A recent survey shows that young women ages 19 to 40 are interested in discovering God’s call on their lives and that action in life is important. However, they are not interested in highly-structured “top-down” organizations to order their life. These findings are just two gleaned from a study conducted over the past six months by the IGRC United Methodist Women as part of an effort to attract a more diverse age range to their ranks.

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

“I am excited about this great opportunity to enable growth of UMW by opening doors for young women and giving them a chance to develop their own way of doing mission for women, children and youth while having fellowship and growing spiritually,” said IGRC UMW President Carolyn Yockey. “We see great potential as we talk to young women, women who are concerned about mission but need to do it their way, in their own time.”

Yockey said part of this comes by allowing younger persons to start their own groups rather than joining existing groups. "This would include development of District Hispanic Ministry Teams, targeting of high-potential locations for congregation and faith community development.

Looking at the practical vision, the group identified the following priorities:

- Expand promotion through communication, building of bridges, expanding collaboration and partnerships and building a funding system
- Expand promotion through communication, building of bridges, expanding collaboration and partnerships and building a funding system
- Increase social justice through establishment of a Justice for Our Neighbors site within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference to assist in immigration matters
- Increase social justice through establishment of a Justice for Our Neighbors site within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference to assist in immigration matters
- Train leaders through establishing a Hispanic incubator in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference to assist in immigration matters

The leaders set as priorities leadership training, funding and education with relationships being key to development. “What was expressed in the meeting was a desire to engage the mission together and not just do it by giving money to the effort,” said Mike Crawford, coordinator of congregational development. “Relationships are key.”

Pastoral care and counseling application available

The application packet for the Director/Counselor’s position of the Shalom Pastoral Care and Counseling Center is now available online for download at the conference website, www.igrc.org Deadline for applications is Monday, Oct. 15.

For more information, contact Rev. J. Michael Smith, pastor of Urbana Grace UMC at 217-328-1414 or by emailing: jmichaelsmith@insightbb.com

A camper from the Retreat and Refresh Stroke Camp applies the finishing touches to a craft project. See Camping on page 8…
Tony Campolo to appear at pastor’s conference

Nationally-known author and speaker Dr. Tony Campolo will lead the fall Pastor’s Conference at Marion Aldersgate UMC Oct. 7-9. All sessions will be held at the Aldersgate UMC in Marion.

This is an opportunity for pastors to discover together how the message of Holiness must meet contemporary culture in our day.

There is a fee for participation in this conference. Pastors interested in attending should call 618-997-6065 or read the pastor’s conference page on www.marion-aldersgate.org.

Pastors, church workers, mission staff, and parachurch staff are invited to attend.

Contemporary Worship Institute Oct. 2-4

The Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, in cooperation with The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., will be holding its second Contemporary Worship Institute Oct. 2-4.

Early registration will be accepted until Sept. 6 with regular registration period beginning Sept. 7. Complete event information and registration are available at: http://www.cor.org/index.php?id=3310.

The institute is for leaders and planners of contemporary worship services that want to explore ways to enhance their current ministries. Assisted by the team at Church of the Resurrection, the 2006 conference sold out early.

Sally Morgenthaler, a recognized innovator in Christian practices worldwide will be the keynote speaker. Morgenthaler is a trusted interpreter of post-modern culture and a guide for Christians making crucial shifts to minister in the 21st century.

The worship institute precedes the annual UM Church of the Resurrection Leadership Institute, giving participants a chance to also receive training in traditional music and worship as all other facets of church ministry.

Ignition expands to two sites

Ignition Middle School Conference will be held at two locations this fall. – Oct. 12-13 at Springfield First UMC and Oct. 26-27 at Troy UMC.

Ignition, designed specifically for middle school students has grown to more than 500 people in attendance. Both weekends will be identical in program with Todd Genteman as the speaker for the weekend and Harvest Worship Brand leading the music. Matt Hampel will be a special guest during the Ignition Coffee House on Friday evening. The weekend include worship sessions, elective seminars, small groups (youth group building, led by a Ignition Staff Person), recreation, music, and tons of fun – middle school style.

The registration fees cover the program, lunch and snacks, and recreation. Groups are responsible for their own housing for the weekend. If you have questions, please contact 618-667-6241 or email tim@troyumc.org for a registration packet. Or you may also visit www.harvestconferences.org and download everything you that will need to register for this weekend.

Lincoln College hosts Witherington

LINCOLN — Dr. Ben Witherington III, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, will be this year’s lecturer at the James D. Strauss Lectures Oct. 16-17 at Lincoln Christian College.

Witherington has written more than 30 books and six commentaries, including The Gospel Code: Novel Claims About Jesus; Mary Magdalene and Da Vinci; The Problem With Evangelical Theory: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism and Wesleyanism.

Witherington is a John Wesley Fellow for Life, a research fellow at Cambridge University and a member of numerous professional organizations.

On Nov. 14, Dr. Robert Smith, Jr. associate professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School, will be presenting the lecturer for the John M. Webb Preaching Lectureship.

Smith serves as professor of Christian preaching at Beeson. An ordained Baptist minister, Smith is a popular teacher and preacher.

Information for either of these lectures can be obtained by calling Lincoln Christian College at 888-522-5228 (toll-free).

McKendree University hosts youth event Oct. 13

McKendree University is hosting a fall youth event for senior high students Saturday, Oct. 13.

The college is inviting youth to come to McKendree University for a visit. Youth will be admitted free to the home football game with a concert featuring Harvest as well as free food and campus tours.

For more information, contact Rev. Tim Harrison at 618-537-6447 or by emailing: btharris@mckendree.edu.

COSROW scholarship application available on web

The Scholarship Award from Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) for Women in Candidacy for Ministry is now available.

The form is on the IGRC website, www.igrc.org, under the documents/forms heading.

Eligibility requirements include Women who are: Certified candidates from IGRC enrolled in seminary for degree or course of study completing at least one semester of training. Interested parties must submit a transcript from seminary (may be sent directly to address beneath), recommendations from 2-3 people who have known her for at least one year, commenting on pastoral qualities, from people such as: professor, district superintendent, church member, mentor or pastor, DCOM statement that she is a certified candidate making progress toward the requirements, financial statement paragraph — loans, other students, expenses, extenuating circumstances, anything she wishes to mention and she should tell us about her ministry, what courses she is taking.

Money is for the student and not required to be spent in a particular way. A committee of three non-students from COSROW will make the decision on who receives the scholarships. Members of COSROW are eligible if they are not on the selection committee. Once a student receives the award, she is not eligible for another reward for four years. Past recipients include: Linda Harrod, Kathy Sue Lewis, Mary Alice Cunningham, Florene Scott and Carol Strubeam.

Deadline: Oct. 30

Send to: Rev. Beth E. Nelson:
P.O. Box 708
Astoria, IL 61501
309.329.2422
email: houserev51@logonix.net

Arts & Crafts festival supports missions

The United Methodist Women of Faith UMC, 1719 S. Prospect Ave., Champaign, will hold their annual Arts & Crafts Festival on Saturday Oct. 27 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

All proceeds from this event will support Missions: Cunningham Children’s Home, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, UMCOR, A Woman’s Fund, Faith Youth ASP, CASA, Center for Women in Transition, Crisis Nursery, Developmental Services Center Tree of Hope, empty tomb, Faith UMC Food Pantry, Faith UMC Minister’s Discretionary Fund, Faith UMC Youth Club, Frances Nelson Health Center, and Good Start Program.

Many vendors will be participating in this year’s event; a partial list of the arts and crafts: angels, cards and prints, Christmas ornaments, crocheted and knitted items, doll clothes, gift baskets, jewelry, stained glass, wood carvings, primitive and country decor, sweatshirts, quilted totes and baskets.

Faith’s UMW will be selling homemade candy and baked goods. Nuts and dried fruit will also be sold. And, we will have a used book sale, including books, DVD’s, CD’s and VHS tapes.

The United Methodist Men will host a coffee shop with coffee and breakfast sweets.

A luncheon will be served between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. The luncheon menu is: soup, chicken salad croissant sandwiches, dessert, and drinks. Cost is $7.50 per person. A hot dog lunch for $3.50 will also be available.

Photographer to speak at UMW annual meeting

Award-winning photojournalist and missionary, Rev. Paul Jeffrey, will share some of his experiences when he addressed the United Methodist Women of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference at their annual celebration Saturday, Oct. 6 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Champaign Faith UMC Church.

The theme for this year’s celebration is Spanning the World for Mission. Jeffrey is Senior Correspondent for Response, the magazine of United Methodist Women, and also reports on emergencies for Action by Churches Together (ACT). He has filed stories from around the world.

See Announcements on page 6...

Positions

Youth Director — the Evangelical United Methodist Church of Mt. Carmel Illinois is seeking a self-motivated, energetic and enthusiastic person with a passion for nurturing youth, grades 1-12 in Christian faith. Effective relational, organizational and communication skills required. Additional information and a job description are available from Pastor Curt Rush by phone at 1-618-263-6561 or email to cmrother@verizon.net. Letters of application and a resume should be sent to Pastor Curt Rush at Mt. Carmel EUM, 2010 N. Cherry Mt Carmel IL, 62863. Deadline for application is Oct. 15.
Liberian Council of Churches elects Bishop John Innis its president

In his acceptance speech, Innis said the Liberian Council of Churches has God as its president. He described himself and the two vice presidents—elect as coaches on God’s leadership team.

Innis praised the leadership of the outgoing president, Bishop Sumowar E. Harris of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, and he noted the role the council has played in fostering national unity and reconciliation in the West African nation following a long civil war.

Innis was elected a bishop of The United Methodist Church in 2000 and has led the church in Liberia since then. He has held a number of leadership positions in the Liberian Council of Churches.

Retired pastor, wife volunteers of the year

By Les Winkeler
The Southern Illinoisan

CARBONDALE - Earl Dickey’s affiliation with Giant City Lodge goes back a long way.

Dickey, 92, of Carbondale was part of the Civilian Conservation Corps group that helped construct the lodge in the 1930s.

He was an 18-year-old Wayne City resident the first time he saw the hill where the lodge stands.

“The lodge had the foundation up about 3 feet high,” Dickey said. “I never worked on the lodge itself, except there were three big septic tanks down below. I worked on all three.

“Our barracks was right in the parking lot.”

Now, more than 70 years later, Dickey and his wife, Juanita, were recognized for their volunteer efforts by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as two of the agency’s 2007 volunteers of the year.

They were recommended for the award by Bob Martin, the IDNR’s site superintendent at Giant City.

The Dickeys work at the Visitor Center from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. each Friday.

“They brighten up our Friday afternoons,” said Jenny Skufca, the park interpreter. “They live maybe 3 miles away. They think of their house as being the gateway to the park.

“They are great supporters of the lodge because they think it is the greatest thing in the world.”

Dickey does confess to having a soft spot for the camp’s machinery except a mattock (a type of hoe), a shovel and a wheelbarrow.

Although life took Dickey away from Carbondale, he’s occasionally found his way back to Giant City.

There were times we had our family reunion down at the park,” he said. “I remember when they had a deer pen. We would take our children down to see the deer.”

It was their children who eventually brought the Dickeys back to Carbondale. They moved from Newton to be near their daughter.

And, it was probably only a matter of time before they started donating their time to Giant City.

“My wife saw a notice in the paper that they needed some volunteers, so we just offered,” he said.

The couple has been donating Friday afternoons to the park since May 9, 2003.

“They man the front desk, answer questions and tell stories,” Skufca said. “They are delightful. The visitors lucky enough to arrive during their time are just enthralled.”

“I get to meet a lot of people,” Dickey said. “Some come in and ask about people and times when I was there. I get to talk to them about that. We tell stories about different things and have a good time.”

And, the Dickeys answer specific questions.

“They ask about the trails,” he said. “They ask about the lodge. We get some odd questions. One man called from California and asked if there was a toilet in the camping area. He said he had flown over and he hadn’t seen it.”

As for the award, Dickey said he was surprised.

“We enjoy doing it,” he said. “They seem to like us.”

(Reprinted with permission from the Southern Illinoisan newspaper).
Mission trip to UMCOR Sager-Brown

Nineteen women from the Springfield area, one woman from Naperville and one from Grand Ledge Mich., went on a mission trip to UMCOR Sager-Brown in Baldwin, La. Aug. 19-25.

Some working making health, school, and sewing kits in the warehouse and a few ladies tried their hand at painting the outside of a house. And two took a truck full of supplies to the 9th ward in New Orleans. Everyone also participated in a local food distribution and handed out between 600 and 700 boxes of food to low-income seniors and single parents.

The highlight of the trip was visiting the Ninth Ward to see the destruction and devastation that still remains from Hurricane Katrina that hit the New Orleans area two years ago.

Those who participated in the mission trip include: Diane Walrath, Pat Wright, Kay Rentfrow, Mary Brunn, Rinda Osborn and Pat Freeman from Sugar Creek UMC; Cathy Henchen, Judy Vicky, Judy Delancy and Shirley Burris from Chatham UMC; Carolyn Leach, Liz Frazier, Arlene Dithener, Martha Bedford, Linda Snyder and Jane Potts from Laurel UMC; Joyce McCumber from Asbury UMC; Deborah Willhoit from Well City Christian Church; Brenda Matson, UMC Grand Ledge UMC, Grand Ledge, Mich., and Barbara Korb from Naperville UMC, Naperville, Ill.

Vermilion River District supports water transport in Nana Kru District

By: Konah L. Parker
Director of Communications
Liberia Annual Conference

The use of boats and canoes along the rivers and seas of Liberia as a major means of transportation has gone on for many years, especially within the coastal regions of the country.

Many towns and villages are separated by large and small rivers and lakes, and the people of these towns and villages can only interact with one another by crossing over in small boats or canoes.

One of the areas now making use of such small boats and canoes is the Nana Kru District of the Liberia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

According to Rev. Morrison Wleh, District Superintendent of the Nana Kru District, the need for transportation was one of the greatest challenges his district faced for the enhancement of its ministry. He said road conditions are deplorable and one can only travel through his district and from one district to another in the southeastern part of Liberia by means of the rivers and sea.

Based on this reality, Wleh held a discussion with Vermilion River District Superintendent Rev. Dr. J. Keith Zimmerman of the Vermilion River District and his wife who he said have been the foundation upon which the funds for the purchase of the boats were raised and donated by local churches of the Vermilion River District in collaboration with Bunny Wolfe, IGRC coordinator of mission and outreach.

A related development, the Nana Kru District is currently involved in the reconstruction of several local churches in the district. He said many of the churches in the district as well as throughout Liberia were either looted, vandalized or completely destroyed during the 14 years civil crisis that engulfed the country. Today, some of these churches have either been reconstructed or are undergoing reconstruction as a result of the enormous and generous contribution from United Methodist brothers and sisters in the United States of America and Europe.

Zimmerman of the Vermilion District and his wife said the partnership between his district and the Nana Kru District to begin a reconstruction and was dedicated Aug. 5. Funds for the reconstruction of the Nana Kru District of the Detroit Annual Conference.

Zimmerman of the Vermilion District and his wife said the partnership between his district and the Nana Kru District to begin a reconstruction and was dedicated Aug. 5. Funds for the reconstruction of the Nana Kru District of the Detroit Annual Conference.

Wleh said he is optimistic that with the level of spiritual, moral and financial support given to the Church, through the Bishop John G. Innis of Liberia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, the Church will rise again and grow more in number.

He said, while it is true that his district has for a while focused on the reconstruction of churches, it has also prioritized the education of the people of the district, and in the process of reconstructing some schools.

Wleh says he is also pleased that many members of his district are engaged in subsistence farming, growing cassava (a traditional tuba plant) and rice to help feed themselves and for sale on the local market.

He expressed the hope that with arrangement being made for the purchase of 50 acres of land by his district to begin a rubber planting project for sustainability, the project will claim the attention of the Liberia Annual Conference, and thereby generate support from United Methodists at home and abroad.

Wleh has also identified the need for a four-wheel drive vehicle to be used inland for the superintendent’s travel through the district as another priority.

Tower Hill raises funds for Nothing But Nets

Tower Hill UMC held a combination garage and bake sale Aug. 4 to benefit the Nothing But Nets endeavor for the people of Africa.

Due to the hard work and generosity of many, $855 has been forwarded to the conference to be used to purchase mosquito nets in African countries with training on how to prevent malaria.

The Tower Hill contribution will provide 85 bed nets with four to five children sleeping under a single net. The nets are durable and will last for up to three years.

Nothing But Nets is a joint effort of the people of The United Methodist Church, the National Basketball Association, Major League Soccer, Sports Illustrated magazine and the United Nations Foundation.

Geff UMC celebrates golden anniversary

Geff UMC will celebrate 50 years of ministry in the current church building on Sunday, Oct. 21 at 10 a.m.

Former pastors and members have been invited to come and celebrate with the congregation.

A meal will follow the service at noon.

For more information, contact Rev. Janice Devor at 618-897-2614 or by emailing janiceumc@yahoo.com.
150 years of ministry celebrated

Vergennes Faith Evangelical UMC will celebrate 150 years of ministry on Sunday, Oct. 14. Harvest Worship Team will lead the music for the service and Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher will be preaching. A potluck dinner will follow at noon.

The United Brethren Church was founded in the Village of Vergennes in the year 1857 and from this time until 1892, services were held in homes and school houses. The first church building was dedicated April 29, 1894, at a cost of approximately $1,000.

The first church building was dedicated April 29, 1894, at a cost of approximately $1,000. The congregation averages low to mid 50’s in attendance, with about one-third of that number being children and young families, indicating a promising future for continued ministry for many years to come.

Pastor Angela Baughman currently leads the congregation in ministry, and resides in Vergennes with her husband Matt, and son Alex.

For more information on the church or the celebration, contact Pastor Baughman at 618-684-4625.

Evenglow Lodge rededicated

Evenglow Lodge will celebrate its 50th anniversary of ministry with a formal re-dedication service on Sunday, Oct. 28, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

The service will take place in the sanctuary of First UMC in Pontiac. Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher will preside over the service with refreshments and fellowship to follow the service at Evenglow Lodge.

The public is invited to attend.

Agency helps church connect digitally

By Linda Green*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - From communication centers in Africa to training programs in the Philippines, United Methodists are making strides in becoming more digitally connected around the world.

Much of that progress has occurred in the last four years, as The United Methodist Church’s communications agency has focused on leading the denomination into the digital age. Members of the church’s Commission on Communication celebrated that progress and shared excitement for what the future holds.

They also reflected on a busy four-year period that included the commission’s first ever meeting outside the United States - in Zimbabwe - and a stronger global emphasis by United Methodist Communications, the agency they oversee.

With support from annual (regional) conferences and the United Methodist Communications Foundation, the agency has established 15 communication centers in Africa, and it has trained and equipped people in Africa, Europe and the Philippines to tell the stories of the church in their areas. More training is planned for Europe in November.

Commissioners affirmed United Methodist Communications’ work in helping the denomination offer messages of caring and support during times of disaster, such as the 2004 tsunami in South Asia and the 2005 Hurricane Katrina on the U.S. Gulf Coast. Through the denomination’s Web site at www.umc.org, the commission enabled people to respond in many different ways.

The commission also heard updates on the agency’s work with organizers of the 2008 General Conference, the denomination’s legislative assembly, which meets next spring in Fort Worth, Texas. United Methodist Communications staff members are using different forms of media and

See Agency on page 7 . . .

New Horizon UMC reaches out in mission trip to East St. Louis

Champaign New Horizon UMC in Champaign and Twin City Bible Church in Urbana joined forces to provide a mission trip experience for 35 youth and eight adults this summer in East St. Louis.

Eating meals and sleeping at Trinity UMC Outreach Center and partnering with the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, the group split into smaller groups working at four different sites throughout the area.

One group worked at the Outreach Center painting, helping with Day Camp, and cleaning up. Another group worked at two area homes and the Family Development Center patching walls, scraping and painting.

The fourth project was the construction of a wheelchair ramp, repairs to a roof and completion of other odd jobs for a single mother of nine, which allowed the family to remain together.

In early July, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House began working with DCFS to help a single mother keep her nine children — all under the age of 13. Neighborhood House provided the family with a new stove and arranged for the mission group to build a wheelchair ramp.

For more information, visit lessiebatesdavis.org.
Announcements
Continued from page 2

45 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. He has been trapped in combat, shot at, taken hostage, and survived a variety of bacterial illnesses.

The scope of Jeffrey’s work is wide reaching. His primary focus, however, is on how Christians and Christian communities struggle for justice and peace in the midst of repression, violence, rapid economic development, and social change.

Before the annual celebration, Cunningham Children’s Home will host Sweet Rolls & Gentle Strolls from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. UMW members and their guests will enjoy a light breakfast in the Spiritual Life Center and then take a tour of the facility including the Chapel of Hope built with donations from United Methodist Women. At 3:30 p.m., after the Annual Celebration, CCH will host an Afternoon Tour of the Cunningham Spiritual Life Center.

Those attending the Annual Celebration will have their choice of one of six “how-to” presentations designed to help strengthen the leadership, recruitment, and mission work of local units. Topics include: What is Your SA (Social Action) Quotient? facilitated by Linda Trent, Conference UMW Social Action Coordinator; If You Lead, Will Anyone Follow? led by Rhonda Whitaker, IGRC Lay Leader; Money, Money, Money – Fundraising Ideas; Being Young at Heart Isn’t Enough – How to Attract Younger Members facilitated by Tremont UMW; Knit One, Pearl Two – Prayer Shawls led by Kay Fisher, Bradley UMW; and Sister, Sisters – How to Support Our UMW Sisters in Liberia led by Bunny Wolfe, IGRC coordinator of mission and outreach and Bev Jones, member of the 2006 Liberian Mission Trip.

The Annual Celebration will also include displays, special music provided by the choir of Faith UMC, lunch, and door prizes. Conference UMW officers for 2008 will be elected.

The day will conclude with communion and a service of commitment. Tickets are $15 and must be purchased by September 25 through members of local units. All UMW members and non-members are invited.

More information on Rev. Jeffrey and samples of his work can be found at www.kairosphotos.com/pauljeffrey/. Additional information on United Methodist Women - Illinois Great Rivers Conference can be found at: www.umwigrc.org. For more information on the Annual Celebration, contact Lynn Travis, Vice President, UMW-IGRC at umw@igrcc.org.

Shared vision leads five IGRC child and family caring agencies to form alliance

The 2007 United Voices For Children breakfast at Annual Conference featured the announcement of a formal alliance with the five Child and Family caring agencies of the IGRC.

Pictured from left are: Clete Winkelmann of The United Methodist Children’s Home; William Kreeb of Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House; Debbie Reed of Chaddock; Dale Strassheim of The Baby Fold; and Sam Banks of Cunningham Children’s Home.

The Alliance will allow the five agencies to keep their separate identities but come together for selected operational, staff, programmatic and advocacy concerns. The five agency CEO’s shared their vision for the Illinois Great Rivers Alliance to offer opportunities for financial savings, increased advocacy and expanded mission outreach for each organization.

The Alliance will sign legal documents to incorporate on Wednesday, Nov. 28, at the Conference Center. More details will be provided in the November issue of The Current.

Motorsports ministry earns Advance status

The Midwest Mission Distribution Center is growing. Thanks to the donations of many individuals and churches, an addition to the warehouse is up and nearly finished! Visit the Center’s web page to see photos (www.midwestmissiondc.org). About $12,000 is still needed to finish the wiring and interior. The new addition measures 96’ x 108’ (10,368 sq. ft.) and will be used to store and process materials for disaster relief. This addition will greatly enhance the Center’s ability to receive and process large donations of materials. It will also allow the facility to handle the “overflow” of materials that always come during a major disaster. During Annual Conference time the truck loads of materials that come in are often stacked “in the aisles” until we can process them for shipping. In the past the Center has leased or borrowed semi trailers to house the overflow, now we will have all items under one roof which is particularly helpful during the winter and inclement weather.

Racing Partner in Ministry and crew chief Kelley Beller and Pastor Mark Amenda check out the United Methodist Motorsports Ministry car in the pit at a race in Knoxville, Tenn.

Recently, the ministry was recognized by the conference as an Advanced Special allowing persons to make direct donations to the ministry through Advance Special Number 6320. The General Council on Finance and Administration has certified the ministry as an affiliated organization of The United Methodist Church.

Every church, organization, corporation, company or individual that makes a donation will become a Racing Partner in Ministry and will receive a certificate acknowledging their support.

The two-year-old ministry has been involved in personal appearances, electronic media and printed media with a combined audience of more than 8 million people.
The grace of God in Macedonia
Church seeks leaders and congregational partners in post-Communist country

By Kathryn Herring
Winchester UMC

In Acts 16, the Apostle Paul tells of a vision in which he is invited to Macedonia. As a result of Paul’s obedience to the vision, Paul boasts of Macedonia that “the grace of God is being shown in the churches of Macedonia.”

Today, Macedonia is a small landlocked nation of 2 million people located in the Balkans north of Greece. Formerly a part of Yugoslavia, it became independent in 1991. The majority of the population is either Orthodox Christian (65 percent) or Muslim (33 percent). The United Methodist Church is the oldest and largest Protestant church in Macedonia with roots going back 150 years; and is one of only five religious groups recognized in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

My own invitation to Macedonia came not through a heavenly vision but from the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission website. Knowing that I would be in Athens with my husband in early June to lead a student tour group, I used the website to locate an individual volunteer opportunity to teach English classes to children. Carol Partridge, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries serving in Strumica, arranged a homestay for me in the nearby village of Monospitovo.

Carol has lived in Strumica for 10 years – first as a Peace Corps volunteer and, since 2000, as a GBGM missionary serving as Director of Christian Education for the 12 United Methodist congregations in Macedonia. Her website, www.carolpartridge.com, includes personal information as well as a map, photographs, prayer needs and background information about the country and our church.

Strumica is a city of 45,000 people in the center of an agricultural valley ringed by mountains. There are five United Methodist churches in the valley and during my stay I got to see all of them.

Few families in Monospitovo own a car. There are more tractors than cars; more horses than tractors; more bicycles and scooters than either. Three paved streets run parallel through town, intersected by a network of narrow dirt lanes which lead to houses arranged in family compounds. Each house has its barn, garden and greenhouses.

Each farm family subsists on a small holding – just a couple of acres – where they grow truck crops such as tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. Most keep a cow for cheese and thick cream, a few pigs, and chickens or ducks for eggs, and raise hay and corn for livestock feed. The family rose early, working from 5 a.m. to noon. After dinner, we slept through the heat of the day, and the family returned to work from 5 p.m. to dark.

On top of the intense heat and breaking labor, the family had to make do without showers for much of my stay. Household water is on a schedule from 6 to 8 a.m., from noon to 2 p.m. and from 7 to 10 p.m.

The people called Methodist in Monospitovo gather for worship Sunday mornings at 9 a.m. with Sunday School following worship. The congregation, currently without a pastor, is under the loving care of its lay leader, “Dedo” (which means grandfather) Zivko. It numbers about 25 adults, more women than men; 10 youth and 15 children. The service is similar to American worship except that the people stand to pray and sit to sing.

I had the honor to give the message and the children sung with gusto one of the action songs I had taught them in English. It was a privilege to worship with people who had remained constant through so many years of discouragement and repression of religious faith.

One of the sites I visited was the Miss Stone Center, a major “diaconia” or social outreach center of The United Methodist Church. Founded in 2000, it is staffed by three full-time workers and delivers hot, nutritious three-course meals, five days a week to more than 100 elderly shut-ins. While there, I witnessed five “Meals on Wheels” deliveries.

Kristian, a 10-year-old boy from Macedonia, learns about puppetry from Lence, his Sunday School teacher and Kole, a youth that aspires to be a pastor. Leadership development is one of the greatest needs of the church in Macedonia. They seek church partners in support of the small but faithful churches that are adjusting to life in a post-Communist society.

On the final evening of my stay, I met Kole, a youth of intelligence, humor and boundless energy whom Carol helped to finish high school. His desire is to attend seminary, a five-year course of study in Austria and become a United Methodist pastor.

Leadership development is one of the great needs of the Macedonia church. Other needs include: church partnerships in support of the small but faithful local churches as they added to the post-Communist era; and regular support for the Miss Stone Center and other diaconal outreachs of The United Methodist Church in Macedonia.

For more information about the ministry of The United Methodist Church in Macedonia, contact me at 217-754-3350 or by email at: pherring@bluffsnet.com

MacMurray College inaugural Nov. 11

MacMurray College has announced that its new president, Dr. Colleen Hester, will be inaugurated on Sunday, Nov. 11 in the Annie Mercer Chapel.

Hester was selected earlier this year to succeed Dr. Lawrence Bryan, who retired June 30.

Lay and clergy members of the IGRC are invited to attend. MacMurray College is a United Methodist-related institution of higher education founded by Methodist pioneers 161 years ago in Jacksonville.

Lowpoint donates hymnals to MacMurray campus ministry

As part of its closing, the Lowpoint UMC has donated its hymnals to the Office of Religious Life at MacMurray College which oversees its campus ministry.

College Chaplain Randy Myers gratefully received the hymnals from Pastor Amy Holman. Lowpoint UMC is part of Holman’s three-charge along with Washburn and Varna congregations. The congregation is in the process of closing and generously donated their hymnals to MacMurray College which will be used in the newly reinstituted chapel services at the college.

Word of the hymnals came to Myers after a visit with Beth Fender, Coordinator of New Streams Ministry in the Conference Office. Her husband, the Rev. Mike Fender who serves River’s Edge UMC in Spring Bay, served as the courier for the hymnals. Both Beth and Mike are MacMurray College alumni (Beth, class of ’91 and Mike, class of ’83)
The article on Senior High YAR to be held March 28-30 at Lake Williamson Retreat Center, which appeared in the September issue of The Current needs some clarification.

The term “Shekinah” was incorrectly used as the name of the YAR event. Shekinah was actually the theme for last year’s YAR with the 2008 event’s theme being “Unleashed.”

Camping develops leaders

Developing spiritual leaders is a top priority of both the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and The United Methodist Church.

The camping ministry is a key element in influencing that development amongst young people. In summer 2007, a group of teenagers met at Living Springs Camp in Lewiston for a four-day Late Night Camp. Pastor Sally Hamon of Zion Chapel UMC was the dean of the gathering.

Families of the Bible was the study of the week. Students gathered around to read scripture and discuss elements and relationships that constitute a family. In addition to reading scripture the youth discussed Jesus’ perception of family in relation to their own families, or families they knew from home. These studies and discussions not only taught content, but also encouraged the youth to teach one another and assisted in the development of leadership skills.

To lead is to possess the abilities to discuss, analyze, conclude, direct, and compromise, to name a few. These are skills that youth learn as they pull together at campsites throughout the year. Late Night Camp allowed leaders the opportunity to watch the teens lead one another. Throughout the week youth were given numerous opportunities to determine their activities and divide responsibilities amongst themselves. From dividing chores to selecting activities during recreation time, and ensuring inclusion of peers, the campers governed the week under the guidance of the camp leaders.

Summer camping allows for an environment to be created that drives youth to develop into spiritual leaders. Creating a safe environment for children and teens to express their fears, doubts, concerns, and joys is to encourage trust and security. These are the tools of a ministry committed to reaching toward the future; to attain its ultimate goal of creating disciples for and of Christ.

Stoke camp provides can-do atmosphere for patients, family and caregivers

Marylee Nanley of Peoria came from a camping background. So when her husband suffered a stroke, the Nunleys began to discover the possibilities that camping provided to battle the isolation and loneliness that stroke recovery brings to the survivor, caregiver and family members.

What resulted was the Retreat and Refresh Stroke Camp which began in 2004 at Living Springs Camp in Lewiston.

“After John suffered a stroke and was in recovery, we began to realize the emotional and physical toll suffered,” Nunley said.

“At times, we felt isolated and alone, as if we were the only ones experiencing this survival mode.”

Stroke strikes more than 250,000 people each year. Many of those who survive will face challenges the rest of their lives.

Some struggle with their speech, others with memory, and many have mobility problems which often require the use of a cane or wheelchair. But, at this camp they are allowed to see new possibilities.

The principle obstacle to the camp becoming a reality was the selection of an appropriate site which could provide all the physical requirements for specially-challenged campers while presenting arestful arena for normal recreational activity.

Because of previous camping experiences at Living Springs, Nunley contacted site director Mike Eaker and a plan was put in place.

The purpose of the camp is to offer stroke survivors, caregivers, and family members an opportunity to relax together as they enjoy three days of recreational and educational activities designed specifically for them and to provide sharing time with others who are experiencing the same challenges. Through sharing insight and struggles with each other, stroke survivors and caregivers are better enabled to face the challenges ahead. The retreat presents a time to grow stronger, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

A three-day retreat schedule is designed to carefully balance educational opportunities with recreation and sharing with relaxation. It includes songs and skits at mealtimes. Other events in the schedule include games, crafts, educational focus groups, breakout sessions, social events, and even pampering sessions (massages, pedicures, manicures), and adaptive physical/recreational activities, many of which are firsts for some survivors since experiencing stroke.

Some of the stroke survivors have even scaled the rock climbing wall and braved the challenge course. These two areas — created through the efforts of volunteer groups — are unique to Living Springs Camp and provide campers new ways to learn and enjoy individual/group successes.

The challenge course has been particularly useful in helping caregivers — especially children — understand the daily struggles faced by their stroke survivors. Campers have also enjoyed adaptive outdoor activities of fishing, boating, and golf.

Education topics covered in recent retreats include: First Aid, Healthy Snacks, What’s Next with my Speech?, How to Enjoy a Vacation, Use of Adaptive Equipment, Using Bungalow Speech Software, The Diabetes and Stroke Link, and a question and answer period with Staff from the Illinois Neurological Institute. These teaching sessions present an opportunity to spend time with Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and Speech Therapists who encourage and educate survivors and caregivers with new information and equipment.

Separate breakout groups are held for survivors and caregivers. This allows each a sense of freedom in sharing individual stories. Survivors encourage each other to keep working and to develop a “can do” attitude while sharing concerns they have difficulty voicing to their caregivers. Caregivers have an opportunity to discuss their individual and unique challenges, to offer insight in ways to cope and to vent in a safe place about the responsibilities of caregiver, a job they never expected to have.

Social events range from viewing movies, to dancing to 50’s hits, to wiener roasts, to Hawaiian luaus, to hayrack rides on the specially-designed “people-mover” created by the men of Fairview Center UMC of Monmouth. This piece of equipment features a wagon bed with a hydraulic system allowing wheel-chair bound survivors to roll on at ground level. The wagon bed is then raised to “appropriate” wagon height for safe and accommodating transportation whether used for a hayrack ride or transporting people to the lake, the activity center, the challenge course, or the pool.

Every camping experience has a final challenge, and stroke camp is no different except ours is in the form of a Time of Affirmation held on the final morning of camp. This is an inspirational time during which scripture passages are read and a brief message is shared with the group. All campers (survivors, caregivers and staff volunteers) are then invited to respond to that message as it relates to their own individual spiritual walks. Tears, laughter, and many hugs become a part of that moment as we approach returning to our “old” worlds but as “new” creations, having been changed by this experience.

“The whole camp experience makes stroke survivors feel whole and not disabled,” said stroke survivor Chuck Hofvander. “For the first time since my stroke, I didn’t feel different, disabled, or unusual. I felt whole. Amazing.”

Haircut benefits Nothing But Nets

Doug Muhs, who attended Epworth Camp in Louisville, took a special interest in camp speaker Waterson Bomossie. Bomossie, who is from Liberia, holds a position as heard of youth, young adult and camping ministries for the Liberia Annual Conference. Bomossie explained that he traveled 1 1/2 hours to work each day by bus and leads a camp that has no beds or furniture because they were taken away and destroyed during the war. Children walk up to three hours each day to attend the camp. Bomossiee was in United States to help raise money to support this camp.

Muh’s home from camp excited about raising money for the Liberia camp. He decided to use an idea presented at Epworth where he would raise money by offering to shave his head. Each Sunday at church Muhs would pass the cups around, one cup labeled “shave head” and the other labeled, “keep hair.” As expected, the “shave head” cup filled up much quicker than the other.

Developing spiritual leaders is a top priority of both the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and The United Methodist Church.
Mission work trips planned for Liberia

**IGRC team leaves Oct. 23 for 13-day trip to Loyee, Camphor**

By Bunny Wolfe  
Coordinator of Missions and Outreach

Two upcoming mission work trips are already filled and as interest in Liberia continues to grow in Illinois Great River Conference. Additional trips are being planned throughout 2008.

Seventeen people will leave Oct. 23 and return Nov. 5. Participants are from Chicago, Edwards, Lebanon, Lewistown, Lincoln, Olney and Peoria.

Guy Goodman from Illinois Central College will meet with leaders of United Methodist University to discuss potential future student and/or teacher exchanges.

Dr. Sharon Hahs, newly installed president of Northeastern College of Chicago, will also visit with the president of UMU in Monrovia during the trip.

Two October projects in Liberia will receive assistance from the IGRC work team. Part of the group will help complete a health clinic in the rural village of Loyee in Tappita District. Funds for this project were donated by the Lebanon First UMC.

Construction on the clinic is underway, as Loyee residents have this project under roof from funds sent in May. The clinic will serve a rural area of Liberia that has been without health services through the help of visiting nurses and staff from Ganta Hospital. Team members working on the Loyee Clinic will stay in the town of Saglejape, a 20-minute drive to and from the work site.

The rest of the team will work at Camphor Mission Station. An apartment building has begun for teachers and staff, but funds have not been adequate to complete the building. Peoria First UMC has provided $8,000 for the first phase of the completion of this much-needed facility.

Additional work teams from IGRC are needed to return to this site to complete this project. This project was begun two years ago and is under roof, but much work and materials are still needed to complete the building.

Each time a site in Liberia is chosen for a hands-on mission work project, funds must be raised to purchase building materials prior to our arrival. The average range of project costs has been $10,000, but some projects cost as much as $14,000. Donations to IGRC #3548489 are needed for the upcoming projects in February and throughout 2008.

Checks may be made out to IGRC and designated to this number to provide necessary building materials.

Several opportunities are planned for February 2008 in the areas of Harper and Monrovia. As representatives from the IGRC Cabinet attend the 2008 Liberia Annual Conference, others will be working on two projects – an elementary school in Plebo and another health clinic in Wechocan. A minimum of $5,000 is needed for each of these projects.

Also scheduled for February, 2008, are two other events. There will be a computer training workshop led by Rev. David Estep, pastor of El Paso UMC. Healing seminars for women who were raped during the civil war will be led by Dr. Carolyn Weber. The computer workshops will facilitate better communication and better follow up on the many projects we are helping to make happen. The seminars for women will not only help bring healing and hope for many traumatized by war, but will also provide new counseling skills to clergy in Liberia. Both of these new ways of serving in Liberia have received full endorsement of Bishop John G. Innis.

October 2008 will include at least two more opportunities to serve in Liberia. There will be the IGRC Ordinands Mission Trip to Liberia to work on a conference youth center and another IGRC work project is still to be identified. Other teams being considered in 2008 will be a trip for teachers wishing to visit United Methodist schools and provide teacher training and a Wesley Foundation trip in late December 2008 into early January 2009.

The IGRC Partnership with Liberia goes far beyond sending funds for projects. We are forming relationships and lives being transformed. We travel to Liberia to offer our assistance in various building projects, but the value is not in the physical work accomplished. By doing so we not only meet new brothers and sisters in Christ, and by our presence we give hope while our own faith walk is deeply challenged and renewed. At the same time, our partners from Liberia travel to IGRC and share their transforming stories of faith. We are on a faith transforming journey together.

Watch for more details on upcoming work opportunities to Liberia. If God is calling you to experience Liberia, plan early to participate. Teams are filling up quickly. For more information contact Bunny Wolfe at 217-529-2749 or by emailing bwolfe@igrc.org.

**Early responder training Nov. 4-5**

A second workshop for early responders in disaster response will be held Nov. 4-5 at the Midwest Mission Distribution Center in Chatham.

Barbara Tripp, a consultant with UMCOR, will be leading the workshop. Tripp will be teaching topics for early response teams: Why do we do it, Why we need to do it, What we do and don’t do, Who is a team, What are their positions and responsibilities, Outfitting a team, and the necessary forms.

Sunday’s session will bring a light supper at 6 p.m. Monday’s session will end by 2:30 p.m. Meals will be provided.

Registration is required. Cost is $35. Participants staying at the Midwest Mission Distribution Center should plan to bring their own bedding (sheets, pillows, pillowcases, blankets or sleeping bags), towels and wash cloths.

Registrations can be sent to: igrc_disaster_response@yahoo.com mail to Rev. Judy Doyle, First United Methodist Church, 1315 Court Street, Pekin, IL 61554.

**It’s a fact…**

- United Methodist have helped more than 60,000 people rebuild 25,000 homes in the Gulf Coast in the two years since Hurricane Katrina headlined one of the most active hurricane seasons in recorded history.

- A recent USA Today analysis comparing recovery work by faith-based groups reported that UMCOR’s home improvement efforts outpaced other religious charities working in region. The article reported that 56,656 United Methodist volunteers have provided services on 15,643 of the total 53,226 homes improved. United Methodists represented the third largest contingent of volunteer workers in the region, according to the article “Faith rebuilds house and soul.” (http://www.usatoday.com/news/region/2007-07-18-faith-building_N.htm)

- The teacher’s building at Camphor Mission Station – one of the two projects that an IGRC mission team will be working on Oct. 23-Nov. 5.

- Midwest Mission Distribution Center has been active in sending flood buckets (house cleaning kit) to many locations in recent weeks. The Center has shipped to Aberdeen, S.D.; Iola, Kan.; Findlay and Shelby, Ohio; Gay Mills, Wis.; and Rushford, Minn. due to the damage caused by unprecedented flooding in those areas. Because of all the flooding, 3,000 buckets have been shipped since June and the Center’s supplies are depleted. Persons are asked to consider bringing the supplies for the “flood bucket” to MMDC, or sending a donation so that we can purchase the supplies. The Center’s web page (www.midwestmissiondc.org) has the listing of all the items placed in a flood bucket or one may call the MMDC at 217-483-7911 for more information.
Reaching New People for Christ

ISU Wesley: belong, believe, become

By Susan Scott

Rev. Jennie Edwards Bertrand adopted a church growth model to intentionally expand the ministry of the Wesley Foundation at Illinois State University when she took over as director in 2006. This decision has brought many personal and professional rewards, not the least of which is that leadership of ISU Wesley is now shared with 13 student leaders who each have a deep passion for ministry.

Bertrand notes that “the students who are attracted to ISU Wesley want to be involved and fully participate in its ministry.” “Merge” was the name recently selected by the students for their mid-week worship gathering. Students also designed the logo. Merge speaks to bringing all the various pieces and broken places of our lives into a oneness with God’s grace and love. Each worship gathering is wrapped in contemporary Christian music – a blend of popular and original pieces written by members of the worship band, and features messages that are relevant to the real lives of college students.

The current worship series, College MythBusters, focuses on the “legends” surrounding college life that often drive students to make choices that are ultimately found to be personally and spiritually unfulfilling.

Last fall, Normal First UMC transformed a large classroom off of its fellowship hall into a new office for the director of the ISU Wesley Foundation and a café for the students. This light-filled space quickly became popular with students because it is a great place to grab a cup of coffee, study, or just hang-out.

This past summer, Bertrand worked alongside students and church volunteers to remodel the Foundation’s main space on the lower-level of the church. A few details remain but, when completed, the lower-level will have a more contemporary look and a prayer room will have been added to the existing lounge, computer room, and kitchen/dining area. Wireless internet access is available.

The prayer room was created in response to feedback from students who wanted a quiet, sacred space where they could meditate, connect with God, and pray. Prayer stations and devotionalists will be changed frequently to keep things spiritually fresh.

Kick-off week for the 2007-2008 school year at ISU Wesley began with a barbecue and live band event on Aug. 19 attended by more than 100 students. Mid-week worship has been attracting a number of enthusiastic students weekly. The newly remodeled space on the lower-level has been eagerly embraced by the members of ISU Wesley and has become the site of student-organized, impromptu movie nights each Friday.

Small group studies are being expanded. As she did last year, Bertrand is leading Genesis, a study that provides support, encouragement, and a Biblical basis for all the things freshmen are experiencing – good and bad. Two new small group studies are being facilitated by members of the ISU Wesley leadership team. One uses the NOOMA video series to spark discussions on faith-based approaches to real-life issues. Another group, Soup & Study, gathers for lunch weekly to deeply explore the Christian basics that form the foundation of a strong faith. There are plans to add additional studies later in the school year.

Jennie expresses deep appreciation for the support students and ISU Wesley and receive from Normal First UMC. Congregation members volunteer to prepare the weekly Sunday supper so that students have a chance to relax and enjoy some fun and socialize over a “home-cooked” meal. They also “adopt” college students. The caring and supportive relationships that are created through this program often continue well-beyond the college years.

As she reflects on her first year and looks forward to her second as Director of ISU Wesley, Bertrand is pleased with the momentum the ministry is gathering and the lives it is touching. She feels that ministry motto belong, believe, become says it all.

UMW

Continued from page 1

their own age, not be a part of an older group,” Yockey said. “It is also easier to be new together than to try to fit into an established system. The women who respond are active, often working or in school and have children, yet they are interested in mission and in spiritual growth. They expressed a desire to learn more about UMW.”

Yockey said the recently-completed HeartSpa weekend Sept. 21-22 in Bloomington attracted more than 150 young women for a spiritual growth weekend which allowed relationships to be formed.

The study recommends that the conference UMW train mentors who are enthusiastic United Methodist Women committed to both mission and inclusion. Mentors will work with young women to develop groups that meet their needs. Mentors will be paired with new group leaders to assist groups in making choices about their group composition; to communicate with the church’s pastor; and to make personal invitations to prospective group members. The mentor will also provide a link to any existing UMW unit, asking that an encouraging atmosphere be established for the new group.

“The mentors are a critical part of this plan. We cannot emphasize enough that they need to be tolerant and accepting,” Yockey said. “The new circle or unit must feel it can develop in a way that meets its needs while still being in mission. It also needs to feel like someone is there for support.”

Yockey said that when two women are ready to start a group, a mentor will be there to help organize, noting that organization can be as simple as having a leader or facilitator or as structured as having numerous work areas and chairs assigned.

The study came as the result of 149 respondents ages 19 to 40. Wesley Foundations on campuses within the conference and information about the study was publicized through local church channels by existing UMW units.

The study is in its final editing stage and will soon be available online.

As she did last year, Bertrand is leading Genesis, a study that provides support, encouragement, and a Biblical basis for all the things freshmen are experiencing – good and bad. Two new small group studies are being facilitated by members of the ISU Wesley leadership team. One uses the NOOMA video series to spark discussions on faith-based approaches to real-life issues. Another group, Soup & Study, gathers for lunch weekly to deeply explore the Christian basics that form the foundation of a strong faith. There are plans to add additional studies later in the school year.
Hispanic ministries
Continued from page 1

Rivers Conference, a planned curriculum for intentional leader training, the training of more lay missionaries and work toward the establishment of a jurisdictional training school.

As a way of multiplying the conference’s efforts, IGRC has applied for a three-year, $50,000 matching grant. The grant is part of an ongoing National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries, approved by the 1992 General Conference. The quadrennial budget for the plan is $3.8 million with the General Board of Global Ministries providing three-year strategic planning grants.

But the IGRC proposal will be a collaborative effort leveraging the resources and talents of several general church agencies.

For example, the General Board of Discipleship designs and produces resource materials and training programs. The General Board of Church and Society provides training on social justice issues such as immigration; and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry train and equip clergy to do Hispanic ministries through retreats, modules and courses of study.

The General Board of Global Ministries will provide an ongoing consultant for the implementation of the IGRC plan.

The new plan calls for faith communities to be organically connected to an established congregation; that community services provide critical services to the community and leadership development. Three communities of faith have been established from scratch in the last three years in Washington Park, Beardstown and Kankakee.

“The reality is that we have 45 persons who have completed two modules of training but ministry to Hispanics is being done by Hispanics,” Crawford said. “Our vision needs to be broader by having Anglo communities doing ministry for and with Hispanics and we need to provide a strategy for utilizing trained lay missionaries.”

Men's study shows commitment, need for growth
By Andrew J. Schleicher*

"Only 27.2 percent of the men have a close male friend that knows or supports them,“ the report states. “The reviewers felt that if a majority of men have difficulty establishing and maintaining a heart-level relationship with another man, a majority would also have difficulty with a heart-level relationship with God.” Sixty-eight percent of the respondents also said that the senior pastor could do more to support men in the congregation.

NAKESVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - United Methodist men are committed to the church but lack close male support, a new report says.

The study of Men report was conducted by the Commission on United Methodist Men and will be submitted to the 2008 General Conference, the top legislative body of the denomination. The study was undertaken at the request of the 2004 General Conference.

The report is based on a survey of 1,350 people of similar demographics to the total number of men in The United Methodist Church. The results were presented by Gil Hanke, commission president, during the board's Sept. 15-16 meeting.

The commission oversees the work of men's ministry throughout The United Methodist Church. United Methodist Men has approximately 239,000 members in the United States in a denomination with about 8 million U.S. members.

Among the report's findings, 86.5 percent of respondents attend church almost every week, with 65 percent in small groups or a men's program. Half of those surveyed said they had a strong connection to their congregation that is growing stronger. An additional 26 percent felt as connected to their church as they did in the previous year. Reflecting on a personal spiritual life, 75 percent said they use a devotional at least several times a week.

In consideration of their families of origin, 76 percent of respondents said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious. Also, 42.6 percent said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious. Also, 42.6 percent said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious. Also, 42.6 percent said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious. Also, 42.6 percent said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious. Also, 42.6 percent said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious. Also, 42.6 percent said their fathers were “somewhat” or “very” religious.

While only United Methodist members were surveyed, the respondents thought a “lack of interest in religion” was the top reason the church does not reach as many younger men. “Societal emphasis on individualism/materialism” and “distrust of organized religion” also were widely held beliefs regarding this struggle.

"Only 27.2 percent of the men have a close male friend that knows or supports them,” the report states. “The reviewers felt that if a majority of men have difficulty establishing and maintaining a heart-level relationship with another man, a majority would also have difficulty with a heart-level relationship with God.” Sixty-eight percent of the respondents also said that the senior pastor could do more to support men in the congregation.

In the months leading up to the 2008 General Conference, the Commission on United Methodist Men will organize a think tank selected by Hanke and the Rev. David Adams, top staff executive, to reflect further on the study and report. The results of the think tank will be published and made available to the church.

*Schleicher is a freelance writer living in Nashville, Tenn.

Hispanic Population in Relation to Total Population
By District

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<th>Population</th>
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<th>Hispanic Population</th>
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Total all districts 2,517,477 3.02% 76,096

Data provided by IGRC Office of Congregational Development
How to Transition to a New Building

A workshop designed to assist churches in the midst of a building program or churches that will be undertaking a project in the near future is being offered by the Congregational Development team in October.

How to Transition to a New Building will be held on Monday, Oct. 15 at Washington Crossroads UMC beginning at 2 p.m. and again on Wednesday, Oct. 17 at Fairview Heights Christ UMC, beginning at 10 a.m. The workshop is designed for teams of pastors, staff and key laypersons.

To register a team from your congregation, contact Melissa Tarlock, congdev@igrc.org or 217-529-3219, with the names of people who will be attending. There is no charge for this event. However, attendees must register by Monday, Oct. 8.

The workshop will address such issues as:
- Why is it best to save the majority of your advertising dollars until several months after the transition?
- Why should a church not launch new initiatives immediately after the move?
- How do you deal with the “post-parish” depression that comes shortly after the transition?
- What steps can you take to build the morale of the congregation in the midst of its exhaustion?
- How can you help the staff re-charge their batteries after all the energy they have expended in the transition?
- Jim Griffith, who has coached churches through dozens of building transitions, will be the workshop leader. Griffith is the founder of Griffith Coaching Network, a network of coaches committed to helping church leaders develop more fruitful ministries. Jim spent the first 25 years of his ministry life starting five different congregations. Since then, Griffith has trained more than 5,000 church leaders, 500 church coaches, and conducted more than 400 assessments of pastoral candidates. Additionally, he coaches 15 to 20 churches each year. His vast experiences and intuitive skills help leaders discern the directions they need to take.

Leadership Institute deadline Nov. 15

The application deadline for Illinois Great Rivers Conference’s 2008 Congregational Development Leadership Institute is Thursday, Nov. 15.

The Leadership Institute is for persons interested in learning what it takes to start a new congregation or persons who would like to gain insights into bringing greater vitality to an existing congregation.

There will be four workshops through 2008 that cover Launching New Ministry, Revitalizing Existing Ministry, Developing a Ministry Plan, and The Interior Life of the Leader. Presenters include Jim Griffith, Paul Nixon, Mike Crawford, and Linnea Nilsen Capshaw.

Though primarily designed for pastors, lay people who serve as leaders within their congregations would also benefit.

Contact the Office of Congregational Development at 217-529-3219 or congdev@igrc.org for more information or to get an application.

Conference website to roll out Oct. 3

First of three phases to make web experience interactive and participatory

An Oct. 3 date has been targeted for the launch of a new IGRC website which will bring a streamlined look aimed at providing an interactive and participatory web experience. Persons that visit www.igrc.org will notice a more colorful website featuring an interactive and participatory website.

Notice a more colorful website featuring an interactive and participatory website.

An interactive and participatory website.

See Website on page 16.

Visit www.igrc.org

“... the Illinois Great Rivers Conference is more than just an organization but rather it is a living, breathing community of people called United Methodists in the southern two-thirds of Illinois,” said Paul Black, director of communication ministries. “Each river is a part of a living community and so the imagery provides a fitting metaphor to our life together.”

Persons navigating on the site will find four major areas – communications, administration, districts and ministries. When one of the four areas is selected, menus specific for that area will be located on the left-hand column, eliminating the multiple levels of menus.

Located on the right-hand side is a tool box which will aid the browser to post and join the Conference List Serv, sign in to check an igrc.org email account, a staff directory, a find a church directory, a central location for all downloads, a central location for all resources, an Outlook-based calendar with color coding for district and conference events and a subscription area for persons to subscribe to the variety of e-newsletters which will be offered by districts and ministry areas targeted to those individuals who have expressed an interest in receiving the information.

“In the past, we have done a lot of pull marketing,” Black said. “This means we send out an email that says, ‘Go look at the conference website – there’s important information there.’ Under the new model, we give you the information and say, ‘if this interests you, then here’s where you can get more information.’ By having the e-newsletters linked to the web, you can actually go to the website from inside the email you receive.”

Much of the first phase of the website is merely a redesign of what is already on the IGRC website.

In the second phase, the website will be adding participatory and interactive features.

See Website on page 16.
New Streams, Communications Ministries

Reflections from the Streams of Living Water

By Beth Fender
Coordinator of New Streams

New Streams of Living Water are flowing all over the Illinois Great Rivers Conference! Many churches have found places to dive into the stream—or at least to dip their toes in the water.

Churches benefit from New Streams in diverse ways. Some churches have sent leaders to training or informational sessions to learn how New Streams can help them make disciples and raise up spiritual leaders. Others have used one or more of the New Streams resources in various settings.

In August, 14 leaders representing the same number of churches attended informational sessions in the Kaskaskia River District—at Mt. Carmel Trinity UMC and Salem Grace UMC. These meetings provided valuable opportunities for those who attended to connect with pastors and laity from nearby churches. Participants also had the opportunity to learn more about the resources distributed to each church at the 2006 Annual Conference.

Some came to the informational meetings from churches that had already begun the process of developing an intentional system of disciple formation. They received advice on how to move to the next step, along with information about available coaching. These leaders also shared some of the pitfalls they had encountered while working with New Streams. Such honest sharing can prepare churches newer to the process to meet challenges with creativity and perseverance.

Many of those who attended these informational events were reassured to hear that other churches were facing the same challenges as they seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Some from smaller churches discussed the possibility of using the New Streams resources on a cluster level. This would allow leaders to share ideas and to hold one another accountable.

Many churches from throughout the IGRC who have explored the New Streams resources report that the DVD, Opening Ourselves to Grace, has helped people to better understand spiritual disciplines.

“So much of our society is not focused on spiritual disciplines—it’s a foreign concept,” says Ted Mitchell, pastor of Chillicothe UMC. “Learning more about the means of grace has helped members of our congregation grow and develop as individuals. This process has also led us to see the need to develop small groups for our leaders.” The DVD has been used in many ways, including use in leadership training, in Sunday school classes, in short-term studies, and as sermon illustrations.

Other churches of all sizes have used the process outlined in the workbook, Charting the Course for Christian Discipleship, to evaluate their current ministries and become more intentional about disciple formation. “The title, Charting the Course, may bring to mind the image of taking a class,” notes Beth McLaughlin, Minister of Discipleship at First UMC in Peoria. “This workbook is not a class, but a wonderful tool that churches can return to again and again.”

McLaughlin notes that large churches may find it helpful to approach the workbook looking to glean helpful tips, rather than feeling obligated to move through every chapter in order. The same is true for churches of any size, particularly those who have previously worked with Congregational Development, the Human Mosaic Project, or on their own to develop mission and vision statements or other ministry tools. Churches are free to use the materials in ways that suit their local context.

The six-session Bible study found on the DVD is another tool that many churches have used or adapted to fit their needs.

Bill Adams, pastor of Mossville UMC, used the study on the DVD as a beginning point, adding additional information and video clips to enhance each session. Adams advises other leaders to “know your own people and fashion the Bible study to take them from where they are to the next step in their own personal devotion and faith. Encourage them that the Means of Grace are normal and productive ways to connect better with God and with each other.”

For more information about New Streams, please visit the Conference website at www.igrc.org or contact Beth Fender, Coordinator of New Streams, at bfender@igrc.org or 217-529-2611. Team members and coaches are available to consult with you about how your church can get started with New Streams.

Christian educators to learn about New Streams

Christian educators from across the Illinois Great Rivers Conference will hear a presentation on New Streams at its Oct. 11 meeting at Springfield Laurel UMC.

The gathering will be held from 10 a.m. to noon, and is sponsored by the Illinois Great Rivers Conference chapter of the Christian Educators’ Fellowship.

Beth Fender, coordinator of New Streams, will present information and lead a discussion time about how New Streams can help the local church Christian educator.

For more information, contact Karleen Dude at 309-452-3838 or by emailing karleendude@yahoo.com Child care will be available upon request. Requests must be made by calling JoAnn Overholt by Oct. 4 at 217-525-1866.

Regional training conference Oct. 26-27

If you’re ready to begin the New Streams initiative and need more information on how to proceed . . .

If you have begun New Streams and need a more in-depth look at next steps . . .

If you’d like assistance in identifying potential obstacles and ways to overcome them . . .

. . . the New Streams Regional Training Conference is for you!

Oct. 26-27 (Friday 6:30 to 9 p.m., Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.)
United Methodist Center, Springfield
Cost: $20 per person payable to IGRC (includes Saturday lunch and materials)
Congregations are encouraged to send a pastor and two or more laypeople.
Registration Deadline: Friday, Oct. 12
To register or for more information, contact Christy Blickensderfer at cblickensderfer@igrc.org or 217-529-2473.

“Learning more about the means of grace has helped members of our congregation grow and develop as individuals. This process has also led us to see the need to develop small groups for our leaders.”

— Ted Mitchell
Pastor of Chillicothe UMC
What to do when violence strikes: being prepared imperative for churches

Editor’s note: The tragic church shooting Aug. 12 in Neosho, Mo., reveals the need for churches to review their security situation.

Many assume that places of worship are a sanctuary for safety — free from the tragedies associated with violence and terrorism. The newspaper headlines today tell a different story.

A church service shooting in Wisconsin claims the lives of seven victims.

A husband shoots and kills his wife in a California church parking lot.

An Oregon man dumps gasoline on parishioners, carpet and pews, lighting them on fire during a worship service.

Tragedies such as these seem unthinkable, but they are occurring in schools, businesses and places of worship with increasing frequency. Predicting when and where these events will occur is nearly impossible. However, it is possible to take steps to prevent and prepare for an emergency.

Develop a plan

“Creating a violence response plan is the single most important step a congregation can take to prevent and prepare for an emergency,” said C. J. Couch, chief of public affairs for the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. “The plan should assess and address the individual needs of a worship center, from the size of the congregation, to the type of building and any special programs they offer, such as day care.”

The first step in creating a plan is forming a security team to identify and assess the risks and potential threats facing a congregation. The team should include staff and volunteers as well as congregation members with special expertise such as medical, military or law enforcement backgrounds.

Together, the team should brainstorm a list of potential events that could happen during service times, weekdays or nights, as well as threats specific to a school or day care on the premises.

“Systematically walk through the list and propose ways to prevent each event,” Couch said. “Begin by addressing prevention areas, followed by developing a plan for response.”

Improve building security

Oftentimes preventing a tragic incident starts with improving building security.

Simple measures, such as keeping bushes around the doors and windows trimmed, limiting access points by locking doors and windows when not in use and installing good lighting around buildings and entrances can reduce risk. In addition, monitor who has keys to buildings and change the locks every one to two years.

Consider using a custodian to open and close the facilities and be present when your buildings are used by outside organizations.

New technology also is available to help safeguard buildings and people. Electronic card access systems now replace keys. The cards limit access to specific areas of the buildings and monitor who is coming and going at all times.

“Security equipment that can help prevent or reduce a violent incident is important,” Couch said. “Consider closed-circuit television cameras, metal detectors and modifying your building to create locked zones that provide a secure area during a crisis.”

Some congregations are large enough to warrant hiring a security service; however, establishing a relationship with local authorities also is beneficial.

“We coordinate our security efforts and emergency response with local officials,” said Sarah Pierik, director of media relations and a member of the crisis management team for Wheaton College, a Christian college in Wheaton. “When asked, local authorities will often add your location to their patrol routes and provide expert advice for creating proper response plans.”

Include a personal connection

During worship or school hours, continual contact is a simple way to keep out unwanted visitors. Work with ushers or a volunteer security task force to be present at all access points as well as walk the halls and patrol the parking lots before, during and after worship services. Encourage them to make eye contact and acknowledge everyone they see.

Ask ushers to keep cell phones in their pockets or supply them with hand-held or discreet communication devices so they can communicate with one another and emergency services.

Establish incident protocol

Many congregations have a plan in place to respond to weather or fire emergencies, but little thought is given to incidences of violence.

“When an event occurs, there is obviously going to be a sense of panic and confusion,” Couch said. “If plans are already in place and you have exercised the plan, the likelihood of confusion and chaos will be minimized. Work together with your security team to establish a plan or response protocol for all potential incidents.”

There are several key components of a response protocol:

• Communication – In the event of a violent situation, it is important to have a plan in place to notify staff, volunteers and members of important details.

Wheaton College recently installed a “reverse 911” system. “The system enables the college to send out an automated message to all faculty and students whose cell phones are registered,” Pierik said. “In addition to the reverse 911 system, we are researching a campus-wide broadcast system, similar to a loud speaker system that would enable us to broadcast emergency information.”

Law enforcement also needs to be notified of the situation. Designate a group of people to make the call, such as ushers during a worship service, or install a “panic button” in classrooms, day care centers and worship facilities to alert officials at the touch of a button.

• Evacuation – Establish a plan for evacuating members and staff, including evacuation routes, meeting places and who will care for those with disabilities. Post all evacuation routes.

• First Aid – Determine who will provide on-site first aid. Keep first-aid kits easily accessible and stocked in all rooms. Consider offering free first-aid and CPR training to all interested congregation members and staff.

• Responsibilities – In the event of an incident, assign a responsibility to each member of the security team. Identify who is responsible for communicating messages, organizing first-aid efforts and handling media inquiries.

Training and awareness

Share the response plans with congregation members and encourage them to take an active role in promoting a safe worship or education environment.

Designate time after worship services to review and practice emergency response drills with the security team and congregation members.

Reprinted with permission from the summer 2007 issue of Risk Reporter, the quarterly publication of Church Mutual Insurance Co.

Church Mutual Insurance provides a variety of resources to churches whether or not they are insured with Church Mutual. Visit: www.churchmutual.com and click on “Safety Resources” and select “Protection Series Booklets” from the left-hand column menu.

United Methodist Communications has developed training for persons who have been designated spokespersons to the media. For more information, visit: http://www.umcom.org and click on “Spokesperson Skill Development” under the “Communications Resource” section of the home page.

The three commandments of stewardship ministries

By Ted Frost
IGRC Foundation

Author Eugene Grimm in the book Generous People gives us the Three Commandments of Stewardship Ministries. These commandments can bring us a new opportunity to talk a new way about stewardship.

First, he encourages us to “Keep it Positive.” This is so easy to do in the United Methodist Church. Because we are a connectional church we have ministries all over the world. The truth is the sun never sets of the ministries of any local United Methodist Church because we are in ministry around the world. How much more positive can we be than that?

Our local churches are also providing much needed ministries within their own communities. One sad statistic in our churches is that 85 percent of the congregation does not know every ministry the local church provides. It is important to highlight the ministries of the church and keep our congregations aware of how God is acting through our ministries.

Second, Grimm encourages us to “Keep it Biblical.” This is very easy to do. In the Church Mutual benchmark for giving, 10 percent in 2005, United Methodists gave 3.85 percent of their annual income. We have some room to grow. However, this number is up from the previous year. We have an Old Testament foundation upon which to stand to talk to the congregation about stewardship.

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks more about money and possessions than anything else besides “the Kingdom of God.” In the church we like to talk about the warm fuzzy words like, “love,” “peace,” “joy,” “happiness,” but Jesus spoke more about money an possessions than all of these added together. We have a New Testament foundation upon which to stand to talk to the congregation about stewardship.

Lastly, the author encourages us to “Stress the Mission – NOT the Need.” People are more likely to give if they know what they are giving to makes a difference. If they see what the out come may look like they are more likely to give. The outcome that we want in the Church is a different world.

It is important for all of our local churches to have a mission statement that they have discerned for their community. It is important that they focus on this mission in all that they do and who they are. Our mission should excite the congregation and community in a way that will garner their support.

So when is comes to stewardship it would be helpful to follow Eugene Grimm’s Three Commandments Of Stewardship Ministries:

1) Keep it Positive,
2) Keep it Biblical, and
3) Stress the Mission – NOT the Need.
New hymnal proposed for United Methodist Church

By Andrew J. Schleicher*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - The United Methodist Church could have a new hymnal by 2013 under plans endorsed by the denomination’s Board of Discipleship.

Directors of the board, meeting Aug. 22-25, voted to ask the 2008 General Conference to form a hymnal creation committee next year to begin developing a new hymnal.

If the committee’s work is approved by the denomination’s top legislative body in 2012, the new resource would replace The United Methodist Hymnal published in 1989. It would be the second official revision since the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist churches in 1968, not including new songbooks for specific racial/ethnic or language communities.

The Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, chief staff executive of the Board of Discipleship, pointed out that the current hymnal would be almost 25 years old—“normally the life of a hymnal”—by the time a new one could be ready for distribution.

“What is the message being sent to young people who come to church and see a hymnal from 1989 — a hymnal that is older than they are?” Greenwaldt said in an interview with United Methodist News Service. “We need a new hymnal that picks up new hymns, new texts, new melodies, new words to old tunes that are being created and being sung in our churches. It is time to engage the General Conference in this question.”

The United Methodist Publishing House already has endorsed the project.

“Our research shows that The United Methodist Hymnal is widely used in all membership-size churches, but that there is also the strong desire for additional and new hymns and tunes to augment worship in a variety of styles and settings,” said Neil Alexander, president of the church’s publishing agency.

Alexander suggested a new hymnal would include musical styles such as jazz, spirituals and contemporary harmonies and a greater variety of accompaniment settings for guitars, keyboards and percussion instruments. It also would draw more music from racial/ethnic communities and would better serve contemplative settings such as Taizé worship and special services for baptism and communion.

Emerging needs

The denomination recognized the need for new music amidst widening worship styles in 2004 when General Conference formed a committee to study:

• Trends and measurement of congregational singing;
• Psalter, services, ritual and service music;
• Texts and tunes (including global and ethnic music);
• Implications of digital and other emerging technologies for worship and congregational singing;
• The Wesley hymns.

The committee, with membership from the Board of Discipleship and the Publishing House, conducted research and listed 19 needs that include “new UM worship and music resources; … providing resources in a variety of ethnic and cultural styles; … (and) new UM resources for ethnic, global, praise, and contemporary music.”

While the committee agreed on the needs, it opted not to make recommendations to the 2008 General Conference and instead referred its findings to Greenwaldt and Alexander, who then proposed the development of a new hymnal to their respective agencies.

Dean McEntyre, staff member of the Board of Discipleship and a member of the music study committee, said a key reason that no recommendations came out of the panel’s work was a lack of consensus over which new resource should get first priority.

McEntyre said all agreed about the need for a new hymnal eventually.

*Schleicher, former editor of Newscope, is a freelance writer in Nashville, Tenn.

Church budget tightens around four areas of focus

By Marta W. Aldrich

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - The United Methodist Church is facing the “very hard, very painful” work of cutting ministries and shifting resources while building its denominational budget around four newly named areas of focus.

After months of reviewing a proposed budget that does not keep pace with inflation, the chief executives of the denomination’s program agencies pledged to preserve ministries that address those four areas - leadership development, congregational growth, global health and poverty.

However, programs and ministries outside those initiatives will be reviewed for possible adjustments and cuts if the church’s top legislative assembly approves the $642 million four-year spending plan next spring, the executives said. The General Conference, which meets every four years, will gather in Fort Worth, Texas.

Agency leaders reported on their budget work Sept. 7 during a joint meeting of the Connectional Table and the governing board of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the two leadership entities that voted in May to send the spending proposal to General Conference.

“The agencies have worked very hard to protect the monies allocated for these major cooperative initiatives,” said the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, chief executive for the Board of Discipleship.

The church’s four areas of emphasis are an attempt to focus the mission and ministry of the church at the dawn of the 21st century and have been affirmed by church leadership at all levels - from the Council of Bishops to the Connectional Table to agency boards and many annual (regional) conferences.

The proposed budget for the 2009-2012 period gives an average spending increase of 6.6 percent to the church’s nine program agencies, which had asked for an average of 16.6 percent more for the next four years. The increases range from 5.37 percent for the Board of Discipleship to 9.6 percent for the Board of Higher Education and Ministry and 10 percent for the Commission on United Methodist Men. (See details at http://www.umc.org/atf/cf/%7BDB6A4E131B6424741%7D/20070530_details_of_proposed_budget.pdf.)

The United Methodist Church representatives attending the joint session expressed concern that some cuts would impact poor and powerless people who depend on the church to speak in their behalf.

“When you consider some of our rural communities, the only light left on in town is the United Methodist Church,” said the Rev. Beverly Wilkes Null, a district superintendent in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and a member of the Connectional Table.

“We understand that, as United Methodists, we can’t do it all,” she told United Methodist News Service. “... But the reality is that human trafficking and sex trafficking is a hot-button issue and we need to be invested in it, and perhaps there are some other things we ought to divest in. Let’s not sacrifice our ministry to the poor and the disadvantaged.”

*Aldrich is news editor of United Methodist News Service.
Lackore to retire as finance chief
By Marta W. Aldrich*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Sandra Lackore will retire next June after serving 12 years as chief executive of the agency that administers finances for The United Methodist Church and safeguards its legal rights and interests.

She shared the news with her staff at the General Council on Finance and Administration on Sept. 17. Her retirement also was announced churchwide by Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, president of the governing board for the agency.

Lackore, 63, will take a three-month family leave beginning Oct. 1 to care for her husband, the Rev. Cecil Lackore, who is scheduled to undergo intensive treatments this fall for acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Her retirement is effective June 30.

The council’s executive committee is developing an interim leadership plan, which will be announced later this month, according to a statement from the agency.

Lackore will be available for consultation during that time.

Lackore’s tenure at the council includes consolidating the agency from three geographically separate offices to one central location in Nashville, establishing a foundation to endow denominational ministries and establishing a denominational insurance company.

“Sandra has dedicated much of her professional life to The United Methodist Church with over 30 years of service …,” Swenson said. “Sandra’s leadership and vision have resulted in the recent consolidation of council operations along with the gathering of a highly skilled staff.”

Swenson said Lackore has guided the council’s members and staff “in demonstrating to the denomination an operational culture encompassed in its mission focus: serving the church through the ministry of administration. She has embodied and reflected our vision of servant ministry,” the bishop said.

“A new beginning” Lackore said her retirement next June after General Conference meets in Fort Worth, Texas, will allow for new leadership for both her agency and the Connectional Table for the next four-year budgeting period, which begins in 2009. The Connectional Table works with the GCFA to coordinate the denomination’s ministries and finances for making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Lackore noted that, in November, Mary Brooke Casad will become the first chief executive of the Connectional Table. “It is a new beginning,” Lackore said in a statement. “I have great hope for the leadership of the (Connectional Table) under Mary Brooke Casad. I will leave GCFA knowing that it is in capable and faithful hands also.”

Raised in Boston, Lackore was an administrator and treasurer for the New England Annual Conference (formerly Southern New England) when the council’s governing board chose her in 1995 as the first woman to head the agency. She began her career as a church administrator for a congregation in Brockton, Mass., and later was director of a church camp. A former president of the United Methodist Association of Conference Treasurers, she also has been a delegate to multiple General Conferences and Northeastern Jurisdictional Conferences.

Integrity and trust Lackore’s retirement announcement elicited praise for her leadership during the last 12 years.

“One of the things I highly respect Sandra for is the integrity she brings to how our appropriation dollars are spent,” said the Rev. Steven R. Jones, a member of the council’s executive committee and senior pastor of Williamsburg (Va.) United Methodist Church.

“It’s critical there be a sense of trust throughout our connection, and I am inspired by the way Sandra values every dollar that comes to the general church. She honors that trust,” Jones said United Methodist News Service.

Jones said Lackore has ensured integrity in the process through a system of audits and its efforts to honor the intentions of General Conference actions. He called her a “visionary person.”

“She has an impressive ability to command an understanding of very specific details and yet also to look at the big picture. … She loves our church. It’s part of who she is, and she has tried to serve it with every ounce of her being.”

The Lackores have three children and three grandchildren. Their daughter, Jennifer Lee Kelley, died unexpectedly in February.

*Aldrich is news editor of United Methodist News Service.

United Methodist loans can be paid online
By Vicki Brown*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - A newly launched online repayment system is making repaying United Methodist student loans easier and will improve efficiency in processing scholarships and loan applications.

“We are moving into the 21st century,” said Angella Current-Felder of the Sept. 1 online launch by the Office of Loans and Scholarships at the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

“This is the first step in making all of our services available online and much more convenient for those repaying loans or applying for college aid,” said Current-Felder, executive director of the Office of Loans and Scholarships. The system was developed with SunTrust Bank.

Beginning in 2008, United Methodist students also can apply for scholarships and loans online.

In addition, students will be able to go online and track the status of an application to see if it is complete. For instance, a scholarship applicant can learn if a letter of reference is missing or if the application is approved pending verification of enrollment.

The new system, called Colleague and developed by Datatel Inc., also will allow frequent e-mail communication with applicants, said Allyson Collinsworth, scholarships administrator.

“In the past, we sent a letter saying these items are missing. They will still get snail mail, but with the new system, they will get constant e-mail reminders about what is missing,” she said.

The enhanced technology will be used to verify an applicant’s church and annual conference and will make it easier to produce reports and analyze data about who gets loans and scholarships. In addition, it will enhance communications with church pastors and annual conferences about scholarship and loan programs.

“This new system will facilitate communications with United Methodist conferences and provide online access to United Methodist students attending colleges, universities and seminaries. It will enhance the effective and efficient processing of scholarships, loans and loan repayments,” Current-Felder said.

Loans, scholarships and offerings
As of March, students have been able to borrow more money at a lower interest rate, according to Current-Felder. The amount a student can borrow was doubled to $5,000, and the interest rate was dropped to 5 percent. As of the end of August, more than $1.7 million of the $1.8 million allocated has been loaned to students needing financial help for the fall semester of 2007.

Offerings from Student Day, observed the last Sunday in November, support other United Methodist scholarship and loan programs. Last year, the board awarded $3.5 million in scholarships to 2,800 United Methodist students and loaned nearly $1 million to college students. Since 2000, about $13.8 million has been loaned to 5,671 United Methodist students attending college.

*Brown is an associate editor and writer in the Office of Interpretation, United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

To learn more about United Methodist loans and scholarships, visit www.ghbem.org. United Methodist churches can order resources for Special Sunday offerings by calling United Methodist Communications at 888-346-3862 or visiting www.umcgiving.org/ss.
Proposed Social Creed seeks global acceptance

The Rev. Alan Delamater, who serves on the Board of Church and Society’s governing board, recites the proposed new United Methodist Social Creed during a Sept. 13-16 meeting in Washington. The 2004 General Conference tasked the denomination’s social advocacy agency with writing a contemporary, timeless version of the century-old creed. The task force traveled to Europe, Africa and the Philippines to solicit feedback in drafting a revised creed that reflects the global nature of the church. The creed was approved by the board and now goes to the 2008 General Conference for consideration by the church’s top legislative body.

By Kathy L. Gilbert*

WASHINGTON (UMNS) - Fresh off its world tour, a “user-friendly” United Methodist Social Creed faces its biggest audience next spring in its bid to become the church’s “roadmap to making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

A small task force of six under the leadership of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society has been working on a 2008 Social Creed to replace the revised 1972 version.

The original creed was written in 1908 as a denominational statement decrying child labor and supporting the economic rights of workers, better workplace conditions, better wages and worker safety.

The 2004 United Methodist General Conference designated the period of 2005-2008 as a time of celebration, education and study of the Social Creed and Social Principles leading up to the 100th anniversary of the 1908 Social Creed.

As part of that celebration, the Board of Church and Society took on the task of writing a contemporary, timeless version to offer for future generations.

The final document was presented and approved at the directors meeting of the Board of Church and Society held Sept. 13-16. The creed now goes to the 2008 General Conference, the denomination’s top legislative body, which meets April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s book of law, recommends the Social Creed be emphasized regularly in every congregation and used frequently in Sunday worship.

However, even Bishop Susan Morrison acknowledged that she wasn’t sure what the creed said or where it could be found when she was asked to chair the task force.

"My experience is that is what has happened to the Social Creed. I have used it, but it wasn’t part of me," she said. “One of the first decisions we made as a task force was to make it user-friendly.”

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On the road

Another priority was to make sure a new Social Creed reflects the global nature of the church. The task force took a draft to Europe, Africa and the Philippines for feedback and suggestions.

The first stop was last March in Oslo, Norway. The five European United Methodist bishops chose 12 delegates to attend.

“There were moments when I literally felt a chill at the joy of being in a setting with our sisters and brothers from across Europe and Euro-Asia and hearing them dialogue about this Social Creed,” said Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, who began chairing the task force when Morrison retired in 2006.

“To be given the opportunity to discuss the Social Creed from a European perspective was both useful and interesting,” said Bishop Oystein Olsen, episcopal leader for the Nordic and Baltic Area. “I was inspired by the level of enthusiasm and the knowledage among the participants, and look forward to seeing a global perspective in the final draft.”

The second consultation was held May 25-26 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, where 36 participants from across the African Central Conferences gathered to review the text.

The consultation so inspired Albert Tyre that the composer and organist from Sierra Leone stayed up all night to compose an accompanying musical arrangement.

“It was a great encounter we all had in Kinshasa, and that has made a lot of difference in our lives,” Tyre said. “We Africans have been so excited about the Social Creed more especially as it has been put into a song we could be singing.”

Nathanael Arnel De Pano, a songwriter and musical director at Kamuning First United Methodist Church, Quezon City, Philippines, said he liked the idea of a more “reader-friendly, easier-to-digest” Social Creed.

“I like the collegial and consistent building style the participants have taken,” he said of the Aug. 9-11 consultation held in Tagaytay City, Philippines. “Everyone is prepared to put forth a draft that is representative of the general disposition of the Philippines conference.”

Singing creed

“At the three consultations, every time we got to the music was the most exciting time,” said the Rev. Grace Cajjuat, a musician, conductor and associate pastor at Appleton (Wis.) First United Methodist Church. “Everyone got more excited about the Social Creed after experiencing it set to music.”

The musical version, which was presented to the group in the Philippines and the directors meeting in Washington, was written by Carol Simpson, a 23-year-old music graduate attending Claremont School of Theology and serving as director of contemporary music and outreach ministries at Glendora (Calif.) United Methodist Church.

Her version is written in a “call and response” style. “I have attempted to create unity by choosing a melody and rhythm that all cultures can embrace,” she said.

Original 1908 Social Creed

The Methodist Episcopal Church stands: For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life. For the principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions. For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational diseases, injuries and mortality. For the abolition of child labor. For such regulation of the conditions of labor for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community. For the suppression of the “sweating system.” For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, with work for all; and for that degree of leisure for all which is the condition of the highest human life. For a release for [from] employment one day in seven. For a living wage in every industry. For the highest wage that each industry can afford, and for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised. For the recognition of the Golden Rule and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.

From The Book of Discipline – 1908, Methodist Episcopal Church

The task force will send the creed to other musicians in hopes of receiving different arrangements in a variety of genres including jazz, hip-hop, gospel and rock ‘n’ roll.

Marching orders

The United Methodist Social Creed has been the inspiration for other faith traditions to develop their own creeds including the National Council of Churches, according to Morrison. See Social Creed on page 20. . .

United Methodist Social Creed

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God’s gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God’s handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We recognize the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God’s Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.

(It is recommended that this statement of Social Principles be continually available to United Methodist Christians and that it be emphasized regularly in every congregation. It is further recommended that “Our Social Creed” be frequently used in Sunday worship.)

Preparing for General Conference 2008:
A Future with Hope

By Rev. Dr. Beverly Wilkes Null

Familiar words written by Charles Wesley were the melody that was fresh from the worship leader’s heart set the stage for the Connectional Table to reflect on what had been and to boldly proclaim the promise of a new chapter for our beloved United Methodist denomination:

O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise; the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace.

My gracious Master and my God assist me to proclaim to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of thy name.

We gathered as representatives of our worldwide church with General Secretaries and their respective presidents from the Council of Bishops to open our hearts, our minds, our ears and our eyes to the message that God is birthing in and through us. It is a message that is keenly aware of the challenging demands that every local church and resident pastor confronts as together they seek to be faithful Christians living and discovering the United Methodist Way.

We spent our time together forging a path where mission, ministry and money converge to assist the United Methodist Church in creating as our General Conference Theme of 2008 proclaims, A Future with Hope.

A Future with Hope is being born in our midst as the Connectional Table is learning to be both the visioning body of the Church and the steward of massive resources. Oh yes, we are aware of the reported membership decline, our financial resources are not where we would like them to be and yes, we are aware that the language of connection has diminished in its influence over the past twenty or so years. However, we are also keenly aware that “The World is Still Our Parish.”

Membership decline is a real reality for United Methodists in the United States of America and it is true in some parts of Europe but it is not the United Methodist collective story that is being lived out and embraced on five continents. There are 13 million people who have chosen to live out their Christian faith the United Methodist Way. “O for a thousand tongues to sing our great Redeemer’s praise;” no, O for 13 million tongues to sing God’s song has to become our mantra.

As the Connectional Table we embraced the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 63, “O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as a barren and dry land where there is no water. Can you feel the synergy of 13 million people living the United Methodist Way eagerly seeking God? That is our hope as we join the Council of Bishops in offering to the Church Seven Vision Pathways:

- Teaching the Wesleyan Model of reaching and forming disciples of Jesus Christ
- Strengthening Clergy and Lay Leadership
- Developing New Congregations
- Transforming Existing Congregation
- Expand racial/ethnic ministries (unique to the USA)
- Reach and transform the lives of new generations of children
- Eliminate poverty in community with the poor

These seven vision pathways extend an invitation to every United Methodist to invest our lives and our resources in ministries and missions that quench the spiritual thirst of our souls. It is a way of connecting with 13 million Christians who choose to live out their faith in a uniquely Wesleyan context where faithful living includes, learning how to follow Christ while at the same time teaching others to follow.

The United Methodist Way is choosing to invest our personal and collective resources in ministries that strengthen clergy and lay leadership to be effective in birthing new congregations and transforming existing congregations. To the thirsty and the faint we offer Christ, not some god, hidden in a book that is hard to read. We offer Christ, the God who cares about those who struggle with issues of poverty, the God who invites the wealthy to invest in ministries and missions that transform their lives while also eliminating poverty and offering life to others; sharing the abundant life with others. Living the United Methodist Way includes digging deep within ourselves to find a wellspring of hope that produces resources capable of delivering clean water to dry lands, bringing food to the barren places and spreading nets over a continent to destroy malaria. “O for a thousand, 13 million tongues to sing our great Redeemer’s praise…” and to believe that our Christ is birthing through us A Future with Hope.

General Conference 2008 delegates will have many petitions before them and everything will seem very urgent. However, I want to challenge delegates to prepare for their time in Forth Worth, Texas, by praying for the 13 million United Methodists who trust them to help us to birth a future with hope. Understand that the collective decisions that you make as delegates hold the possibility of not only changing this denomination but they will change lives and in some cases, change a continent and to some extent, change the world. I invite the delegates to think about people living on five continents who still need to know about the saving and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that every delegate to the 2008 General Conference will ponder what we as practicing United Methodists have to offer to the World as together we seek to have worldwide collaboration and influence for the Church of Jesus Christ as we birth A Future with Hope.

(Rev. Dr. Beverly L. Wilkes Null, conference superintendent assigned to the Mississippi River District of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference is a North Central Jurisdictional member of the Connectional Table relating to South Indiana and Virginia conferences).

Reflections on Annual Conference

By Skip Proctor
Latham UMC

I have been attending annual conference for the last 30 years. When the two former conferences joined together into our present one, I lost my conference “job.” So I asked our District Superintendent, Rev. Gerald King, if there was an opening at the conference as a “at-large” member and he has appointed me each year. He said he was willing to do that because he felt I have done great work in the district and during conference time.

After attending conference for about 10 years, I became interested in becoming a page. Rev. Floyd Blackard and his wife Bobbi, served for a number of years as head pages. We had 25 lay members and ministers that worked from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day of conference. Our work was sorting materials that were to be put on chairs at different times during sessions, collecting offerings, taking counts when votes were taken, controls of the doors and checking persons to make certain they had their badge and to instruct visitors, who had a different color badge, where they were to sit because they could not vote.

We had to know the conference area front and back and to tell people where they needed to go for meals, meetings and other things.

When the Blackards gave up the head page position, they made me head usher and I have to train about 25 people before conference starts and then assign them daily to the three entrance doors – two per door – four times each day.

I also work with conference staff in the office outside the arena door. We also have security personnel who work with me outside the arena doors while we are in session.

When we came to Peoria, we had tables in which to sit, and that made our job a little easier. I still move around most of the day and greet people and they ask a lot of questions. Sometimes, I need to go to our leader to get an answer.

We now have between 2,000 and 2,500 at annual conference. I get to know a lot of ministers and they get to meet a lot of lay members who come every year. These people come from north and south, east and west within the Illinois Great Rivers
Beyond the boundaries

The majority of United Methodist Churches in North Alabama are small churches and they are in precipitous decline.

All indications are that the decline will accelerate over the next decade, despite our efforts, and despite the mandate of Jesus Christ that we, as his disciples, are to go and to grow. By my estimates, we produce about 20 new small churches every year in North Alabama, as once medium-sized churches shrink.

History shows the small congregations are wonderfully resilient. They survive. To be honest, one reason United Methodism has more small membership churches than any other denomination is that we have so many ways of subsidizing and supporting small churches, long after any other denomination would have forsaken these small congregations.

However, one of the main reasons that small churches survive is that many so restrict their view of the ministry of the church, scaling down their expectations for discipleship, that clergy and laity find it easy to meet the meager expectations that many people have for the small church. If your definition of the church does not extend beyond the bounds of the nurture and care of the people in that congregation, then it doesn’t take much pastoral leadership, or much time and effort, to meet those expectations.

Now if we move from our scaled down, limited expectations for the church, to Jesus’ more expansive expectations, many of our small congregations look quite different. The major reason why our small congregations are not growing, and the major reason why most small churches are almost exclusively tied to those of us in the over 50 generation, our small congregations are not growing — mainly because it restricts ministry to its own people. A congregation may think of itself as a loving and caring group of people, but if you visit there on a Sunday morning, or if you should try to join, you have the impression that they are unfriendly, focused inward, and closed. Their vision of the church is restricted to those people whom God gave them thirty years ago. They restricted their ministry to the members of the church, and their families. As those members age, as the birth rate declines, so does these churches.

Alas, too many of us pastors have bought into this view of ministry. We believe that the purpose of their ministry is our ability to care for the people within the congregation exclusively. We pray for the sick, we visit the infirm, we focus upon the needs of the congregation, without praying for, visiting, or encountering anyone beyond the bounds of the congregation. And the congregation comes to value a pastor exclusively on that pastor’s performance within the congregation. Death is the result.

The writer to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ as the one who went “outside the camp.” Jesus Christ was crucified, in great part because he went beyond the boundaries. He reached out, touched, and embraced the unconditionally. He was constantly pushing out beyond the boundaries, expanding the notion of God’s kingdom and God’s people. In fidelity to Jesus Christ, we must stop propping up small congregations who have decided to limit their vision of the church to those who happen to have been given to them by a previous generation. And pastors, who have come to limit their definition of ministry to those within the bounds of a congregation, have got to grow in their definition of what God has called them to do as evangelical leaders of the church. Any congregation that limits its ministry to itself will not be with us long into the future. This appears to be a law of church growth and decline. More importantly, it also seems to be an implication of following a Savior like Jesus!

(Bishop William H. Willimon is the episcopal leader for the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church. The above column was from an entry on Bishop Willimon’s weblog on Aug. 21, 2007. You can find this column and other blog entries at http://willimon.blogspot.com)

Encouragement needed to use UMC resources

Editor, The Current:
It was good to read about the caring and giving children in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference who participated in this summer’s VBS experiences (VBS Roundup, The Current, July 27).
However, I was disappointed to discover that only one of the Vacation Bible Schools featured in the article was using United Methodist materials. I know that my church (Normal First UMC) had a successful and meaningful (as well as colorful and “mission-full”) week using Lift-Off, the 2007 Cokesbury publication. The Book of Discipline states that amin the responsibilities and duties of elders and licensed pastors are: “To give oversight to the educational program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media.” (§340.3(a)2).
Perhaps more “encouragement” is necessary.
Catherine W. Knight
Normal First UMC

True or false?

Editor, The Current:
The September Current story about our church divesting from 20 American companies doing business in Israel is based on the belief that Israel is occupying Palestinian land.

Nine times the story mentions Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land. This occupation, the story says, has led to “human rights violations that go against Christian principles and international law.” Therefore, the goal of our church, Bishop Peter D. Weaver reminds us, is “ending the Israeli occupation.”

But what if the occupations is not true? What if the nine times reference to Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is just plain false? Then the entire foundation of this story collapses.

We must remember that Israel has been at war with its Arab neighbors since 1948 – 59 years. Only Egypt and Jordan have signed peace treaties. The other Arab countries (such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq) have not. So this is still an actual war, one that has not yet ended in peace treaties. And international law does apply to this long war, namely UN resolutions and the UN Charter, the Geneva Convention and the League of Nations.

When Egypt, Jordan and Syria lost the Six Day War in 1967, they lost the land, too. Since there were no peace treaties at the time, the administration of Gaza and the West Bank became Israel’s responsibility by international law. Arabs continued to sell land to the Jews until Yasir Arafat stopped that in 1994. He declared such land sales a capital offense.

The nation of Israel came into existence legally, not be conquest. There is no occupation by Israeli settlement of Palestinian lands, and saying there is nine times in the Current story does not make it so. For our church to believe and support this Arab propaganda is very dangerous. Our church must do all it can to see that 20th century history is not repeated in the 21st century.

Rev. Douglas Rettig
Retired IGRC clergy
Social Creed

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sequence of the Social Principles from the natural community to the world community.

“It is written as marching orders for social holiness,” said Rev. Mike McKee, a task force member. “If you read the document closely, you will see some phrases that are familiar to you from great hymns and Scripture.”

The ending phrases are from Jesus’ first public sermon in the Book of Luke. McKee notes that those same verses also were used by Methodism founder John Wesley to describe the character of the itinerant pastor.

“I can’t tell you how profoundly we have felt the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst,” Middleton said. “Obviously we had a lot of choices from many recommendations over the last few years. But as we worked with the final language, it truly felt it was coming together as a wonderful whole.”

Morrison said approving a new creed could be an important milestone at the upcoming General Conference.

“... If in the end we can approve a Social Creed that becomes part of the DNA of the future generations’ faith stories, praise the Lord,” she said.

Foundation presents stewardship event

The United Methodist Foundation of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference will be holding a workshop, Getting the Most Out of Local Church Stewardship on Wednesday, Oct. 24 at Hillsboro First UMC.

The training event will be from 10 a.m. to noon with lunch provided.

The training is most effective if pastors can bring laypersons with them. Committees with specific interest would be: finance, trustees, stewardship and church council.

Registrants are asked to contact Ted Frost at tfrost@igrc.org with the number of people who will be in attendance. Limited space is available.

CFA moves to direct debit of cafeteria plan payments

Paperless option also available to churches for health insurance, pension

By Paul Black

In an effort to reduce bill processing and paperwork for local churches as well as the conference, members of the Council on Finance and Administration voted Sept. 17 to have payments for the conference’s cafeteria plan for medical expenses be handled electronically beginning in 2008.

“One of the biggest complaints we get from local church treasurers is there are too many bills from the conference, too many envelopes and too many stamps,” said Rick Van Giesen, conference director of administrative services. “Many persons are already paying bills through automatic debit and so this is a way in which to reduce some of the paperwork.”

Van Giesen said currently 220 bills are sent out monthly to collect the amounts participating pastors have asked to be deducted from their paycheck. Under the plan, these monthly amounts would be debited out of the church’s bank account on the final day of the month.

In addition, local churches will have the option to also have pension payments and health insurance premiums deducted electronically. Currently, 550 persons received health insurance bills on a quarterly basis and 650 bills are generated for pension payments since part-time local pastors participate in the pension system but not the conference health insurance plan.

A mailing will be sent to all local church treasurers. If pastors opt for the conference medical reimbursement plan, treasurers will need to provide bank account information and return the form to the conference office. The first debited transaction will be at the end of January 2008. A similar form will be needed to be completed by treasurers for the optional debiting for pension and health insurance payments.

In other business, CFA approved a final draft of the job description for the newly-created controller’s position. The vacancy will be posted in Newscope, Springfield State Journal-Register and the job listing at www.umc.org and on the conference website. Start date is targeted for Nov. 1.

CFA also approved salaries for district superintendents and directors for 2008. Superintendents and directors received a 3.42 percent raise beginning Jan. 1. Superintendents will earn $75,500 and directors $74,462 in 2008.

The raises are just slightly higher than the 2007 cost-of-living increase (3.32 percent), but less than the average raise received by pastors across the denomination (3.63 percent) and by IGRC pastors (3.83 percent).