. Rick Van Giesen, director of administrative services and conference treasurer.

“Angell’s qualifications and experience, we believe, prepared her very well to fulfill the role we envisioned for this position. We have been understaffed for over 18 months, so it is quite a relief to have her on board.”

Bell has both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in business administration from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Positions

Chatham UMC is seeking a part-time tech/media coordinator to manage worship media and church website. Contact Rev. Sara Isbell at sisbell@springnet1.com or Chatham UMC, 104 W. Chestnut, Chatham IL 62629 217-483-2132.

Clergy support group begins Jan. 22

An interfaith clergy support group comprised of six to eight clergy members is forming in the Decatur area and will have its initial meeting Tuesday, Jan. 22.

A few openings are still available for the group which will hold its meeting at Decatur Psychiatric Associates, 3040 N. University Ave., Ste. 2 in Decatur from noon to 1:30 p.m. for 12 weeks. Cost for attending the group is $10 per session. For more information, call 217-872-1700.

Scout Sunday Feb. 3

Local congregations are encouraged to observe Scout Sunday on Sunday, Feb. 3.

The observance provides an opportunity for churches to recognize the Boy Scout pack, troop or crew they sponsor or the scouts within their church.

Contact the United Methodist Men Youth Services/Scouting co-coordinators Dennis Lussenheide by emailing dlussenheide@charter.net or phoning 618-288-5281, or Ray Gessel at raygessel@aol.com or by calling 309-688-1508.

Three join conference staff

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Slots for Cuba VIM trip

There are two open slots for the UMYM Team to Cuba, sponsored by the Tennessee Annual Conference.

The dates for the trip are April 18-30. This team will be working on the Seminary in Havana and will be staying at the Methodist Center. Cost for the trip is about $2,300.

For more information, contact the team leader, Larry Burke: ljrdburke@comcast.net

Registration open for CEF Conference

NASHVILLE — Registration has opened for Blessed to Be A Blessing: Christian Education for the 7th Generation with Preaching from the Center, a conference of Christian Educators Fellowship (CEF) and Preaching from the Center (PFC).

The conference will take place Oct. 24-27, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and Albuquerque Convention Center in Albuquerque, N.M.

Full conference details are available at http://www.cef2008.org

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Duff retires as McKendree provost

LEBANON — Dr. Gerald Duff, provost and dean of McKendree University, will retire on Dec. 31 to begin a busy new chapter of life as chairman of the Foundation Board of the American University in Central Asia.

Duff, an award-winning author who resides in Lebanon, Ill., will also continue his many writing projects. He has just published *Fire Ants: And Other Stories* (NewSouth Books; $27.95; 336 pages).

The American University in Central Asia is a selective liberal arts university based on the American model and located in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan. The curriculum is committed to democratic values, freedom of expression and inquiry and is supported by independent governance. The university was established in 1997 and is sponsored by the U.S. State Department, George Soros’ Open Society Institute and the Kyrgyz government.

Duff is also a professor of English at McKendree. During his tenure at the university, he helped develop graduate programs in nursing, education and business. Before joining McKendree, Duff served as provost at Goucher College and Rhodes College, and he has taught at Johns Hopkins University, Kenyon College, Vanderbilt University, St. John’s College of Oxford University and Exeter University.

Duff, a native of Texas, has written six novels, including *Indian Giver, That’s All Right, Mama: The Unauthorized Life of Elvis’ Twin, Memphis Ribbs and Coasters*. He has published two collections of poetry, *A Ceremony of Light and Calling Collect*.

Dr. Christine Bahr, interim vice president for academic affairs at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., will succeed Duff as McKendree provost and dean.

**Appointments**

Raymond Hudson to Decatur: Grace, Associate, Sangamon River District, effective Jan. 1.

Lee Savage to Henderson and North Henderson, Spoon River District, effective Jan. 1.

Change of status

Lawrence D. Bryan to honorable location, effective July 1, 2007.

Diane Menke Pence, probationary deacon, transfer to South Indiana Conference effective Sept. 1.

**Deaths**

Rev. Eva Morris, a retired pastor, passed away Dec. 4. She was a pastor in the former Southern Illinois Conference, retiring from Zeigler in 1992. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to a brother, Charles A. Westman, 4 Bishop Court, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864.

Janet Deal, wife of retired pastor David Deal died Dec. 10. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. David Deal, 302 Holly St., Marshall, IL 62441.

**General Board of Church and Society names Rhodes Director of Communications**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Wayne Rhodes of Glen Allen, Va., has been named Communications Director for the General Board of Church and Society, the public witness and advocacy arm of The United Methodist Church.

The announcement was made by Jim Winkler, chief executive of the agency that has offices on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York City.

Among his duties as Director of Communications, Rhodes will edit the agency’s weekly electronic newsletter “Faith in Action,” develop program materials for its ministry areas and serve as a media relations contact.

A former vice president and group publisher of ABC-Cap Cities Midwest Diversified Publishing Division, Rhodes has worked as a newspaper reporter, magazine writer, editor and publisher. As a free-lance writer and editor, he has produced newsletters and served as a Webmaster for several clients, including the Northern Illinois Annual (regional) Conference of The United Methodist Church. He recently served as interim Director of Communications for Northern Illinois when his wife, Linda, left that position to become Director of Communications for the Virginia Conference of the denomination.

For the past seven years, Rhodes served as North Central Jurisdiction Field Representative of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. In that role, he interpreted and promoted mission activities of the denomination for 12 annual conferences. He visited the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference sessions on numerous occasions to represent both the Board of Global Ministries and the Advance.

A native of Oklahoma, Rhodes holds a B.A. from the University of Oklahoma in journalism and an M.S. from Boston University, also in journalism. A veteran, Rhodes served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

**United Methodist interfaith commission dismisses its chief executive**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (UMNS) — The Rev. Larry Pickens has been dismissed as the chief executive of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.

The action by commission members came Dec. 5, upon recommendation of the personnel committee, after several hours of discussion in executive session during the body’s Dec. 4-6 meeting.

Retired Bishop Albert F. “Fritz” Mutti, who served as the commission’s president from 2000-2004, was elected as its interim leader.

The Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns became the second general church agency to dismiss its chief executive in the past two months. Randy Day, chief executive of the General Board of Global Ministries, was dismissed in October with retired Bishop Felton May being selected as its interim general secretary.

Pickens, 49, who was a commission member from 1988 to 1992, became its chief executive on July 1, 2004. He succeeded the Rev. Bruce Robbins, who left at the end of 2003 after 17 years of service, including 13 years as its top executive.

“The United Methodist General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, meeting in Birmingham, Ala. expressed its deep gratitude for the service Dr. Larry Pickens has given to the commission, The United Methodist Church and the ecumenical and interfaith community,” commission members said in a written statement.

Beyond its statement, the commission declined to elaborate on the reasons behind the decision not to re-elect Pickens, who was the first African-American in that position.

“The board of directors of the commission spent three and a half hours in intensive conversation regarding the future leadership needs of the commission,” the statement said. “Conversation was frank, passionate and included significant differences of viewpoint.”

Bishop Ann Sherer, the commission’s current president, said directors “talked at length about what we needed in order to lead the commission” and “finally determined we needed to thank Dr. Pickens and seek new leadership.”

A search committee for a permanent chief executive was named the next day, and Mutti was expected to arrive in Birmingham to meet with staff. The commission is based in New York.

A clergy member of the denomination’s Northern Illinois Conference, he has a bachelor’s degree from North Park University in Chicago; two master’s degrees from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill.; and a doctorate of ministry from Chicago Theological Seminary. Pickens also earned a law degree from DePaul University in Chicago in 1997 and is a past member of the Judicial Council, the denomination’s Supreme Court.

Pickens led a nine-member commission delegation to Cuba in October 2006 to meet with Cuban Methodists and provide a witness to the importance of relationships - both Methodist and ecumenical - in the life of the Cuban church and its people.

He also has been active in the commission’s participation in a study committee established by the 2004 United Methodist General Conference to consider the denomination’s historic, current and future relations with Methodist churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. That group conducted a consultation in Panama in March and is bringing legislation to the 2008 General Conference.

He remains supportive of the commission’s work and expects to continue as an elected member of the Central Committee and Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches. “I see that as an opportunity for me to remain connected to the work of the ecumenical movement,” he said.
Ministries of deliverance transform lives

By Paul Black

PEORIA – Pam Cochran is a firm believer of the power of prayer and the power of touch.

As a member of Peoria First, Cochran is part of two high touch ministries that is literally providing deliverance for persons struggling with addictions. Providing for a physical need has opened doors to discuss the void left by a spiritual need.

“When you can offer hope to someone else, change is always possible,” Cochran said. “I have seen God’s sword deliver people from heroin and cocaine addictions. When we build sacred relationships through the connection of touch, doors open and new possibilities through Christ exist.”

Cochran is active in Peoria First’s Fishes and Loaves ministry and Neutral Ground, an outreach program for HIV/AIDS patients that is a partnership with the University of Illinois School of Medicine.

Over the past two years, Neutral Ground is a support ministry for those in the Peoria area who live with HIV or with AIDS. A ministry of love, care, prayer, and compassion, First UMC provides a place where clients of the Clinic can come for household and personal items, for spiritual support, and for friendship and care.

Every Tuesday afternoon, the pantry of cleaning supplies and personal items is open for patients to receive these items not normally provided for by public aid.

“Wherever I am, I want people to take pause of who I am,” Cochran said. “I am not just a nice person. But out of gratitude for what God has done for me, I serve them.”

Cochran said she sees herself as a fellow pilgrim on a journey with these patients. “I go on these journeys with my friends,” she said. “This ministry is not one that is sterile or detached. I get calls at home all the time. God has stretched me and humbled me in this ministry” as she tells of the story of a child who was stuck with a dirty hypodermic needle in the park or a woman whose unfaithful spouse infected her with HIV/AIDS.

Neutral Ground serves 175 families in the greater Peoria area. According to county statistics, there are 450 identified cases in the greater Peoria area.

The Fishes and Loaves ministry is having a similar impact on lives. For the past 11 years, Peoria First UMC has provided a hot meal for more than 250 marginalized persons in Peoria every Saturday. The program began when the only feeding ministry in Peoria on Saturdays was destroyed by a fire.

Since that time, more than 42 churches in the Peoria tri-county area join together with Bradley University and several local high schools to provide volunteers, food, love and care for some of Peoria’s poorest citizens.

“Many of the Neutral Ground clients are also guests of Loaves and Fishes,” Cochran said. “Many don’t see the sacredness in their lives and so we build a bridge. I am known as the Scripture and Prayer Lady and it is my task to read and engage them in God’s word. Some have a background of scripture, but because of life’s choices, have strayed from it. But when you have someone say, ‘be my guest,’ they find God’s invitation is still there and still possible for them.”

Members of Peoria First UMC man the service lines for Loaves and Fish ministry, a community feeding ministry that provides a hot meal for 250 persons every Saturday.
McDowell UMC celebrates 125 years

Members of McDowell UMC recently celebrated 125 years of ministry by celebrating the past and building the future.

The church’s continuing history was illustrated symbolically and practically as the congregation completed a handicapped-accessible addition that cost 50 times more than the $3,300 needed in 1882 to complete the church building.

A special service of worship, followed by a luncheon and time for reminiscing were a part of the day’s festivities. “This congregation has showered me with love, care and encouragement,” said the Rev. Donna Baker, who has been pastor of the church since 1998. “This is a most loving congregation. Visitors never leave here without having been warmly received. And because of this, many return and many have become members here. New members are quickly and easily embraced into the fellowship of this church.

Nellie Mae Smith and Marge Popp began their faith journeys as children attending the McDowell church. Smith, in her early 80’s, and Popp, 90, were brought to the church by their parents and are among those whose families have attended the little country over several generations.

Smith, whose grandmother attended the church, has witnessed the changes that most country churches have seen over the decades. “When we were kids, we went to church every Sunday. We didn’t say, ‘do we have to go to church?’” she said.

When she was a child, students from all the nearby country schools would hold a Christmas program at the church. “You’d have to get there early, or you wouldn’t get in the church. It’d be full,” Smith said. “It’s getting back to that now. We have big crowds, but not like we did when I was a kid.”

The 1882 building was added onto in 1963, with two Sunday School rooms upstairs and the kitchen, in the basement, made larger. That cost $6,000. The church’s well-known pancake and sausage breakfast held the second Thursday in January will observe its 60th anniversary in 2008.

The new addition will have a lift for the handicapped, and the two spacious restrooms on the main level are also handicapped-accessible.

Baker, in her sermon noted, “The forefathers of this church were faithful to the call of God. As I have read the history of this church, I found stories of courage, vision and faith. Those stories have a lot that we can learn from. Those stories are our heritage – our faith stories.

...This country church, located at a county crossroad, in what some would say is the “middle of nowhere,” is still living out the mission and vision of our founding fathers. … McDowell has been faithful to the call of God to follow our Lord through the thick and thin of our days and years, and other have come along to share that journey with us. Christ brings meaning and purpose to our present, and guides us into a future alive with promise as the people of God in this place.”

Harvest UMC of Mason, located in the Embarra River District, recently broke ground for a new church building. Harvest was formed in July 2006 with the merger of the Mason, Edgewood and West Point UMCS. When completed, the new church will have more than 11,000 square feet of space and while include a sanctuary, fellowship hall, classrooms and nursery.

Those participating in the groundbreaking ceremony include from left to right: Janet Hamilton, First Mid-Illinois Bank and Trust in Altamont; Rev. Randy Reese, Embarra River District Superintendent; Tammy Kearney, building committee member; Shawn Kearney, chair of the building committee; Pat Laack, building committee member; Rev. Dan Laack, pastor; Ed York, building committee member; Mary York, trustee; Karlie Richardson, building committee member; Leonard Franklin, building committee member; Joe Henderson, building committee member; and Brant Fuller, Fuller Construction Co. of Louisville.

The new church site will be located midway between Mason and Edgewood on Illinois Route 37.

Grace Urban Ministries is a Conference Advance Special that ministers to the people on Springfield’s east side. Grace Urban Ministries youth group, pictured above meets on Mondays and Fridays at Grace UMC where Sylvester Weatherall is the pastor. Many adults volunteer on Mondays with tutoring sessions. On Fridays, the group shares a meal together; might see a movie or have a session on socializing. Mission donations can be made through the conference office by designating your gifts for Advance Special 6240.

Fairview Heights Christ in new sanctuary

Fairview Heights Christ UMC opened its new 1,100-seat sanctuary on Sunday, Dec. 2 to a weekend crowd of 1,845.

A Saturday night chapel, a service in Spanish and an evening performance of Handel’s Messiah were included in weekend worship. The two Sunday morning services totaled almost 1,200 in attendance.

The theme of the day was, “We are not a people moving into a new church. We are the church moving into a new building.”

The Rev. Shane Bishop, senior pastor commented, “We were delighted by the number of people in attendance but most of the people came to celebrate the presence of God in this new worship space. It is hard to believe that in 1997 this congregation averaged just over 200 in weekend worship. We are truly experiencing sustained revival here. It is a joy to be a part of what God is doing here.”

Christ UMC will hold a grand opening on Jan. 20 and celebrate worship with Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher and Rev. Dr. Beverly Wilkes Null, Mississippi River District Superintendent, on Jan. 27.
UMC Year in Review
Continued from page 1

tarian and social needs of the Iraqi people. They urged increased support for veterans of the Iraq war and all wars.

The resolution is the council’s latest action questioning the Iraq war. In 2005, the bishops urged U.S. President George W. Bush, who is United Methodist, to create a timeline to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

Among the United Methodists joining an Oct. 8 interfaith fast for peace and an end to the war in Iraq was Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, who noted earlier that his agency “has been the most resolute and consistent voice of opposition to the war” within the denomination.

■ Virginia Tech, Jena Six

The Wesley Foundation of Virginia Tech University became a safe haven for students immediately after a deadly shooting spree there on April 16 - which left 33 dead and 15 wounded - and a spiritual hub for grief and prayer as the campus community began to come to grips with the tragedy.

In response to the shooting, the Board of Church and Society also renewed the denomination’s call for governments around the world to ban ownership by the general public of handguns, assault weapons, automatic weapon conversion kits and weapons that cannot be detected by traditional metal-detection devices.

Both Church and Society and the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries called for justice in the case of the “Jena Six,” a group of six black students facing a timeline to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

■ Immigration concerns

In a June 19 letter to the U.S. Senate, seven United Methodist agencies and organizations opposed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 and called for “genuine reform” that would allow immigrant families to “achieve their American dreams.”

The groups said Senate Bill 1348 “fails to achieve” any of the goals advocated by the church and other proponents of genuine comprehensive immigration reform. These goals include reunification of families, a fair earned pathway to citizenship and humanitarian border policies that maintain the civil liberties of all people.

The bill failed to pass.

Elvira Arellano, an illegal immigrant and member of Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago, was arrested in California and deported to Mexico on Aug. 19 - four days after she left the Chicago church where she had received sanctuary for a year with her 8-year-old son, Saul, a U.S. citizen.

Arellano announced during an Aug. 15 news conference and immigration rally at Adalberto that, after several weeks of fasting and praying, she had decided to leave the church and speak out for immigration reform. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, episopal leader of the United Methodist Northern Illinois Annual (regional) Conference, said the conference has supported Arellano and the church for the past year.

■ Providing disaster relief

Throughout 2007, the United Methodist Committee on Relief continued to fund long-term recovery projects related to 2005’s Hurricane Katrina and the South Asian tsunami which occurred at the end of 2004.

At a special Katrina summit in September, United Methodist volunteers from across the United States were welcomed, thanked and challenged to keep coming to the Gulf Coast. More than 63,000 United Methodist volunteers from 42 states, two foreign countries and 60 annual (regional) conferences have come to the aid of the Gulf Coast since Hurricane Katrina stormed ashore on Aug. 29, 2005. United Methodist bishops also distributed $2 million in February to assist Gulf Coast churches and pastors affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

An additional $4.7 million in aid to economically vulnerable Sri Lankans still finding their footing after the tsunami was approved in April by UMCOR directors. Major tsunami recovery work also continued in Indonesia.

The agency was called to assist in new, smaller emergencies throughout the year, working in tandem with annual conferences.

They responded to tornados that struck central Florida and rural Arkansas in February, Alabama in March and Kansas in May. After a powerful tornado roared through Enterprise, Ala., on March 1, killing nine people, including eight high school students, Enterprise First United Methodist Church welcomed hundreds of youth for a special worship service to remember their dead and injured classmates and begin the emotional process of healing.

Another church near the high school offered hot meals to storm victims, relief workers and school employees.

Churches also responded to flooding that plagued parts of the United States from mid-June through August.

United Methodist response to the October wildfires in southern California is occurring primarily in the San Diego area, with a focus on secondary victims of the fires.

International relief efforts extended beyond the tsunami-related programs. As part of a continuing collaboration, UMCOR and Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio, began a four-year relief project to reestablish water supplies and improve sanitation in refugee camps in Darfur, Sudan. Since 2005, Ginghamsburg Church has raised more than $1.8 million for its work with UMCOR in Sudan.

UMCOR’s partnership agreement with Muslim Aid, the London-based global relief and development agency, allows the two agencies to work together on peace building and poverty reducing programs around the world. The partnership was signed June 26 at the House of Commons.

■ U.S. membership down, giving up

In an attempt to focus the mission and ministry of the church at the dawn of the 21st century, the denomination has selected four areas of focus - leadership development, congregational growth, global health and ministry with the poor. The areas of focus have been affirmed by church leadership at all levels, including the Council of Bishops, the Connectional Table, agency boards and many annual (regional) conferences.

This is Our Story, a 2007 report from the denomination’s Council on Finance and Administration, showed the church’s membership is growing throughout the world but shrinking in the United States. And a shrinking U.S. church base means a smaller impact on society, according to a denominational task force on funding patterns within the church.

Statistics for 2005, the latest available, show worldwide professing and baptized membership at 13.75 million in more than 50 countries, compared with 11.35 million in 1995. U.S. professing membership is
**Congregational Development**

**Five practices...with a suggestion for two more**

By Mike Crawford  
Coordinator of Congregational Development

In his recently released book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, Bishop Robert Schnase challenges churches to examine their life and ministry and to develop practices that will lead to greater fruitfulness. The book is written by one who has years of practical experience. Prior to being elected to the episcopacy, his most recent appointment had been as pastor of First UMC in McAllen, Texas.


Like Natural Church Development, the emphasis is on the adjective. In other words, it is not enough to have Hospitality. It should seek to be “radical.”

The *Five Practices* are basic to the life of a fruitful congregation. If any one practice is missing, the church will not be as effective as it can be.

Schnase emphasizes the biblical nature of each practice and shows how each one has been experienced in the Wesleyan movement. There are also practical stories of how each practices is lived out in congregations in the 21st century.

Bishop Schnase emphasizes the practices will be experienced differently in various churches. For example, Passionate Worship will not look the same in one congregation as in another.

This reader believes there are two aspects of fruitful church life that Bishop Schnase does not address as fully as could be. One is aspect of developing leaders. It is implied and somewhat talked about throughout the chapters, but if a congregation is going to be fruitful it must be a focus. It is vital that leaders continue to grow in faith and that new leaders are identified and mentored.

The other aspect that is not addressed in the book is multiplication. How will this church multiply its fruitful ministry in the life of other congregations? Healthy organisms multiply and the same is true of vital, fruitful congregations. Churches that desire to bear fruit that will last will seek to extend their ministry in establishing new congregations and in helping other congregations to become more fruitful.

By focusing on the basic practices of congregational life in Bishop Schnase’s book, a church can become more fruitful, reaching more people for Jesus Christ and transforming the community and world.

(Bishop Schnase’s book is on the conference’s recommended reading list which can be found at IGRC Virtual Cokesbury bookstore. Click on the bookstore icon in the lower right-hand corner of the IGRC home page at www.igrco.org. Then follow the hyperlink located in the center column of the storefront page)

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**Demographic information available**

Would you like to better understand your community? The Illinois Great Rivers Conference Office of Congregational Development is making a new source of demographics information available to every IGRC congregation. To activate your church account, go to: www.missioninsite.com/client-login.shtml.

On the left vertical bar under client login is a section that explains how Church Users can register. Click where it says “Click here to Register with MissionInsite”.

The IGRC account number is VIGKO.

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**UMC Year in Review**

Continued from page 6

7,995,429, compared with 8,075,010 the previous year, a decline of nearly 1 percent. Membership has decreased by more than 1.9 million members, or 19 percent, since 1974.

Despite the decrease, giving is up. The church gave almost $5.9 billion during 2005 - representing an increase in giving for the 15th straight year when adjusted for inflation - and data indicates the average income of a United Methodist is growing faster than in the general population.

To stimulate membership growth, the United Methodist Board of Discipleship has organized a strategy team on new congregational development. The goal of “Path One” is to start 650 new congregations by 2012. Other goals include doubling the number of young people serving as pastors and church leaders, and expanding ministries with the poor, according to denominational leaders during an April 17 “town hall” teleconference.

| Reflecting church’s diversity |

Three March gatherings reflected on the diversity found within The United Methodist Church. In the first meeting of its kind, leaders of the Korean-American United Methodist community gathered in Englewood, N.J., to share celebrations and challenges and develop a vision to embolden their ministry in the United States. There are about 60,000 Korean-American United Methodists, with 310 churches in 40 states.

A conference on women in Methodism, Struggle, Faith and Vision: Celebrating Women in the United Methodist Tradition, was held at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn., where a new research library was dedicated to the study of organized lay women in mission in the Methodist tradition.

United Methodism’s African-American caucus, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, celebrated four decades of advocacy for racial justice and inclusion by challenging itself to develop ministries that make a difference in people’s lives. More than 500 people attending the event heard speakers recount the genesis and growth of the nearly 5,000-member caucus and list its challenges and possibilities for the future.

| Issues of sexuality |

A gay man who had been denied membership in 2005 at South Hill (Va.) United Methodist Church was accepted in March by the new pastor, the Rev. Barry Burkholder, through transfer of membership from a Baptist church.

The denial of membership by the previous pastor prompted controversy across the denomination on the issues of homosexuality and pastoral authority and led to a series of rulings on the case by the denomination’s highest court.

In Seattle, the Rev. Kathleen Weber disclosed her homosexuality during a Sept. 30 worship service at Blaine Memorial United Methodist Church, where she serves as associate pastor. A commissioned candidate for ministry, she is on track to be ordained next year.

The United Methodist Church, while affirming that both homosexuals and heterossexuals are people of “sacred worth,” does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers the practice “incompatible with Christian teaching,” according to the Book of Discipline, the denomination’s book of law. Church law specifically prohibits the appointment of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” as clergy.

In October, the United Methodist Judicial Council upheld a bishop’s decision that a pastor who changed gender from female to male remains eligible to serve the church.

The council stated that it was not ruling on whether changing gender is a chargeable offense or violates minimum standards set by the church’s legislative body, the General Conference. Rather, the court said “a clergyperson’s standing cannot be terminated without administrative or juridical action having occurred and all fair process being accorded.”

See UMC Year in Review on page 13 . . .
**Camping and Youth Ministries**

**Confirmation camps slated**

Four dates have been announced for the 2008 Confirmation Camps.

The retreats will be held on various weekends from January through March at three different conference campsites.

Dates and speakers for the retreats are as follows:

- **Feb. 9-11**: at East Bay Camp, Hudson. Keith Michaels speaker.
- **Feb. 23-25**: at East Bay Camp, Hudson. Keith Michaels speaker.
- **March 2-4**: at Epworth Camp, Louisville. Randy Azbell speaker.

Registration for the two-night event is $78 per person. The confirmation retreats follow the Claim the Name curriculum and are designed to support confirmation classes in the local church. They are not meant to take the place of instruction within the local church.

Registration materials are available for download from the youth website at: [http://youth.igrcamp.org](http://youth.igrcamp.org) or by calling the Office of Camping and Retreat Ministries at 217-529-3007.

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**Shane Claiborne featured at Senior High YAR**

A founding partner of The Simple Way Community; Board member of the Christian Community Development Association; Author of The Irresistible Revolution (Feb 2006/Zondervan)

During Senior High Youth Annual Retreat, Shane will share a message at two worship services and will present on “The Simple Way” Saturday afternoon. The presentation Saturday afternoon is also open to college age students for a small cost. Call the Camping and Retreat Ministries Office for more information at 217-529-3007.

With tears and laughter, Shane unveils the tragic messes we’ve made of our world and the tangible hope that another world is possible. Shane graduated from Eastern University and did graduate work at Princeton Seminary. His ministry experience is varied, from a 10-week stint working alongside Mother Teresa in Calcutta, to a year spent serving a wealthy mega-congregation at Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago.

During the recent war in Iraq, Shane spent three weeks in Baghdad with the Iraq Peace Team (a project of Voices in the Wilderness and Christian Peacemaker Teams). Shane was witness to the military bombardment of Baghdad as well as the militarized areas between Baghdad and Amman. As a member of IPT, Shane took daily trips to sites where there had been bombings, visited hospitals and families, and attended worship services during the war.

Shane is a founding partner of The Simple Way, a faith community in inner city Philadelphia that has helped to birth and connect radical faith communities around the world, many of whom have become known as a “new monasticism,” which produced the book Schools for Conversion. These communities seek to follow Jesus, to rediscover the spirit of the early Church, and to incarnate the “Kingdom of God” — a way of life standing in stark contrast to the world of militarism and materialism. At the Simple Way, their little revolution is lived out locally, as days are spent feeding hungry folks, doing collaborative arts with children, running a community store, hanging out with neighbors, and reclaiming trash strewn lots by planting gardens. Shane and The Simple Way do much work to expose the fundamental structures that create poverty and to imagine alternatives to them.

Shane serves on the Board of Directors for The Christian Community Development Association, one of the largest national associations of faith-based organizations whose pillars are Redistribution, Relocation, and Reconciliation. Shane writes and travels extensively speaking about peacemaking, social justice, and Jesus. He is featured in the DVD series Another World Is Possible and is the author of the book The Irresistible Revolution.
Promotional DVDs and the 2008 Camping Brochures are now available from the IGRC Camping Office. Call 217-525-3007 or check the web site: www.igrCAMP.org. Brochures are in the mail to IGRC congregations and campers who attended a 2007 camp.

Junior High YAR 2008

Info just in for Junior High YAR 2008: The event theme is Renew and it will be held at Lake Williamson in Carlinville Oct. 17-19. Christopher Ames will be our guest speaker and will provide a concert at the event. More details will follow.

United Methodist camps transform lives

By Bishop Scott Jones
Kansas Area

There are several good reasons Moses went up to Mt. Sinai to meet with God. First, God told him to, and obedience to the Lord is always a good idea.

Second, this was seen by the Israelite people as a holy place, one where an encounter with God could be expected to occur.

But there is another reason as well. Leaving ordinary life behind and venturing to a new place opens up our awareness that God might speak and renders us more ready to listen to whatever God might be saying.

Perhaps that is why church camp is transformative. You get children, youth and adults away from their normal routines, put them out in nature to see God’s beautiful creation, build community with new friends and old friends, and give God more time than God normally gets in our daily routines. In such a situation, it’s not surprising that encounters with God occur regularly.

Camp is really for everyone. We focus on camp for children and youth because they are at their most formative stages in life. But adults need retreats and new friends and extra-ordinary time just like children do.

At church camp, young people grow in their faith. Some make first-time commitments to Christ. Others hear God’s call for them to be ordained ministers or enter some form of service to the world. Camp opens their eyes to a God who is bigger than what they have known before.

Camp changes lives.

For the past 30 years, United Methodism has been drifting. Part of that is not sufficiently emphasizing children, youth and young-adult ministries.

At our camps, this has meant long-term neglect of our facilities.

Our children are not as tough as we were when we were their age. For that matter, we aren’t as touch as we were 30 years ago. Expectations have changed, and we must prepare ourselves for excellent camping ministry in the 21st century.

Let’s support our United Methodist camps. Let’s change some lives.

(Reprinted with permission from the November issue of the Kansas West Connection, the newspaper of the Kansas West Conference).

Introducing...Kenny Carter

Kenny Carter was the worship leader, with Theta Band, at the 2007 Senior High YAR. Kenny returns this year with a supporting cast of accomplished musicians to lead worship at Lake Williamson. While he serves those at YAR with his musical talents, which have gained him a large amount of praise, Kenny has a strong belief system that have guided his development as an accomplished musician.

Kenny Carter currently serves as the Assistant Program Director of Contemporary Music at Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, Kansas. He coordinates and directs six contemporary youth bands consisting of 6th-12th graders. Carter grew up in the inner-city and found himself challenged as a youth. As a child Kenny dreamed of being a “rockstar for God”, using his talents to reach people for, and with, God. Kenny’s favorite scripture also points to the call on his life:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn…” (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Kenny heads a number of accomplished bands in Kansas City, bridging the gap between Christian and secular music. On the MySpace page for one of the bands, “TrumpDawg,” Kenny states that “Formed in late 2000, this band was sent on a cosmic, musical mission from God. This mission, simply put, is to ‘keep it real’ and make music that conveys ‘all that is funky, all that is heavy and all that is beautiful.’”

We’re excited to have Kenny and his band at Sr. High YAR 2008 for a weekend of engaging music, worship, discussion, and community. If you haven’t registered yet, please visit www.youth.igrcamp.org for downloadable posters, flyers, videos, and registration information. For more information on Kenny, visit both of the following websites: Church of the Resurrection: www.cor.org/worship-sermons/contemporary-music/staff/ and Rez Life (COR Youth Ministry): www.rezlifekc.org
Making disciples: a conversation

By Michael B. Henderson

“It sits down boy! I’ve got something to ask you,” Mary Ella said as I walked into the coffee shop.

“Mary Ella, it’s good to see you. What’s on your mind?” I asked.

“Discipleship,” she said.

“I’m all for it, as long as it doesn’t impact my life in any substantial way,” I said.

“Yup, you and about 8 million other church members,” she said.

The waitress came over and asked if we’d like coffee.

“Do you have Turkish coffee? If not, I’ll take Greek coffee,” Mary Ella said.

“They’re the same thing,” I said.

“I was just testing you, boy,” she said to me, then turned back to the waitress.

“It’s the only kind we serve,” the waitress said.

“Good. Bring us two cups, lots of cream and sugar, it’s real strong. Now where was I?” she asked.

“Discipleship,” I said.

“Right. The purpose of the church is to make disciples, right?”

“Yup,” I said. “Says so in The Book of Discipline, in our conference publications, in just about every church mission statement. Even says something about it in the Bible, I believe.”

“Okay. So what is a disciple of Jesus?” I was wondering where she was going with this line of questioning. Mary Ella was a longtime Christian, a seminary graduate, and now a retired second-career pastor. Surely, I thought, she would know what a disciple is.

“A disciple is someone who learns from Christ, who follows him and who is sent out in his name to the world.”

“Okay, I’ll go along with you so far,” she said.

“But how do you make disciples?”

“What do you mean?”

“We sing the song, Go Make of All Disciples. So how do you do it?” she asked, getting a bit irritated.

“I guess just like the song says … baptizing in the name … teaching … helping people find their area of service. Maybe Jesus gave us a hint when he commissioned us to make disciples by baptizing, teaching and obeying him.”

“So that’s what we’re supposed to be doing?” she asked, still pushing on.

“Yup,” I said.

“They aren’t we doing it?” she asked.

“What makes you think we aren’t?” I asked.

“Well, the fact that The United Methodist Church in America decreases in membership every year,” she said. “Every four years we decrease enough to have the equivalent of the South Carolina Annual Conference. If all our losses were concentrated in one place, we could close every Methodist church in our state.”

“I’m glad that doesn’t happen here,” I said.

Restructuring the church

By Teresa Gilbert

Certified Coach/Consultant

Pathways to Excellence, LLC

Co-Leader of New Streams Team

In Deepening Your Effectiveness, Dan Glover and Claudia Lavy capture the discipleship challenge and present a framework for discipleship that can speak to every person in the life of your congregation. Designed to help you understand what an intentional discipleship process is, the authors also help you to find yourself in the discipleship stages, help you understand how to take the next step personally, and give you valuable information on how to structure discipleship in your church so every person, at every stage, is being offered opportunities to grow into the next stage of discipleship.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One describes, in a metaphor using the ocean, the various stages of discipleship. Each one of us is currently at one of these stages. Biblical examples are given of how each stage is revealed through the lives of New Testament characters, how Jesus addressed his disciples at each stage, and how they reproduced this disciple making in their relationships with others after Jesus’ ascension. For each stage, we learn there are some “primaries” as people make their journey toward becoming a fully committed follower of Christ. At each stage there is a Primary person. The person on the spiritual journey, the traveler who is moving toward deeper water.

Primary question: The conscious or subconscious question that resonates in the heart and mind of the traveler; however, the question changes from stage to stage. These are the questions the ministries of the church must recognize and seek to answer, if we are to become effective disciple makers.

Primary relationship: The person who has the most influence when it comes to helping the traveler move forward into the next stage. It is the responsibility of the church to indentify and capitalize on these relationships by intentionally providing opportunities for them to develop.

Primary barrier: Woven into the fabric of human nature are natural tendencies that guard us from the unknown. These tendencies, which can keep us from harm’s way, can also act as barriers to our forward movement into God’s unknown future for us. The purpose of the ministries of the church is to help the traveler overcome and move through these barriers.

Primary ministry: There is a primary ministry that can have a significant, positive impact on the traveler at each stage of development. The job of the church is to place emphasis on the creation and ongoing maintenance of these ministries in order to have maximum impact. The second half of the book describes the Discipleship Pathway, which they divide into four parts: Invitational, Instructional, Relational and Servant. On the pathway in each of the parts, the kinds of ministries which are appropriate to move an individual forward on his or her discipleship journey are given. For example, for those at the invitational stage, the most important things are dynamic, come and see worship and authentic, high impact hospitality. The reader is then given ideas of what this looks like in real life. It is not a book of rhetoric – it is filled with information, tools and resources that can readily be applied to a church of any size that is serious about intentional discipleship.

One of my favorite paragraphs in the book describes the importance of every person who serves in the church in any capacity being able to articulate how that particular service is helping to make disciples for Jesus Christ. The paragraph reads:

When a servant who bakes cookies for Sunday morning refreshments understands the process of spiritual development, that servant becomes more committed to the overall mission of the church: Homemade cookies and a cup of coffee help a curious visitor feel welcome and invited. When they feel welcome and invited, they begin to overcome their heightened sensitivity.

When their sensitivities decrease, they will have a more positive experience and want to return. When they return, they will have the opportunity to hear the gospel and accept Christ.

Did the cookie baker lead that person into a personal relationship with Christ? Indirectly, by providing a means to overcome the barrier that had the potential to stop that person dead in his or her tracks.

The church is called to develop a discipleship pathway that moves individuals from unchurched to fully committed follower. It is called to build a bridge from children’s ministry to student ministry and create a discipleship pathway that moves teens and young adults from unchurched to fully committed follower. Every ministry should eventually demonstrate elements of come and see and authentic high impact hospitality if our hearts’ desire is to make disciples of all nations.

I think Deepening Your Effectiveness could be an excellent resource for leadership to read and discuss together prior to working through the New Streams disciple formation workbook. It could set a solid foundation for a unified understanding of the overall definition and vision of an intentional discipleship formation process in your local congregation.
Year-end giving: a strategy that helps the church as well as the donor

By Ted Frost
IGRC Foundation
Executive Director

The majority of giving to nonprofits traditionally takes place during the months of November and December of each year. Our mailing boxes are full of requests from Universities to local nonprofits wanting our assistance.

Many times in these mailings we will receive a brochure talking about ways to make significant gifts at year-end. Gifts of stocks, bonds, real-estate and even certificates of deposits are ways people can make these year-end gifts.

There can be advantages to making gift from other assets beside cash. Although, cash is traditionally how most people make year-end gifts. Some people may be able to give stock in order to make a larger gift. You may not have the cash to make are large gift, but you do have stock that has increased in value over the years. If you sell the stock to make a gift, you may have to pay capital gains tax.

Another idea would be to give the stock to your local church or Conference agency. Giving the stock to the local church or Conference agency would not require you to pay capital gains tax. Since nonprofits do not pay taxes the local church or Conference agency can sell the stock and receive a large gift.

Let’s imagine you have stock that has fallen in value. Then you might want to sell it yourself, possibly take a tax deduction for the loss, and give the gift in cash to the local church or Conference agency.

Seniors who are 70 1/2 years or older have an opportunity to give a gift out of their IRA’s. This opportunity only exists until December 31, 2007. The can make a gift of up to $100,000 without having to count the disbursement as income. This gift must come directly from the IRA trustee to the local church or Conference agency.

There may be a need for some people to increase their income rather than be giving a gift. You might want to consider a deferred gift that will allow you to take a tax deduction this year. Converting an asset (certificate of deposit) to a life income gift (charitable gift annuity) maybe helpful to some people.

Converting these assets to life income gifts can increase your income today, may produce a tax deduction, and ultimately become a future gift to your local church or Conference agency. The increase in income is usually produced because these gifts are based on actuarial tables (life expectancy) rather than just on current market conditions.

As you think about your possibilities of making a year-end gift, you will want to discuss this with your appropriate tax consultant or CPA. They are the best people to help you see how this opportunity can be helpful to you and your local church or Conference agency.

Guidance for reporting expenses of after-school programs, daycare centers and other ancillary program expenses

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) wishes to offer this guidance for consistent reporting on the Table II year-end statistical report for expenses related to Ancillary Programs which are offered by or located at a United Methodist Church:

- If the program is a separate corporation, not controlled by the church, merely renting space from the church, then no expense reporting is required on the Table II report.
- If the program is not a separate corporation, it is controlled by the church (i.e. a majority of church members are on the Board of Directors), then the church’s contribution to the program should be reported on the Table II report under line 70, “Program Expenses.”

- The church’s contribution is defined as:
  - Total expenses of the program minus tuition and/or fees required for participation equals church money required to run the program (report this amount). If the program is totally self-supporting, no report on Table II is required.
  - If the program actually provides a service and Police-Community Relations Program

Human Relations Day set for Jan. 20

TORCH ministry reaches out to youth offenders

"Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them."
—Hebrews 13:3a, NRSV

If a teenager gets into trouble with the law, he or she may think it’s the end of the world. But an Oklahoma ministry called TORCH, supported in part by United Methodist gifts on Human Relations Day, is trying to change that perception.

Human Relations Day is celebrated the Sunday before the national birthday observance of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. It’s an opportunity to “make it a day for all God’s children.” Our special offerings strengthen outreach to communities in the United States and Puerto Rico, encouraging social justice and work with at-risk youth.

Modelled after The Upper Room’s Walk to Emmaus, TORCH pairs 25 teenage males from several correctional facilities with adult mentors. But before that happens, the youth join 30 to 40 adult volunteers for a weekend event. Assigned to “table families,” the teens hear personal testimonies by the adults—and at a “forgiveness service” Saturday night—are encouraged to forgive persons who have hurt them.

“We plant seeds...” explains volunteer Maurine Wiseman, who with her husband Bob has been involved in the ministry for several years. Even though “we may not see the harvest,” she admits, staff members at the facilities notice a positive difference in the youth who participate.

“We recently assisted the first boy I mentored,” Ms. Wiseman says. “He had hit on some hard times. We provided him with a place to live for about six months. He finished his GED and worked at two jobs. Now he is in training to drive 18 wheelers.”

Human Relations Day was established by the 1972 General Conference to promote support for the Community Developers, United Methodist Voluntary Service and Police-Community Relations programs. Begun in 1968, the three programs formerly had received support from the churchwide Bishop’s Fund for Reconciliation. In 1989 the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program replaced the Police-Community Relations Program to respond to the growing population of youth offenders and their need for creative redirection.

IRS sets 2008 mileage rate

The IRS announced Nov. 27 that the 2008 Standard Mileage Reimbursement Rate for business miles traveled: 50.5 cents per mile.

The reference to the IRS article is: www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=176030,00.html

This rate is important for pastors and local churches because the Standing Rules of the IGRC require that pastors be reimbursed for miles traveled on church business at the rate set by the IRS. (Standing Rule VI.B.3; page 258 in the 2007 Conference Journal).

Order your 2008 Program Calendar today!

To order please send $6.50 per calendar and a completed order form to The Communications Ministry Team.

Make checks payable to IGRC
Mail to IGRC
Communication Ministry Team
United Methodist Center, PO Box 19207, Springfield, IL 62794-9207
Attention: Michele Willson

Number of copies x $6.50/calendar = $_____enclosed

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City/State/Zip ________________
**Missions and Outreach**

**Kankanee Trinity providing Liberia pastoral salary support**

Kankanee Trinity UMC is providing pastoral salary support for pastors in the Grand Gedeh District, their partner district in Liberia.

Each month, a freewill offering is taken as part of the observance of Holy Communion.

The first offering, received the Sunday before Thanksgiving, totaled nearly $123 – enough to support six pastors for one month in Liberia.

“We praise the Lord for multiplying our giving and pray this will be multiplied many times over as our sister churches in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and Vermilion River District join us in this ministry to show our love and support of our sisters and brothers in Christ ministering for our Lord,” said Trinity pastor Rev. R. David Reynolds.

**Building Hope**

**Glen Carbon New Bethel partners with second Liberian congregation in reconstruction of church**

**GLEN CARBON — New Bethel UMC** is partnering with a second Liberian congregation in reconstruction of a church building. Zorr UMC, located in the St. John’s River District in Liberia, has been selected as New Bethel’s partner.

The decision to build a second church in Liberia was made in spring 2007 when New Bethel UMC undertook their “Continuing Our Journey of Faith” campaign to pay down the debt on their recently expanded facility. New Bethel has sought to “put others first” as they make plans for their own congregation. $12,000 was set aside for a project in Liberia. The congregation previously rebuilt the Phillip D. Innis Memorial United Methodist Church and three members of the church attended its dedication in November 2006.

The choice of Zorr UMC was made at a meeting with Rev. Nelly Wright, superintendent of the St. John’s River District in Liberia. Rev. Wright noted that the church has been praying for help. The congregation was able to build a small round structure to temporarily replace the one destroyed in the nation’s civil war. Their current building is woefully inadequate for their present scope of ministry. The new structure will be much larger and furnished with a pulpit, pews, and church office area. The older structure will be used for children’s ministry.

Zorr United Methodist Church is located in a remote area of Liberia and has a membership of 223 souls. The pastor is Rev. Moses Yolosuah and the lay pastor is Solomon Doedyu. The name “Zorr” means “gift” in the Bassa tribal language.

The congregation was founded by a young pastor who just finished his theological training and elected to go start a new church where there was none instead of going to an established church that would pay a salary. His desire to use his gifts where they were most needed inspired the name of the church.

“The people will be so happy…”, commented Rev. Wright, “There will be dancing and celebration.” She received the $12,000 in funds from the hands of Bob Jones, Ginger Little, Bev Jones, and Pastor Moses Yolosuah (right) stands in front of the current structure that houses the ministry of Zorr UMC. A total of 90 people crowd in this building for worship services. The building will become a children’s ministry center when the new church is built.

Princess Wright, Nelly Wright’s daughter, youth group of the church is putting together a basket of items that will be sold at a rummage sale for funds. The proceeds will go toward the purchase of a truck to transport the blocks for the new building from the factory. The building will be completed by February 2008 when she will complete her term as superintendent and begin work as the youth ministry director for the Liberia Annual Conference.

“Building Hope” was overseen by Belle Wright who received the $12,000 in funds from the hands of Bob Jones, Ginger Little, and Bev Jones.

“Building Hope” was overseen by Belle Wright who received the $12,000 in funds from the hands of Bob Jones, Ginger Little, and Bev Jones.

“Our congregation has been so blessed through our partnership with our brothers and sisters in Liberia,” said the Rev. Chris Ritter, directing pastor of New Bethel. “It seems like every time we give there, we are blessed a hundred times over in our own local ministries.”

Breann Towner, all members of New Bethel UMC. She took the monies back to Liberia where she will hire a truck and fill it with everything needed for the construction of the church. The blocks for the new building will be molded from sand the people will dig from nearby riverbeds.

Rev. Wright anticipates that construction will be completed by February 2008 when she will complete her term as superintendent and begin work as the youth ministry director for the Liberia Annual Conference.

Rev. Wright also noted that there has been a marked surge in the attendance of the P.D. Innis UMC since its reconstruction. Thirty-five new members have joined the church recently. The people gather each Wednesday and Friday to pray for the people of New Bethel UMC and their friends in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

“Our congregation has been so blessed through our partnership with our brothers and sisters in Liberia,” said the Rev. Chris Ritter, directing pastor of New Bethel. “It seems like every time we give there, we are blessed a hundred times over in our own local ministries.”

In addition to building churches in Liberia, New Bethel UMC pays the salary of three Liberian pastors each month. The youth group of the church is putting together a basket of items that will be sold at a rummage sale for funds. The proceeds will go toward the purchase of a truck to transport the blocks for the new building from the factory. The building will be completed by February 2008 when she will complete her term as superintendent and begin work as the youth ministry director for the Liberia Annual Conference.

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U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. Questioned about his views on homosexuality, he said his 1991 paper on the topic was written for a denominational committee and does not reflect his position today. The Senate had not voted on his nomination as of the beginning of December.

United Methodists in Maryland joined religious leaders across the state in opposing the governor’s proposal for state-owned slot machines. In September, Gov. Martin O’Malley, a Democrat, proposed legalizing slots as one measure to close the state’s budget shortfall.

Some 6,200 youth and youth leaders from four continents attended the July 11-15 Youth 2007 event in Greensboro, N.C., designed to build disciples by encouraging young people to live out their faith in ways they might not have thought possible.

A protest against locating the George W. Bush presidential library at Southern Methodist University took the form of an online petition started by the Rev. Andrew Weaver, which had gathered more than 11,000 signatures by November. But 10 of the 11 active bishops of the denomination’s South Central Jurisdiction affirmed the SMU board’s process to bring the Bush library to the campus.

After two years of research, a United Methodist task force in the New England Annual (regional) Conference urged its members, churches and investment managers to divest from 20 companies identified as supporting Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.

A March 1-4 consultation in Panama City, Panama, focused on the relationship between The United Methodist Church and independent Methodist churches in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Directors of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, through action of the personnel committee, abruptly dismissed the Rev. R. Randy Day, the mission agency’s chief executive, Oct. 9. Retired Bishop Felton May became the interim chief executive.

The Rev. Sam Dixon was elected to lead the United Methodist Committee on Relief; Harriett Olson is the new top executive of the Women’s Division, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, and Erin Hawkins became the head of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.

Passings
Utilizing Africa University’s computer lab, Black was able to file daily reports back to the IGRC.

The Re. Ed Hoke and Bunny Wolfe, Missions and Outreach Coordinator, apply mortar to a wall of the administration building at Ganta Mission Station.

The meeting was the first held by any general church agency outside the United States and included a time of training African communicators in the use of basic computer technology. For Rev. Margaret Mukundu, the training allowed the Zimbabwean pastor to see her name in print for the first time.

See IGRC Year in Review on page 14.
IGRC Year in Review

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> Outreach initiatives and collaborative efforts

Building on work which began in the spring pre-conference session and the annual conference in June, members of the IGRC Connectional Table approved a relational covenant Oct. 17 as the new structure brings money and mission to the same table.

The Connectional Table structure is a mirroring of the structure approved by the General Conference. At the general church level, the Connectional Table is the successor of the General Council on Ministries where “ministry and mission are brought to the same table to coordinate the mission, ministries and resources of The United Methodist Church. Organized to discern and articulate the vision of the church and the stewardship of mission, ministries and resources as determined by the General Conference and in consultation with the Council of Bishops.

At the conference level, the Connectional Table was formed by Resolution 112, a reshaping of working relationships among the various ministries of the conference. The connectional table will be meeting in January 2008 to assess ministries being proposed for funding in the 2009 conference budget that will be presented to the 2008 annual conference.

An initiative aimed at expanding the church’s outreach to the growing Hispanic population gained momentum in September when the Cabinet and Hispanic Ministry Team met to put together a strategy to facilitate congregation growth.

The leaders set as priorities: leadership training, funding and education with relationships being the key to development.

The plan seeks a $50,000 grant from the General Board of Global Ministries where “ministry and mission are brought to the same table to coordinate the mission, ministries and resources of The United Methodist Church. Organized to discern and articulate the vision of the church and the stewardship of mission, ministries and resources as determined by the General Conference and in consultation with the Council of Bishops.

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A goal was set to form 10 new groups in 2008 – whether new local church units or smaller groups within a church that already has a UMW unit – with a mentoring relationship being established for support and guidance.

Shared vision has also led the five IGRC child and family caring agencies to form the Illinois Great Rivers Alliance, a limited liability corporation aimed at collaborating on selected operational, staff, programmatic and advocacy concerns while maintaining separate identities. Legal documents were signed by the five CEO’s Nov. 28.

The five agencies have combined assets of $50 million with more than $4 million in annual benevolent care.

2007 Annual Conference

The celebratory spirit in the opening worship at annual conference set the stage for what was to occur over the next three days. With Merab in attendance, IGRC members danced as they brought their offerings forward.

The conference ended on an abrupt note, when a quorum was not present to continue on Saturday. Six annual conference resolutions and 15 of 16 general conference resolutions were not considered because of the quorum count.

The conference did approve a $14.4 million budget – an increase of 4.24 percent and approved the purchase of a new episcopal residence to replace a 30-year-old house that did not meet standards for handicap accessibility.

A plan outlining the future of the Area Office of Pastoral Care and Counseling was approved that calls for roughly half of the Director’s time to be spent in providing counseling from multiple locations and the other half being used to develop proactive measures aimed at addressing problems before they develop.

Inspirational worship was also a part of the conference, as United Methodists celebrated with representatives of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Owning Our History, Proclaiming a New Story, as part of a service of reconciliation.

A moving memorial sermon by the Rev. Carol Lakota Eastin told of her own journey of grieving.

A conference-wide dinner on Friday evening prior to the service of reconciliation was attended by more than 900 as the group gathered to celebrate the ministry of the conference. A Hawaiian hula, sponsored by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, assisted in the raising of funds for the annual ordinands mission trip.

Buildings and rebuilding

Storm that swept through Central Illinois June 23 took its toll one of the IGRC campsites.

A tree fell on Fellheimer Lodge at Living Springs Camp near Lewistown, causing extensive damage to the lodge’s chapel and two of the four sleeping rooms on the lodge’s west side. Two people were in the lodge at the time of the tree’s falling but no injuries were reported.

While a storm caused the collapse of one building, the wrecking ball was the culprit in the razing of the former Central Illinois Conference building on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University.

The former office building, which served as a home for the former conference council on ministries and the IGRC Conference Ministry Team from 1964 to 2000, was demolished to make room for a new $5 million welcome center which is set to open in fall 2008.

Power outages were prevalent in several parts of the conference during February and March. During that time, the Joy UMC became a shelter for more than 50 persons who were among the thousands in Mercer County, without power. The church provided meals as well as a warm place to stay or visit.

Volunteers also were sought to assist the Native American Fellowship in the building of Dayspring UMC. The building, a 92 by 50-foot log structure, blends into the church’s natural setting, allowing for a basement walkout onto the 43 wooded acres of land.

Developing spiritual leadership

Twenty-five IGRC students gathered during the summer to study and experience what it means to grow in spiritual leadership.

Marked, sponsored by the conference, seeks to help conference youth discover the mark God has left on their lives and to discover who they can leave on the world for the Lord.

The camp was created to work as a four-year leadership academy. Each summer, students will have the opportunity to apply for another year of leadership training. Eventually, they will return to serve as leaders of the first level of Marked, leading other conference youth on the journey.

The Office of Congregational Development has adopted a similar approach unveiling its Congregational Development Leaders Institute which will begin in 2008.

The Leadership Institute will become the focus of training leaders for new and connecting. See IGRC Year in Review on page 16...
Bishops more credible than policy ‘experts’ on Iraq war

Editor, The Current:

While I appreciated Rev. Phillips’ thoughtful response to the Bishops’ Iraq resolution, I was troubled by his invocation of the old “you don’t have the expertise to make policy” platitude. That’s what our leaders always tell us when they want to send our sons and daughters off to die for some fuzzy cause. They say, “Just trust us with the lives of your loved ones and don’t ask too many questions because you can’t understand the answers anyway.” When it comes to the lives of our citizens and the killing of the people of other lands, we all have expertise; the problem is that we’re too often too reluctant to exercise it.

Any reasonably well-informed person could see in 2002-03 that the proposed Iraq venture was a folly. Yet the “true” experts to whom Rev. Phillips alludes could not see it. And here we are today with tens of thousands of dead and wounded because of what almost everyone now sees as a misguided policy, and the same groups of “experts” are still calling the shots.

Given the record, I think I’ll trust in the bishops’ prayerful wisdom over the military, economic, and diplomatic expertise of those who blindly led us into this deplorable situation.

Donald L. Robinson
Pastor, Twin Rivers Cooperative Parish
Spoon River District

Mission study clarifies Israel, Palestine issues

Editor, The Current:

We have just finished the study, Israel and Palestine, in our United Methodist Women’s group. Evidently, Rev. Douglas Rettig has not studied this information or does not believe this so-called “propaganda” as he calls it, according to his recent letter in The Current (see October 2007 issue).

Our District Mission Study was led by a person who toured Israel-Palestine with the Board of Global Ministries and saw first hand the occupation of Palestinian lands, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The 400-mile wall is not being built on the “green line” border as was agreed on but many acres into much of century-owned Palestinian lands. There have been many declarations declaring rights but Israel ignored all of them.

Of course, we Methodists have always supported our fellow Jews but now there is even a group of young Israeli soldiers who have come back from their term of occupying these lands and protesting the atrocities being done to the Palestinians — many of them our Christian brothers and sisters. We often forget all Arabs are not Muslims.

The Jews have a right to their state and, according to the study, are receiving between $5 and 7 billion from U.S. government support every January. But I don’t think Jesus would approve of the injustices being done in the land where He walked. We need to be praying for the Palestinian Arab Christians whose land has been taken, lost jobs due to the wall and whole town bulldozed.

June Nicholson
Hillsdale UMC
Spoon River District

Proposed Creed falls short

Editor, The Current:

Two weeks before the October issue of The Current came out, I linked into articles about the proposed Social Creed on the www.umc.org website. I printed it out so that I could read it more clearly and compare it to our current Social Creed. I am printing it here as the October Current did not have it printed (Editor’s note: see shaded box).

While I applaud and thank the individual who worked so hard and diligently in trying to meet a vision, the work product (the proposed Social Creed) is a disappointment and does not, in my opinion, have the substance to be a creed.

My insides twisted when I first read the proposed creed. I have found that this is the way God gives me the message that tells me something is “off” or wrong when I may be thinking something is okay. I took the proposed creed to my Sunday School class and as we read it a second and third time, it became clear as to what God was telling me.

While this work product would be fine as a responsive reading in a worship service about the Social Creed, it is not a creed. This proposed social creed lacks a firm statement of commitment.

There is an old saying and song lyric that says, “if you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.” This proposed creed again lacks a firm statement of commitment. It gives an “out.” It says that first God will do or feel a certain way about a situation and then the individual will or try. “And so shall we” is a “try” statement. A commitment statement is “I will” or “We will.”

This creed takes away the responsibility to mature in the relationship with God — the responsibility to make oneself aware, to learn God’s teachings through Jesus about how we should be, and to do something about situations not because God did or wants it first but because it is the right way to feel or respond is taken away.

The proposed Social Creed also invalidates God’s grace, love, healing, strength and teachings that are told to us in the Bible and have been experienced in our lives and other lives (“Today is the day”). This statement in a Social Creed says anything that happened before “today” did not count. God did not care until today. Since Adam and Eve, God cared. God wanted and still wants a blessing relationship with us.

Our current Social Creed is a clear and firm statement of commitment. In trying to be “user-friendly” the proposed Social Creed waters down that commitment.

Again, I think the individuals who sacrificed their time to work on this project. It is my opinion, though, they came up with a good responsive reading for a service on the Social Creed and not a replacement for our current Social Creed. I urge the delegates to amend the petition Proposed Social Creed

God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ, calls us by grace to be renewed in the image of our Creator, that we may be one in divine love for the world.

Today is the day
God cares for the integrity of creation, wills the healing and wholeness of all life, weeps at the plunder of Earth’s goodness And so shall we.

Today is the day
God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends. And so shall we.

Today is the day
God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the market- to make this an official responsive reading based on the current Social Creed. I urge them to vote “No” in replacing the current Social Creed with the proposed Social Creed. I trust God will guide the delegates in this.

Darla Stewart
Waverly First UMC
LaMoine River District

What is the question we are answering?

The United Methodist Church now has great clarity about its mission: making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We here in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference have been aligning our intention and practice as well as our personnel and financial resources around this mission for some time. At the recent global convocation for Cabinetas planned and led by the Council of Bishops the participants explored together how this mission is led.

At the convocation Dr. Randy Maddox, professor of Wesley studies at Duke, named for us the heart of our Wesleyan DNA. He noted that John Wesley’s deepest question was: “How can I be the kind of person God and I want me to be?” To answer this question for ourselves, we must be formed in the mind of Christ and then live as Christ as our second nature.

Dr. Maddox went on to say to be formed in the mind of Christ we must be steeped in Christian practices: acts of mercy (doing no harm and doing good) and acts of piety (growing in love of God through prayer, scripture reflection, Holy Communion, Christian conversation, worship, and fasting.) After all, Christianity and therefore United Methodism is a way, a way of life. Practiced over a lifetime, we go on toward perfection in love.

The leadership of our IGRC superintendents and conference staff as well as the New Streams and Congregational Development initiatives of our conference focus their attention on resourcing our congregations in their disciple-making mission so that the people in our congregations and the communities they serve can find their way into asking and answering the question “How can I be the kind of person God and I want me to be?” It is the question that sets us on the path to fullness of life and peace that passes understanding.

Is your congregation equipped to help people ask and answer this question?

— Bishop Sharon A. Brown Christopher
IGRC Year in Review

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existing IGRC congregations. Comprised of four sessions each year, participants will be covering a variety of topics aimed providing a greater understanding for congregational development and how a healthy new church start can actually revitalize churches in the area.

In the news

The shooting on the campus of Virginia Tech University April 16 hit close to home as one of the 32 victims – Austin Cloyd – was a former member of Champaign First UMC.

Cloyd, who moved with her family in 2005 to Blacksburg, Va., was a VTU freshman majoring in international studies.

The shooting sparked a number of responses across campuses within the IGRC, as college students looked for meaningful ways to pray and mourn those that had died.

An IGRC local pastor was discontinued from ministry April 17 following his arrest on charges of predatory criminal sexual assault and child pornography.

Larry Reinke remains free on bond awaiting trial on the charges.

The 11-year-old son of Australian pastor Mike Rayson, was killed tragically May 14 when a horse responded to an undetermined disturbance striking him.

Sam Rayson died of internal injuries. A memorial service was held May 15 at a Geneseo funeral home. When news reached of the death and the family’s lack of medical insurance, an outpouring of love and financial support for the Rayson family enabled them to return to Australia for Sam’s burial.

An IGRC pastor also garnered national headlines when she gave a $10,000 tip to a Pizza Hut waitress enabling the woman to complete her education.

Rev. Becky Brault, currently on leave of absence, gave 20-year-old Jessica Osborne the gift as she was getting to relocate from the Ft. Wayne, Ind. area in July. Brault and her children frequented the restaurant about once a week and over the course of time, struck up a friendship with Osborne.

The education funds came from an insurance settlement following the accident that claimed the life of her husband, Rev. Bradford Brault and her 20-year-old daughter, Melaine, on July 1, 2003.

“I thought this was a good way to honor Brad and Melanie’s memory by investing in a young person’s education,” Brault explained. “I also would like to think this will be an encouragement to others to help those they can reach.”

Retired pastor C. Don Ferrill also reached out and walked with Amanda Hamm, a Clinton woman who was convicted of child endangerment Feb. 1. The trial, which ended in December 2006, centered around the drowning deaths of Hamm’s three children in September 2003.

While the incident and trial divided a community, Ferrill visited Hamm weekly, saying, “No other minister was stepping forward after the deaths of the children. I believe in second chances; otherwise, none of us would make it.”

Personalia

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher announced in November that she will retire Sept. 1, 2008, when her third term in the Illinois Area is completed.

Christopher notified the president of the Council of Bishops that she will seek retired status, concluding a 20-year career as bishop in Minnesota and Illinois.

The retirement means that a vacancy will be filled by election at the 2008 North Central Jurisdictional Conference. IGRC delegates have endorsed the candidacy of Rev. Dr. Timothy Bias, pastor of Peoria First UMC as bishop. Other candidates that have announced interest in the vacancy includes Rev. David Bard, endorsed by the Minnesota delegation and Rev. Randolph Cross, endorsed by the Dakotas delegation.

Should Bias be elected, he would be the first to be elected from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. Bishop William Lewis was elected in 1988 as a clergy member of the former Southern Illinois Conference and Rev. H. Clifford Northcott was elected in 1948 as a member of the Illinois Conference of the Methodist Church, a predecessor of the former Central Illinois Conference.

Paul Black, IGRC director of communication ministries, received certification in Christian communications from the United Methodist Association of Communicators. Black was recognized at the 2007 annual conference session and later, received an award for his column on the Virginia Tech shooting which appeared in the April 27 issue of The Current.

Former IGRC Director of Communications, Paul Widicus was inducted in the UMAC Hall of Fame Oct. 25.

Widicus, who was nominated by Black and former Current writer Steve Husteed (now director of communications in the Desert Southwest Conference), was known as “a voice of reason and compassion during the times immediately before and after the merger of the former Southern Illinois and Central Illinois conferences.”

Keith Anderson, pastor at Chatham UMC, was selected as Executive Director of Preachers’ Aid Society; following a seven-month search process in which Preachers’ Aid sought to expand ministry to retirees by helping clergy prepare for retirement as a partner with the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

Carolyn Yockey and the United Methodist Children’s Home were among those honored by the United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries (UMA) at its national convention in March.

Yockey was recognized for her contributions to The Baby Fold, Cunningham Children’s Home and Lessie Bates Neighborhood House.

The United Methodist Children’s Home was recognized as UMA’s Organization of the Year.

MacMurray College named Dr. Colleen Hester, vice president of strategic planning, institutional research and evaluation at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, as its 15th president May 5.

Hester succeeded the retiring Dr. Lawrence D. Bryan who served as MacMurray’s president for 10 years.

Rev. Randall Reese, pastor at Sumner-Beulah UMC’s was named superintendent of the Embarras River District. Reese succeeded Rev. Alice Shirley July 1 after she had served seven years in the post.

Beth Fender was selected as coordinator of New Streams, the conference initiative on disciple-making July 15.

Passings

IGRC paid its final respects to a former bishop for the second year in a row as Bishop David J. Lawson died May 31 at the age of 77.

Lawson was bishop of the Illinois Area for just a single term – from 1992 to 1996 – but guided the conference through a time which culminated in the merger of the former Central and Southern Illinois conferences.

Bishop Leroy Hodapp died just prior to the 2006 annual conference and with Lawson’s death, Bishop Woodie White (bishop of the Illinois Area from 1984 to 1992) is the only surviving former bishop of the Illinois Area.

Others who died in 2007


Rev. K. Eugene Dilworth, retired pastor, Jan. 21.

Rev. Caroline Hutchinson, retired pastor, Feb. 4.

Eula B. Wilson, widow of Rev. Paul C. Wilson, Feb. 11.

Rev. Craig Dillman, retired pastor, Feb. 23.


Clara Snapp, widow of Rev. Marvin Chester Snapp, March 25.

Kim A. Brown, wife of Rev. Steve Brown, April 7.

Rev. John J. Lauer, retired pastor, April 10.

Lois Bodeen, wife or retired pastor Harold Bodeen, April 26.


Rev. Roscoe Rose, retired pastor, June 11.

Rev. Harrison Blankenship, retired pastor, July 12.

Shirley Barrow, wife of Rev. Steve Barrow, July 14.


Opal George, widow of Rev. R. E. George, Aug. 29.

Rev. Thomas M. Richards, retired pastor, Sept. 10.

Doris Mae Friesner, widow of Rev. Marvin W. Friesner, Oct. 3.

Beulah Purcell, widow of Rev. Wilbur Louis Purcell, Oct. 12.

Helen Murphy, wife of retired clergy Rev. Albert Murphy, Oct. 15.


George Fischer, husband of retired pastor Rev. Mary Jane Fischer, Nov. 6.

Mary Lou Scott, former director of the United Media Resource Center, Nov. 9.

Rev. Karl E. Wright, retired pastor from the former Southern Illinois Conference, Nov. 18.

Rev. Eva Morris, retired pastor from the former Southern Illinois Conference, Dec. 4.

Janet Deal, wife of retired pastor Rev. David Deal, Dec. 10.