Crossing borders

Photojournalist challenges UMW to step outside comfort zone in mission work

By Susan Scott
Communications Coordinator
IGRC UMW

Paul Jeffrey is clear about Jesus’ call of missions to the church.

“If anyone wants to engage in mission work, they need to be willing to step out of their comfort zone and be willing to follow Jesus across geographical borders as well as those created by prejudice and ignorance of other people and cultures.”

In a wide-ranging presentation that wove together biblical texts, historical records, current events and some dry humor, the senior correspondent of Response, the magazine of United Methodist Women, was the guest speaker at the Illinois Great Rivers Conference United Methodist Women Annual Celebration Oct. 6 at Champaign Faith UMC.

“God is never satisfied with where we are, and neither should we be. We are called to cross over the borders that separate us from each other,” Jeffrey said. “(When we do) we will find there is not just an opportunity to serve others, but also a chance to discover our own salvation.”

He also encouraged everyone to consider what borders we each needed to cross and reminded us that we never travel alone, God goes with us.

Sri Lankan fishermen received funds to buy new boats and nets to replace those destroyed by the tsunami. This fisherman works in Galle. The Methodist Church of Sri Lanka and the United Methodist Committee on Relief provided the money. The photo was a sampling of the work of Paul Jeffrey, who was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the IGRC United Methodist Women.

The biblical mandate

Jeffrey points to the biblical passage that best describes this sort of life-changing mission, he believes, is Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-37). Jesus, a Jew, and the woman, a pagan Gentile, lived in two highly separate worlds defined by race, social class, and religious background.

Yet, on that day in Tyre, their two worlds collided and forever changed Jesus and the scope of his mission.

This bold and persistent woman knew Jesus to be a healer and she wanted him to heal her daughter. Her interaction with Jesus points to the biblical passage that best describes this sort of life-changing mission, he believes, is Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-37). Jesus, a Jew, and the woman, a pagan Gentile, lived in two highly separate worlds defined by race, social class, and religious background.

By Paul Black

Bishop Christopher announces retirement effective Sept. 1

By Paul Black

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher has announced that she will retire when her third term as episcopal leader of the Illinois Area ends Sept. 1, 2008.

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

“My decision is the result of a long, prayerful, intentional discernment that has led to the realization that it simply must, is time to retire,” Christopher says in her Current column found on page 15 of this issue. “In the ordinary time of Charles and my life and in the extraordinary movement of God, it is time.”

A bishop shall be retired on Aug. 31 next following the regular session of the jurisdictional conference if the bishop’s 66th birthday has been reached on or before July 1 of the year in which the jurisdictional conference is held. Christopher could have served another four years as bishop in another episcopal area but chose voluntary retirement.

“I love the work I am about as a bishop. I have never been more fulfilled in ministry or more hopeful for the church and its mission in the world than I am now,” she wrote. “Thus, this decision is not driven by any desire to distance myself from episcopal ministry.”

The decision does have consequences within the North Central Jurisdiction, set within the North Central Jurisdiction, set.
Early disaster response workshop Nov. 4-5

An Early Response Team workshop will be held Nov. 4-5 at the Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

UMCOR consultant Barbara Tripp will lead the workshop which includes such topics as: Why 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 begin with a light supper at 6 p.m. Monday’s session will end by 2:30 p.m. Meals will be provided. Participants staying at the Midwest Mission Distribution Center should plan to bring their own bedding, towels and wash clothes. Registrations can be sent to: igrc_disaster_response@yahoo.com or Rev. Judy Doyle, First United Methodist Church, 1315 Court Street, Pekin, IL 61554.

Missouri prayer seminar features Tekyl

Nationally-known speaker Terry Tekyl will be speaking on prayer at two Missouri locations Nov. 3-4.

Tekyl will speak at Church of the Shepherd (Highway 94 campus) in St. Charles, Mo., on Saturday, Nov. 3 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tekyl will speak at Wood’s Chapel, 4275 NE Lakewood in Lee’s Summit, Mo., from 2:30 to 7 p.m.

The Acts 29 Prayer Event is a blend of worship, teaching, ministry, prayer, and fellowship. The registration fee includes all seminar materials, honorarium for Dr. Tekyl, and a catered dinner. This dinner is open to all pastors and their churches.

For more information on this event, please contact Wendy Minshall at 816-795-8848, ext. 312, or drop her an e-mail at wendym@woodschapelchurch.org.

For more information about Terry Tekyl and to view a couple video clips at wendym@woodschapelchurch.org.

MMDC Fall Festival slated for Nov. 9

The Fifth Annual Fall Festival for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center Endowment Fund will be Friday, Nov. 9, from 4 to 7:30 p.m. at Springfield First UMC.

The festival is the combined effort of many central Illinois United Methodist church groups.

The event will feature pulled pork sandwiches with trimmings, dessert and beverages, prepared by Raymond Poe of Sherman and a church crew. Mission craft items for Christmas from the Twice Giving Store, home-baked goods sale of cakes, pies, breads and candy, a silent auction of antiques and miscellaneous items, a pottery making display and sale, floral and craft items sale and MMDC project and program displays are a part of the festivities.

Choral and other musical groups from various churches will be on stage every 30 minutes.

Tickets are now on sale at many churches or may be purchased at the door.

Pensions statement for information only The General Board of Pensions included a “Before and After Tax Agreement Form” in your recent quarterly statement. This was merely for convenience.

Pastors need not use the form to declare 2008 Personal Contributions to UMPIP. The Charge Conference “Green Sheet” does the same thing.

Red Bird Mission collection

The Kaskaskia River District United Methodist Men will be loading a semi trailer for Red Bird Mission on Saturday, Nov. 17.

The collection will be held at the LeClair Marriott Farm, 1 mile north of Bellmont.

Articles being accepted are men’s, women’s and children’s clothing; toys, furniture and appliances. Articles need to be packed in strong cardboard boxes that can be stacked or strong trash bags.

Monetary donations will be accepted to offset fuel costs for delivering the trailer to eastern Kentucky.

For more information, contact Leon Johnson at 618-445-4902 or 618-298-2499. Persons needing to contact the loading crew on Nov. 17 should call 618-262-3739 or 618-272-3740.

Russian Methodist choir to visit Springfield area

The Singing Christians, a girls’ choir from Kurgan, Russia, will visit the Springfield area Nov. 17-22.

A concert of Russian folk songs and religious music will be presented by the choir on Tuesday, Nov. 20, at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary of Springfield First UMC. A freewill offering will be taken to assist with expenses. A reception for the choir will be held at the conclusion of the concert.

The choir will sing during First UMC’s worship services on Sunday, Nov. 18. Pastor Larissa Malysova from Voronezh, Russia, will accompany the choir and will speak in morning worship services Nov. 18 at Taylorville First UMC. Malysova is an interpreter for the choir.

Members of the choir will be hosted by church families in Springfield and conclude their visit with a Thanksgiving dinner on Wednesday, Nov. 21 at the Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

The choir of high school and college age students helped to start a new Methodist church in Kurgan, a city of 400,000, in the Ural Mountain region of western Siberia. The pastor, Lyudmila Egorova, is also the director of the municipal choir. She will lead the 12 members of the girl’s choir on tour. The Kurgan church has been a partner church with Springfield First UMC for the past seven years.

While in the United States, the group will attend the Russian Initiative meeting in Kansas City from Nov. 14-17, concluding their visit with concerts and visits to three churches in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore areas.

Positions

Immediate opening for full time Print & Mail Assistant. Must have computer skills, accurate data entry skills, and able to learn new computer programs and operate print/copy machinery. Must be in good physical condition, able to lift 40lbs. Positive attitude, good work ethic necessary. Full time position with benefit package, salary in low 20’s. Send resume/cover letter to Rick VanGiesen at rvangiesen@igrc.org or fax at 217-529-4107.

The Current (USPS 014-964) is published monthly by the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church, 5900 South Second Street, Springfield, IL 62711. An individual subscription is $10 per year. The opinions expressed in viewpoints are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Current, the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, or the United Methodist Church.

Communications Team leader: Paul E. Black; team members: Catherine Flynn and Michele Willson. Send materials to P.O. Box 19207, Springfield, IL 62794-9207, tel. 217-529-2040, fax 217-529-4155, e-mail TheCurrent@igrc.org, web page: www.igrc.org. Periodical’s postage paid at Peoria, IL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to “The Current,” Illinois Great Rivers Conference, P.O. Box 19207, Springfield, IL 62794-9207.
People in the News

Bishop May named interim GBGM head

STAMFORD, Conn. — Bishop Felton E. May (retired) will serve as interim general secretary of The United Methodist Church’s international mission agency, the General Board of Global Ministries.

Directors of the board, meeting in Stamford, elected the bishop after they confirmed a personnel committee report that did not re-nominate Rev. R. Randy Day as general secretary, a post he had held since 2002. The general secretary is the chief executive officer of the organization.

“This action does not diminish our appreciation for the many talents and skills of Randy Day but indicates that directors are looking for a different style of administrative leadership to take us into the future,” said Bishop Joel N. Martinez of San Antonio, president of the board.

“Randy has made many new friends for mission and strengthened mission partnerships around the globe. We acknowledge his energetic service.”

Bishop Martinez said that a search committee for a general secretary would be named before the directors ended their meeting in Stamford Oct. 11 and would begin its work right away.

Day became general secretary of the Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church Jan. 1, 2003. For the two previous years, he was a deputy general secretary, responsible for two of the board’s program areas, Evangelization and Church Growth and Community and Institutional Ministries. The General Board of Global Ministries is the international mission agency of the denomination.

Day was born in Roodhouse and grew up in the United Methodist church there. His family came from rural and small town merchant backgrounds. He attended Illinois Wesleyan College in Bloomington and Silliman University in Dumaguete, the Philippines, receiving a B.A. degree in sociology and a certificate of competency in Southeast Asian Studies. His theological degree is from the Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.

He was ordained in the former Central Illinois Annual Conference and was associate pastor at Chillicothe First UMC. He transferred his membership to the New York Conference in 1973 and served congregations in both Connecticut and New York State. He was also superintendent of the Metropolitan District of the Conference.

Notified of the honor, Widicus displayed the heart of the servant leadership he provided the conference during his tenure. “I am completely surprised and very honored to represent the Illinois Great Rivers Conference as I become a member of the Communicators Hall of Fame,” he said. “I appreciate all the opportunities the former Southern Illinois Conference and the new Illinois Great Rivers Conference have given me to use the talents God gave me in communications. It is a joy to spread the good news of Jesus and to tell the stories of the ministries and missions of God’s people.”

IGRC Director of Communication Ministries Paul Black introduced Widicus to the gathering as part of the annual UMAC Awards Banquet. Black joined with Steve Hustedt, former writer/editor for The Current and now Director of Communications for the Desert Southwest Conference based in Phoenix, Ariz., in nominating Widicus for the award.

“Paul served as a voice of reason and compassion during the times immediately before and after the merger of the former Southern Illinois and Central Illinois conferences,” the duo’s nomination read. “As with any merger, difficult decisions, like where the new conference home would be taken, the former Southern Illinois Conference and the new Illinois Great Rivers Conference until returning to the local church in 2002.

Widicus inducted into UMAC Hall of Fame

Former director of communications ‘voice of the conference’ during time of merger

By Paul Black

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Rev. Paul Widicus has always had a knack of getting teams of people to accomplish a task.

Whether it is getting a group of men together to do community mission work in Harrisburg or assembling a team of volunteers to provide communications support for the annual conference session, Widicus has been the one behind the scenes guiding the work and seeing that it was done with quality.

The United Methodist Association of Communicators honored Widicus’ years of service in Christian communications with induction into the UMAC Hall of Fame Oct. 25 at the Francis Marion Hotel. Widicus, pastor of Harrisburg First UMC, served as director of communications for the former Southern Illinois Conference and later served as co-director and director of communications for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference until returning to the local church in 2002.

Appointments

Keith Anderson to Preachers Aid Society (extension ministry), Sangamon River District, effective Nov. 1. Change of effective date from previous announcement.

Larry Bricker to Lovingston, Sangamon River District, effective Jan. 1. This is a change from half-time to three-quarter time only.

Linda Harrod to Springfield: Woodside, Associate, Sangamon River District, effective July 19.

Sara Ishbell to Chatham, Sangamon River District, effective Nov. 1.

Amanda Jayne Richards to Heyworth, Vermilion River District, effective Nov. 1.

Kenneth G. Sloan-Couch to Roanoke and Secor, Vermilion River District, effective Nov. 1.


Paulette Kay Cott to Cropsey and Saybrook West, Vermilion River District, effectiveNov. 1.

Janet Lee Wyrer to Collision, Iroquois River District, effective Aug. 1.

Mark Canada to Clay City, Harmony and Bethel, Kaskaskia River District, effective Dec. 23.

Suply not appointed


Don Barker to Fairview, Kaskaskia River District, effective July 1.


Bob McNeely to Xenia, Kaskaskia River District, beginning July 15.

Change of status

Russell D. Collister to Galva, Spoon River District, effective Sept. 1.

While the church of Logan County celebrated the appointment of Dayle Eldredge as a part-time associate pastor of the Logan County Parish Sept. 10. At a Mike Rayson concert sponsored by the county churches, Eldredge was presented with a clergy robe by Revs. Jame Hahs and Julie Azbell, indicating her status in The United Methodist Church. They were joined by Rev. Kevin Trepptom of Mt. Pulaski, Chestnut and Latham Charge and by Rev. Sharon Trepptom of Moweaqua who is Dayle’s clergy mentor. Logan County Parish is a charge of over 900 members. Though each pastor has primary responsibility for a particular church, each pastor is appointed to the serve the whole parish.

Pictured from left are Hahs, Azbell, Eldredge, Kevin Trepptom and Sharon Trepptom.

Death notices

Helen Murphy, wife of retired clergy Rev. Albert Murphy, died Oct. 15. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to a daughter, Margaret “Beth” Foulk, 228 S. Blair, Virden, IL 62690.

Beulah Purcell, widow of Rev. Wilbur Louis Purcell, died Oct. 12. Expressions of sympathy cards can be sent to: Mrs. Margaret Evans, 422 Stave Mill Road, Murphysboro, IL 62966.

Doris Mae Friesner, widow of the Rev. Marvin W. Friesner, died Oct. 3. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to a daughter, Janet Parker, PO Box 272, Iuka, IL 62849.

Positions

Church Music Praise and Worship Leader (part-time) — Duties include: leading worship music during a service on Sundays, directing Praise and Worship Choir, selecting worship songs and choir music, directing weekly practices, organizing special music and seasonal performances. Interested applicants should contact Rev. Ron Martz at Eureka UMC, 208 N. Callender, Eureka, IL 61530. Phone: 309-467-3026. Email: revrm@mtco.com.
Worship conference helps attendees ‘lift their gaze to the Savior’
By Susan J. Meister

“Our purpose was to help local church worship ministries move to the next level,” commented Tim Price, Director, Harvest worship ministries.

Paula Pokfliet, a member of the Troy UMC Worship Team, sang an original song, accompanied by Tim Price, at the 2007 Worship Conference.

Santa Express info coming soon

Information about Santa Express, the holiday ministry of IGRC churches to children at Chaddock School will be mailed soon to churches.

“Through worship, we give ourselves to God again and again,” explained Julie Zdenek, director of worship for Shiloh UMC.

“Worship is not about us at all. We are here to help people lift their gaze to the Savior.”

More than 150 persons from 35 churches gathered Sept. 22 to explore components of modern worship. The attendance grew from 110 at the first conference held in 2006. Thirty-two of the churches were from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

“Our purpose was to help local church worship ministries move to the next level,” commented Tim Price, Director, Harvest Ministry Teams. Attendees heard music from the Harvest Worship Band, The Great Romance and Mike Rayson, and had the choice of elective sessions during the day.

General sessions were led by Zdenek, Price and Rayson, a Christian musician and preacher. Elective sessions included leaders from Champaign New Horizon, Columbia Bethany, Fairview Heights, Pawnee, Shiloh, and Troy United Methodist churches.

Rayson reminded the gathering that “nothing can separate us from the love of God.” As those assembled sang There is None Like You, Rayson remarked that we sing about God and God sings about us.

Harvest Ministry Teams and Conferences has scheduled additional events for the fall and spring for youth and young adults. Go to www.harvestconferences.org for more information about Ignition Middle School, Fire-Up, and the Light Kids conferences.

Order Today!

2008 Program Calendar
To order please send $6.50 per calendar and a completed order form to The Communications Ministry Team.

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

United Methodists join in opposing gambling expansion

ILCAAAP, faith groups rally at State Capitol opposing expansion to fund capital project bill

SPRINGFIELD — United Methodists from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and the Northern Illinois Conference were among those represented at the Oct. 3 Rally organized by Illinois Church Action on Alcohol and Addiction Problems (ILCAAAP).

The rally was being held during the veto session of the Illinois General Assembly where lawmakers are considering a capital works project funded by the expansion of gambling.

Paul Black, IGRG director of communication ministries, represented Bishop Sharon A. Brown Christopher at the rally.

“Whether we know it or not, gaming is a tax on poor people,” said Sen. James Meeks, D-Chicago, told the Springfield State Journal-Register. “We devised a scheme to deliver capital at somebody else’s expense.”

“I’m very blinded by the need to do a (construction) bill today.”

ILCAAAP is mobilizing forces to mount a challenge to the capital works bill in the House. Sample resources, such as letters to the editor can be found at: http://www.ilcaaap.org/legislative_information/action_alerts/2007-09-25.php

Paul Black’s complete statement at the ILCAAAP Rally can be found at: http://www.igrc.org/getdoc/f38783b7-5f41-4086-9d29-71ffecb6a47/ILCAP-Statement.aspx
Local Church News

Clarksburg, Moulton to merge into new congregation

The Clarksburg and Shelbyville Moulton UMC's are merging into the formation of a new congregation, the Fourth Street UMC on Sunday, Nov. 18.

Clarksburg and Moulton voted Sept. 9 to merge their ministries together. The final services at both churches will be on Sunday, Nov. 11.

The new congregation will be meeting in the former Moulton UMC building. Clarksburg UMC will be sold to Clarksburg Township for use as a community building.

Clarksburg was founded in 1900. Moulton was founded in 1878.

McLean raises funds for Nothing But Nets

McLean UMC and McLean Christian Church have joined together to conduct Vacation Bible School the past few summers.

The offering collected this year was marked for Nothing But Nets to assist families in Africa. McLean UMC's congregation also gave special donations to this effort and combined it with the profit they made from sponsoring this fall’s town-wide garage sales. The community’s generosity totaled $715 toward stopping the spread of malaria in Africa.

Lincoln First UMC include elected officials as liturgists

Participating in the worship service were two members of our school board, the Circuit Clerk, and the County Treasurer. The Lincoln mayor, who was baptized and confirmed in our church, also participated.

The service was originally planned to be a letter writing Sunday for Bread for the World. Rev. Jame Hahs was part of a small delegation representing Bread for the World that met with U.S. Rep. Ray LaHood. Following the meeting, Hahs invited Congressman LaHood to come to a worship service. LaHood selected Oct. 14 but later sent regrets due a pressing legislative schedule. Hahs had already contacted the United Methodists who serve our county and city and so it was decided that the service would go forward.

Seeking a national representative, Hahs contacted Senator Durbin’s office and they sent Tim Sullivan who led the responsive reading from the Psalm.

Annual pet blessing offered at Streams of Hope

Streams of Hope UM Fellowship recently celebrated its fourth Annual Pet Blessing. Pastor Jennifer Seder blessed 44 dogs and two donkeys. A generic blessing was given to the herd of deer, flock of ducks and one lone rooster. Each pet was given a certificate of blessing along with homemade treats baked by Cheryl Lenig. Those gathered sang, “All God’s Critters Got A Place In The Choir” as they rejoiced in the multiple ways that God blesses lives through furry friends.

Each fall churches across the nation have a service for the blessing of animals and pets. Oct. 4 is the official day for the Feast of St. Francis, a day to celebrate the life of this 13th century Italian monk. Francis was well known for his hospitality to all creatures—animals included. He loved all animals, great and small, and believed they should be treated with dignity and respect. Francis wrote a Canticle of the Creature, an ode to God’s living things. It includes the line, “All praise to you, O Lord, for all these brother and sister creatures.”

Members of Patton UMC collected a crib full of shoes for the people of Liberia. The collection from this congregation of 25 to 30 in southeastern Edgar County was the result of Anne Cooper, Tom and Jan Jones visiting and telling of their trip to Liberia. The group told about people with no shoes and how the parasite would get into their bodies causing their death.
Displaying an air of confidence, Mark Canada, pastor of Long Point and Grand Ridge UMCs, sits atop a dunking booth as Emily Ruff and Kendall Loudon prepare to dunk the pastor in the water. The churches recently raised $445 to assist the Vermilion River District’s Fannie Boat project and the Nothing But Nets campaign. The boat will be used by Liberian pastors to minister to their congregations and provide transport to remote areas of the west African country. The other funds will be used to provide treated mosquito nets which will protect persons from malaria-infested mosquitoes while they sleep.

Widicus

Continued from page 3

“...and what leadership would continue forward, had to be made....Paul worked with his counterpart Bettye Story to merge their communications resources and, in so doing, helped the two conferences to embrace one another and become one...They found compromise in their work together, sharing editing responsibilities and growing together in ministry.”

Story was inducted into the UMAC Hall of Fame in 2002.

Part of shaping the communications of the new conference, Widicus and Story managed to make an enormous impact, combining the monthly Southern Illinois newspaper into a biweekly publication for the new conference.

Widicus also was one who early identified that communications needed to be more diversified and worked on assembling a team for video production work and launching the conference’s first website.

Always one who could form a team to accomplish a task, Widicus credits others for his success.

With his knowledge of communications, Widicus saw an opportunity to serve the United Methodist connection by assisting the United Methodist Committee on Relief. UMCOR mentioned needing a mobile communications center, and Widicus stepped forward to wire an RV so that it could be dispatched to various parts of the United States when United Methodists joined other disaster relief agencies in recovery efforts.

“I thank all the persons who have helped me over the more than 20 years I have been a communicator and thank all those who have encouraged me along the way;”

“My hope is that with all the communication resources we now have at our disposal, the church will find many new and efficient ways to connect God’s people spiritually across the Conference and around the world.”

— Paul Widicus

he said. “My hope is that with all the communication resources we now have at our disposal, the church will find many new and efficient ways to connect God’s people spiritually across the Conference and around the world.”

Hustedt noted in the nomination that one of the greatest parts of the gift of communications ministry that Paul gave to the United Methodist church is that it continues to grow. In his time as a communicator Paul worked with and mentored Stephen J. Hustedt, former writer/editor for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and now Director of Communications for the Desert Southwest Conference; Black, former Assistant to the Bishop in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and now the Director of Communications Ministry in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference; and Susan Meister, former Director of Missions and Outreach then Director of Communications for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and currently the UMCOR Gulf Coast Communications Consultant.

“Paul had a hand in shaping the communications ministry of these three communicators and many more,” Hustedt said. “Moreover, these three communicators are now influencing communicators throughout the United Methodist Connection. Through his work and his teaching the impact of Paul’s communication’s ministry is felt today and will continue to be felt for generations of communicators.”

Summer campers help out Liberian children

Campers raise funds to combat malaria for distant friends

By Carolyn P. Smith

Belleville News-Democrat

WASHINGTON PARK – At least 70 children who attended an eight-week summer camp at Trinity United Methodist Outreach Center hope the money they’ve raised will help children in Liberia to sleep without the fear of being bitten by disease-carrying mosquitoes.

On Aug. 3 — the last day of the camp — they presented a $608.82 check to the Rev. Dr. Matthew Jaiah, a native of Liberia. They told him to send the money to his homeland to buy mosquito nets for the children who need them. The nets will cover their beds and prevent mosquitoes from biting them.

“It’s about helping no matter where the need is,” said 8-year-old Aaron Bell. “We don’t want those children over there to be getting bit by mosquitoes because they hurt. And, if you scratch them when they itch, they bleed and can make a sore. That’s not too good.”

Bell said he hopes the money he and his fellow campers raised will make life easier for some of the children of Liberia.

“I wish we could have gotten more money, but we are giving them what we can,” said 11-year-old Brandon Taylor. “It was a great experience. I am glad to be able to help somebody.”

The campers surpassed their goal of $500.

“I knew we’d reach our goal, and I am happy we went beyond that,” Teresa Mendez, 11, said. “We want the children in Liberia to be happy. We don’t want them to get bit by mosquitoes and maybe die from the bites.”

Whitney Taylor, 11, said she is used to helping others.

“We’ve helped people in Asia and in other parts of Africa before,” she said. “For me, it’s nice to give than to take. So, I am glad to be a part of a group who is helping others.”

Some staffers and aids at the camp, called “Safe Harbor,” talked to the campers about the children dying in Liberia from malaria. The mosquito-borne illness is estimated to cause more than 1 million deaths a year worldwide, most of them in young children in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

“Right away, the young people wanted to know what they could do to help,” said the Rev. Rose Booker-Jones, pastor of Trinity UMC. Booker-Jones said the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, comprised of 900 United Methodist churches in the southern two-thirds of the state, benefits Liberia.

“We’re helping Liberia to rebuild through mission trips and hosting fundraisers. So, local churches here are helping,” she said.

Jaiah thanked the children for their efforts and told them he was impressed with them. He has requested that pictures of the campers be sent to the children of Liberia so they will know who helped them.

“I am impressed because even though you’re located here (in Washington Park) and have needs of your own, you have sympathy for the children in Liberia,” he told them. “It shows your commitment and love for your fellow sisters and brothers.”

(Reprinted with permission from the Aug. 6 issue of the Belleville News-Democrat.)

With a red bandanna serving as a bib, Rev. Lee Legg, pastor of Bradford Leet UMC, eats Sunday lunch from the church’s rooftop. Members of the church met Legg’s challenge to have 100 people attend a Sunday morning worship service. After the pastor was seated, everyone enjoyed the Fourth Sunday Food and Fellowship.
Quincy Union UMC holds global communion service

By Robert Morwell
Pastor, Quincy Union UMC

QUINCY — Time and space are not what they used to be.

What once seemed to be insurmountable barriers are now either non-existent or merely inconvenient.

On World Communion Sunday, Union UMC in Quincy went about proving that reality, while celebrating the fact that long before the world was linked by modern technology, Jesus Christ created a global spiritual network.

Their ambitious goal was to link, via internet and international telephone, with Christians on all seven continents.

They fell one continent short, as bad weather disrupted satellite communications with Chaplain Jonathan Bell, USAF Reserve, at McMurdo Station, Antarctica. But Pastor Bob Morwell on Union UMC had succeeded in establishing contact with Bell earlier in the week. Bell, a fellow UM from the West Pennsylvania Conference, was thrilled to be invited and proud that a UM church in Quincy, Ill., and a pastor from Orlando, Fla., meet for the first time in a church in Kansas City and immediately discover they have a common acquaintance near the South Pole! The world has grown small, indeed!

Using GoogleEarth projections on the church’s sanctuary screen, the congregation “leapt” from their church to a Presbyterian church’s sanctuary screen, the congregation in New Zealand, where it was already 3:00 AM the next day. Roy Pearson, the pastor of and Philip’s and St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Churches, appeared on the sanctuary screen and helped lead the call to worship in the Bislama language of the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu.

Then, the congregation jumped to Kidapawan in the Philippines, where UM missionary Janet McCarty, who hails from Jacksonville, IL, greeted the congregation with an onscreen smile and wave and led the in an affirmation of faith. A Filipina friend read a passage from Galatians in the native language of Tagalog.

Moments later, the congregation vaulted over the vast Pacific to the Chilean city of Iquique.

“Kind of makes you feel like Superman, doesn’t it?” Morwell commented as the GoogleEarth globe spun to each new location.

UM missionary, Becky Harrell, greeted the congregation by phone, because an internet connection with the Second Methodist Church in Iquique had proven too difficult. Then the members of Union sang, “Jesus Loves Me” and the children of the church responded with the same verse in Spanish. Harrell went on to note that members of the church had shown up an hour early in eager anticipation of the historic live connection with fellow Methodists in the USA.

The next leap took the Union congregation to Monrovia, Liberia, where they had an abbreviated phone connection with Samuel Quire, the Director of the Bishop Judith Craig Children’s Home. At Easter time in 2005, Quire had sent a desperate e-mail to Randall Robinson, Superintendent of the LaMoine District explaining that the home was out of food and out of credit and the children were in danger of starvation. Robinson sent out the call for help from the LaMoine District churches over the internet and was astonished by the over $21,000 that flooded into his office in less than a week. Quire thanked Union for being one of the churches that took part in what many saw as an Easter miracle.

Contact with Quire was cut short because he was rushing to meet the German Chancellor, who was visiting Liberia. So, Quire offered his message from a car rushing across the African city.

After serving Communion, using many different types and colors of bread to symbolize the diversity of God’s people, the

“A pastor from Quincy, Ill., and a pastor from Orlando, Fla., meet for the first time in a church in Kansas City and immediately discover they have a common acquaintance near the South Pole! The world has grown small, indeed.”

— Pastor Robert Morwell

service closed with Father John Davies, an Anglican priest in Ruthin, Wales, offering the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer in Welsh.

Morwell noted that while the technology which made this global event was impressive; it was not the focus of the service.

“The Risen Christ has gone to these places before us. Even now, as always, he is ahead of us.”

The technology which was utilized in this service is readily available to many churches. There were occasional glitches, but most things worked well and the congregation’s enthusiasm was not dimmed by small technical problems, which Morwell had warned would probably crop up in such an unprecedented event.

The service demonstrated that many churches can connect with their brothers and sisters in Christ around the planet for little cost, and establish new and close ties to mission fields which once seemed far distant. The family of Christ is becoming an ever more intimate one, despite what people have long considered insurmountable barriers and divisions.

Union UMC’s historic service demonstrates that a combination of imaginative faith and modern technology can help us follow Jesus more closely, anywhere in the world.

Time and space aren’t what they used to be. But the Holy Spirit, has never been contained by them.

Church adds spire to new sanctuary

Fairview Heights Christ UMC recently added a spire to its building. The new spire at Christ Church looms some 140 feet above Frank Scott Parkway and features a 12 foot gold cross at its pinnacle.

There were multiple delays due to high winds but the 80 foot spire was in the air by sunset. The spire sits atop the new 1,100 seat sanctuary set to open in early December. The building will be consecrated by Bishop Christopher on Jan. 27.

The Christ congregation is also building a new sanctuary for Christ UMC in Kabacan, Philippines. That sanctuary is already being called “The Cathedral” in the rural Kabacan region. Senior Pastor Shane Bishop will travel to Kabucan to open the Philippine sanctuary in mid-February 2008.

“We are growing in Fairview Heights so we will be in a better position to change the world around us in the years to come,” Bishop said. “This really isn’t about us; it is about living into a unique calling God has given this congregation.”

Christ Church has grown since their 1996 relocation from just over 200 to more than 900 per weekend in worship.

“This really isn’t about us; it is about living into a unique calling God has given this congregation.”

— Pastor Shane Bishop

MEMBERS OF THE A TEAM OF ANGELS ON ASSIGNMENT CONSTRUCT A WHEELCHAIR RAMP ONTO A Jefferson County mobile home. Angels on Assignment is a caring and sharing ministry of Mt. Vernon First UMC. Organized in 1991 when a church member was inspired to begin a ministry of care for the needy, Angels on Assignment has played an important role in the lives of many persons in Jefferson County. Assistance with utility bills, rent and medical needs as well as a thrift shop and food pantry are a part of this ministry.

In 2006, 13,570 people were assisted in the form of 9,460 bags of groceries. An average of 40 volunteers give time to Angels on Assignment in any given week. While the majority are members of Mt. Vernon First UMC, other people in the community also join in this all-volunteer effort. For more information on this ministry, contact Dwayne Johnson, 3508 Victoria Ave., Mt. Vernon, IL 62864 or by calling 618-242-3707.
What is the Connectional Table?

The Connectional Table is comprised of the elected, appointed, and employed lay and clergy leaders of the conference who gather at one table to reflect on the effectiveness of ministries in fulfilling the mission, vision, and strategies of the annual conference and vision new ways to live into our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The Annual Conference shall provide for the clear connections between the General Conference agencies, annual conference program and administrative entities and the local congregation through the Connectional Table.

Who is represented on the IGRC Connectional Table?

- Boards, Committees, Councils, Commissions and other groups to be elected by the annual conference (listing in the Report of the Committee on Nomination);
- 2004 The Book of Discipline paragraphs for member requirements; Board of Church and Society (¶628);
- Board of Discipleship (¶629);
- Commission on Camping and Retreat Ministries (¶629.1b);
- Board of Laity (¶630);
- Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns (¶631);
- Board of Global Ministries (¶632);
- Congregational Development Committee (¶632.5);
- Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries (¶633);
- Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Concerns (¶641);
- Commission on Small Membership Church (¶644);
- Organization of United Methodist Women (¶646);
- Organization of United Methodist Men (¶647);
- Council on Youth Ministries (¶648);
- Council on Young Adult Ministries (¶649);
- Committee on Native American Ministry (¶653);
- Commission on Statistics (¶655); Commission on Membership, the Society (¶628);
- Board of Discipleship (¶629.1b); Board of Ordained Ministry (¶634); Administrative Review Committee (¶635); Committee on Episcopacy (¶636); Episcopal Residence Committee (¶637); Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (¶638); Board of Trustees (¶639, 2512.1-7); Commission on Archives and History (¶640); Commission on Religion and Race (¶642); Commission on the Status and Role of Women (¶643); Commission on Communications (¶645); Joint Committee on Incapacity (¶651); Committee on Disability Concern (¶652); Sexual Misconduct Taskforce (nominated by the Cabinet); Committee on Annual Conference Sessions; Committee on Standing Rules; Committee on Nominations; and other Conference Organizations as established by the Annual Conference in alignment with the Book of Discipline and other temporary, short-term or specially focused task forces or implementation teams that the Connectional Table or other agencies create and whose members are nominated by the Conference committee on nominations.

IGRC delegation prepares for General and Jurisdictional conferences

Members of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference delegation met recently to begin preparing for the 2008 General and Jurisdictional conferences. The 2008 General Conference will be held April 23-25 in Fort Worth, Texas, while the North Central Jurisdictional Conference will be July 16-19 in Grand Rapids, Mich.

United Methodist Student Day Nov. 25

United Methodist congregations across the United States will be observing the last of the six general church offerings for 2007 – United Methodist Student Day.

The special offering, which generates funds for the United Methodist Student Loan Program provides both loans and scholarships to students. Funds from wills, annuities and other designated gifts supplement the special offering.

Students need to complete only one application per year. Applications are reviewed by members of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and other affiliated representatives.

Applicants must be an active, full member of The United Methodist Church for at least one year. Membership is determined by the date the applicant is confirmed and took membership vows with The United Methodist Church.

Applicants must be pursuing a degree program at any accredited institution.

High school students may apply if they will be college students in the fall term.

Applicants must have a minimum grade-point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

Applicants are required to be full-time students according to their school’s standards for the program for which they are enrolled.

Nearly $600,000 was collected in 2006 and 41 IGRC students directly benefited from the offering. In all, 42 loans and scholarships were awarded. Those IGRC students receiving scholarship and loan assistance for the 2007-2008 school year include:

- Tina Arnold, Nokomis UMC, attending MacMurray College
- Lowell V. Beaver, Marshall Emmanuel UMC, attending McKendree University
- Adam W. Bohland, Orion UMC, attending Augustana College
- Jared H. Bohland, Orion UMC, attending Western Illinois University
- Kelly C. Boxdorfer, Shiloh UMC, attending McKendree University
- Scott E. Carnes, Pittsfield UMC, attending Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- Kara J. Crawford, Tuscola UMC, attending DePaul University
- Mallory Alice Cunningham, Shattuc UMC, attending St. Paul School of Theology
- Noah T. Dunham, Pontiac First UMC, attending Illinois Wesleyan University
- Lacie L. Durand, Dunlap Prospect UMC, attending University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- Amanda M. Englund, Mattoon First UMC, attending McKendree University
- Bradley D. Ferguson, Peoria First UMC, attending Bradley University
- Tabitha K. Frederickson, Normal Morningstar UMC, attending Arkansas State University
- Patricia D. Forst, Chatham UMC, attending Greenville College
- Bradley M Glenn, Fairview Heights Christ UMC, attending Central Methodist University
- Samantha L. Hamlin, Nokomis UMC, attending McKendree University
- Justin M. Howard, Marshall First UMC, attending Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
- Dennis R. Hutchinson, Vandalia First UMC, attending Candler School of Theology
- Kayla S. Kindred, Normal First UMC, attending Illinois Wesleyan University
- Amanda M. King, Effingham Centenary UMC, attending Webster University
- Julia L. Kuehn, Willow Hill UMC, attending Duke Divinity School
- Matthew C. Landis, Chatham UMC, attending Illinois State University
- Julie A. Laub, Normal First UMC, attending Duke Divinity School

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Volunteers in Mission needed for projects throughout Midwest

Minnesota

The Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is requesting assistance from United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Teams starting now.

UMVIM Teams are being requested for winterizing and rebuilding homes damaged from flash flooding in SE Minnesota on Aug. 19. The FEMA report as of Sept. 26 lists seven counties affected with seven fatalities. The FEMA Damage assessment includes 305 homes destroyed, 482 homes with major damage, 148 with minor damage, and 695 other homes affected. 4,484 applications have been submitted to FEMA with 3,165 individuals or households approved for aid.

Contact: Schedule VIM Teams through the Long Term Recovery Committee: Volunteer Team Coordination — Joyce Pedersen, 612-922-0776 or jpedersen2@msn.com. A work coordinator will be available in the region.

Ohio

Visit: http://www.westohioumc.org/ Click on Response to Ohio Flooding.

Ohio: What We Need Right Now is the call for UMVIM teams and the process for serving. There are specific needs for skilled, licensed volunteers in the following areas:

- a. Electricians
- b. Plumbers
- c. Heating and Air

Contact: Sue Alley or Dee Stickle-Miner at the West Ohio Conference Office to indicate your interest in forming a team.

North Dakota

Residents of Northwood, N.D., were devastated by an F4 tornado that moved through the community on Aug. 26. The churches, hospital, nursing home, businesses and homes of this small community were impacted; it is estimated nearly 95% of the town’s structures sustained damage.

On Oct. 20, the North Dakota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), of which the Dakotas Conference is a member, is organizing a Rebuild Blitz to help prepare homes for winter. UMVIM teams are needed to assist in the repair efforts; it is requested each team have one member with some experience in shingling and/or window installation.

When your team is organized, please notify Three Rivers District Superintendent Debra Ball-Kilbourne (neumc@ daktel.com) or Conference Disaster Relief Coordinator Paul Baker (emuc@702com.net) to receive additional details.
New conference website attracts visitors

12,000 unique visitors visited over one weekend

By Paul Black

Several emails expressed concern over crediting John Hartleroad’s photography with a link to his personal website. In our team discussions of developing a concept for the new website, we were looking for visual imagery which reflected our history as the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. As we researched the circumstances around our merger, it was clear that the original concepts of the river still had great meaning because of the individual district’s identification with the larger body. The river also provided a living, organic image which was also important in describing our common life.

The next step was then to search out the best source for photographs. Knowing of John’s passion for photography, I contacted him and was surprised to find that he had been photographing rivers of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference for quite a few years. I believe his work speaks for itself. He is a juried photographer and is a featured artist at the Hoagland Fine Arts Center in Springfield where his work is on display. When I presented the idea to John, he agreed to assist us and at no time, has the conference paid any compensation to John for allowing us use of the photos.

In the absence of John’s willingness to do the project, we probably would have had to pay to have similar photos taken and the link on the front page of the IGRC website is standard industry practice as part of providing credits to photos. As a matter of fairness, I do not see why John should be treated differently than any other photographer.

In regard to the word photo, our team has changed the link to read “river photos” which will refer to anyone who donates their time, talent and energy to assist the IGRC community. And the link goes to a gallery of Illinois river photos from which the river photos were selected. And the gallery also has a way for photos to be purchased through a conventional web photo service. John will receive no income from any photos purchased through this service.

It is our hope that the new website will become a place of community that will allow pastors to share their blogs, podcasts and other communications that will uplift the Body of Christ.

I hope that at some point, for instance, under Leadership Develop-ment, there would be links to all of the different workshops, conferences, etc. being offered throughout the conference...even if they are also linked on other parts of the website. It would be terrific to have them all together where we can find them at a glance. The same with pension and health insurance ... links to our insurance and pension info (and the basic information itself) would be wonderful.

We’re working on it. Redundancy will be built into the new website to allow for items to be found in multiple locations. Having all of the workshops, conferences, etc. under leadership development is one which we are looking to incorporate. And with the new content management system of website development, we are able to put items on the web, assign a time at which they will no longer be visible (such as the starting date of the event) so it does not require someone to physically go out and remove items once something is over. This was a problem with the old site in that events were publicized even after they were over.

The pension and health insurance information will be designed for one stop shopping so that it is all together.

Were you aware that the screen resolution is such that it doesn’t automatically adjust to the size of the monitor, so smaller monitors require scrolling across to get all of the info?

The page was set with a screen resolution of 1024 by 768 pixels. If your monitor setting is at 800 by 600 pixels, you will have both a vertical and horizontal scroll bar. To change the resolution, go to the Start button, select Control Panel and then Display. Select the Settings tab, and looking down to the center of the left-hand side, you will see a slide bar that shows the dimension of the monitor. Moving that slide to the left will increase the number of pixels. However, because the monitor is covering a larger area, the icons will appear smaller on the screen.

The decision to move to this standard was because the industry standard has moved to 1024 by 768. Older computers (4 to 5 years old) may not be able to adjust to the higher setting because of the computer’s video card. Nevertheless, you can scroll over as well as down to take advantage of the full page.

The churches in our district were asked to submit our church’s websites so they could be on the conference website. Is that going to happen?

We are putting together a Find a Church tool that will allow persons to search by a number of different factors – ZIP Code, City, etc. – the information will pull up the address of the church, name of the pastor, service times and a Google map showing the location. The church website address will also be included in that listing for the church if provided.

Why did you make the change during charge conference season when everyone needs the charge conference forms?

No matter when the change would occur, there would be something that would not be accessible from the website for a period of time. Charge conference forms, which had been online since July were made available with a phone call to the communications office. Several pastors received their forms as attachments to an email upon request.

My bookmarks from the old site no longer work on the new site.

That is because the pages of the old site were HTML and the new site uses active server pages (.asp). New bookmarks will need to be set up, since redirecting hundreds of pages from the old site into the new site was not practical and would have the transfer of pages from HTML to .asp even longer.

What does the little box with an arrow to the upper right-hand corner mean?

The icon simply means that by clicking it, you are moving to a website that is outside the IGRC website and therefore, is not covered by our privacy and disclosure of information policies. We merely provide this notification as a courtesy to our visitors.

Change is difficult, but with your patience, it is our hope that when completed, it is more professional looking adhering to web industry standards; it is easier to use and navigate and that it will be a place that exceeds the visitor’s expectations.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.
Certification – Is it for you?

By Beth Fender
Professional Certification in Christian Education

A church hires a new Christian education director who has years of experience as a Sunday school teacher and nursery volunteer. As a new school year approaches, a number of Sunday school teachers recommend changing to a new curriculum that includes video clips and a website. The new CE director has never chosen curriculum before, and wonders how she can tell if this curriculum is right for her church.

The youth director at a large church has noticed that the teens in his group are asking difficult theological questions he feels ill-prepared to answer. He really doesn’t know any other youth workers in his area. If only he had more background in theology, or at least knew some other youth workers who could help!

With volunteers in increasingly short supply, more churches are hiring staff in areas such as Christian education, youth ministry, and music ministry. While some of these church staff members have preparation in a related field, many lack any formal theological training. Staff members often feel isolated from others in similar positions. How can these dedicated Christian leaders find the training they need and the connections they crave?

One option is a program leading to professional or paraprofessional certification in a specific ministry area. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry offers certification in seven different ministry areas: camping/retreat ministries, Christian education, evangelism, music ministry, older adult ministry, spiritual formation, and youth ministry. For those who have a bachelor’s degree (in any field), professional certification is offered. A college degree is not required for paraprofessional certification.

“I would recommend that those starting out in Youth Ministry investigate the benefits of certification and take seminary-level courses in Youth Ministry,” suggests John Hauck, pastor of Washington Evangelical UMC, who holds certification in Youth Ministry. “The knowledge and relationships I have gained have been very helpful to me in my ministry with youth."

Upcoming New Streams informational meetings in December

Sunday, Dec. 9  
Coal City UMC, Vermillion River District, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 11  
Quincy Melrose Chapel UMC, LaMoine River District, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 12  
Rushville UMC, LaMoine River District, 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Traveling the path of discipleship together

By Patty Johansen
Pastor, Tuscola UMC
Co-Leader of New Streams Team

Discipleship is a life-long journey. It is a journey that we take individually, as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is also a journey the community of faith takes with us. We travel the path of discipleship together.

Jeffrey Jones is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Plymouth, Mass., a congregation that is very clear about being a disciple-making and -forming congregation. Following his own revelation that the old answers for how to “do” church don’t work anymore, because the world in which they had worked is no more, Jones has taken the bold stance that the work of the church is about discipleship. Making and forming, not about membership.

His latest book, Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple-Forming Congregations, published by The Alban Institute, provides a guide for churches wanting to move into the post-modern world of discipleship. He does not spend a lot of time rehearsing where and how Modern Christianity has disappeared. His premise is that this is simply a given is refreshing, and helps to quickly engage the reader about where the church needs to go today, as we move into God’s preferred future.

Jones writes about the realities facing congregations in this post-modern, post-Christian world. He helps the reader understand what it means to be a disciple, and builds a biblical foundation about the mission of the church – to make and form disciples of Jesus Christ. He unpacks practices and qualities of a disciple-forming congregation, and spends time on the kind of leadership needed for congregations that are seeking to move forward in the midst of change and outbreaks of conflict. He writes the book from the perspective of discipleship being an individual and a corporate process, which is helpful in the current reality of churches not always being certain about their own role in making and forming disciples.

Traveling Together can be a wonderful companion piece for the New Streams of Living Water disciple formation process workbook, Charting the Course. Leadership in a congregation might consider a study of Jones’s book, and then move from there into the workbook approach of developing a disciple formation process for a local church that is unique to that church’s context.

Just as the workbook is not a “cut and paste” approach to discipleship, neither is Traveling Together. Or chapters from the two books could be used together. For example, Jones has a great chapter on “The Life of the Disciple” which could be read by the leadership prior to moving into the workbook chapter on developing a description of disciple for the local church.

This book will engage the imagination of church leaders who are seeking direction for congregational life, and who need a good dose of hope about moving into God’s future.

Lawyer seeks to suppress statements

FAIRFIELD — The lawyer representing a former United Methodist pastor has filed a motion to suppress his client’s statements to police.

Attorney John O’Gara, Jr. of Belleville filed the motion during an Oct. 17 pre-trial hearing on behalf of Larry Reinke.

Rinke, who served as a local pastor in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, was charged April 17, on two counts of predatory criminal sexual assault and one count of child pornography. Notified of the arrest, Bishop Sharon A. Brown Christopher terminated Reinke’s appointment as a local pastor in The United Methodist Church.

Circuit Judge Paul Lamar has set a Jan. 23 hearing to hear O’Gara’s motion in Wayne County Circuit Court.

O’Gara is arguing that Reinke was “promised certain dispositions in the case” in return for his statement. The motion alleges that authorities promised that the matter would not become public, that the Church would not suffer adverse publicity and that a statement would result in leniency.”

Reinke remains free on $50,000 cash bond awaiting trial.
Report: Changing demographics will affect future church funding
By Marta W. Aldrich

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - The face of today's United Methodist is markedly different than it was 40 years ago - a reality that concerns church financial leaders tracking how changing demographics are hitting the denomination in its pocketbook.

In the United States, which provides the lion's share of denominational resources, United Methodists are becoming rarer in a growing population. They are generally older adults above age 57 who attend larger churches. Most are white or African American. And they are generally wealthier than United Methodists of previous generations.

The implications are far-reaching and represent a mixed bag of good news and bad news relating to denominational resources and reach, according to Don House, chairman of a task force that recently completed its study of funding patterns within the church.

"While the (U.S.) population is growing, our membership is decreasing per capita, which means United Methodists are having a smaller and smaller impact on society. That wasn't supposed to happen," said House, a research economist in College Station, Texas.

House presented the group's report during the September meeting of the governing board of the denomination's General Council on Finance and Administration, on which he also serves as a member. The board voted to send legislation based on the report's recommendations to General Conference, the denomination's top legislative assembly. Among other things, the legislation aims to hold leaders at all levels of the church accountable in their responsibilities.

Mixed bag

House presented the bad news first. Membership has decreased by more than 20 percent since 1973, and membership per capita has dropped from 4.75 percent to 2.7 percent by 2005. The church has 8 million U.S. members and 11.5 million members across the globe.

During the same time, the number of United Methodist churches has declined by 12.4 percent. The declines have been significant in all five of the church's U.S. jurisdictions.

"There is no jurisdiction with a winning report card," House declared. "We are getting rare in the population, and it has an impact on our funding."

He cited numerous trends that help explain the drops.

Ethnic background: In counties with a high percentage of whites and African Americans, a solid percentage of the population attends United Methodist churches. However, according to House, "we don't do well" in counties with growing or larger percentages of Asians, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders and Native Americans.

Age: Based on the U.S. population, those attending United Methodist worship services today are underrepresented in the under-35 age group and overrepresented in the over-57 age group.

Church size: The largest churches are growing while the smaller ones are stagnant or declining. "The smaller you get, the faster the decline in membership. It wasn't that way in the '70s," he said, noting that church growth 30 years ago was similar among all sizes of churches.

The good news is that, despite declining membership and attendance, United Methodist churches claim a relatively constant share of the dollar given to U.S. religious groups. While religious organizations in general are losing their share of the philanthropic dollar to educational institutions and foundations, the United Methodist Church has received a steady 6 percent of the religious dollar since the mid-1980s.

House cited data indicating that the average income of a United Methodist is growing faster than in the general population. He noted that, beginning in the mid-1990s, as older, lower-income members have died, new members replacing them have generally earned higher incomes. "United Methodists are higher-income earners than ever before," he said.

By Linda Bloom*

STAMFORD, Conn. (UMNS) - Growing up in a Mennonite community, United Methodist Bishop Sally Dyck learned about peacemaking at an early age.

Now she and others would like to see an emphasis on peacemaking or "holy conferencing" implemented more widely across the denomination.

Dyck, of Minneapolis, spoke about the need for holy conferencing during the Oct. 5-8 annual meeting of the Women's Division of United Methodist Board of Global Ministries in Stamford, Conn. Dyck characterizes holy conferencing as a way of being open to what God has intended. She would like to see the practice emphasized throughout The United Methodist Church.

Guidelines for holy conferencing

■ Every person is a child of God. Always speak respectfully. One can disagree without being disagreeable.

■ As you patiently listen and observe the behavior of others, be open to the possibility that God can change the views of any or all parties in the discussion.

■ Listen patiently before formulating responses.

■ Strive to understand the experience out of which others have arrived at their views.

■ Be careful in how you express personal offense at differing opinions. Otherwise dialogue may be inhibited.

■ Accurately reflect the views of others when speaking. This is especially important when you disagree with that position.

■ Avoid using inflammatory words, derogatory names or an excited and angry voice.

■ Avoid making generalizations about individuals and groups. Make your point with specific evidence and examples.

■ Make use of facilitators and mediators.

■ Remember that people are defined, ultimately, by their relationship with God - not by the flaws we discover, or think we discover, in their views and actions.

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House cited data indicating that the average income of a United Methodist is growing faster than in the general population. He noted that, beginning in the mid-1990s, as older, lower-income members have died, new members replacing them have generally earned higher incomes. "United Methodists are higher-income earners than ever before," he said.

By Linda Bloom*

STAMFORD, Conn. (UMNS) - Growing up in a Mennonite community, United Methodist Bishop Sally Dyck learned about peacemaking at an early age.

Now she and others would like to see an emphasis on peacemaking or "holy conferencing" implemented more widely across the denomination.

Dyck, of Minneapolis, spoke about the need for holy conferencing during the Oct. 5-8 annual meeting of the Women's Division of United Methodist Board of Global Ministries in Stamford, Conn. Dyck characterizes holy conferencing as a way of being open to what God has intended. She would like to see the practice emphasized throughout The United Methodist Church.
Emerging church movement seeks to get back to church’s roots

By Linda Green*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - Young adults, seminarians and pastors with a heart for the Gospel are thinking and talking about new ways to “do church” by transforming churchgoing from the inside out.

More than 50 people gathered in Nashville Oct. 4-6 for an “emergingumc” conference on getting back to the roots of church and its mission. The emerging church is a grassroots effort intertwining evangelism and social justice to make the church more relevant in today’s society and to make worship and Christian life more authentic.

The emerging church is a nondenominational grassroots movement that intertwines evangelism and social justice to make the church more relevant to today’s culture and to make worship and Christian life authentic, experiential and connected.

Known officially as the emerging mission conference, the concept is about turning the church from a place of ritual worship to one of reclaiming mission as the foundation, said the Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of worship resources for the United Methodist Board of Discipleship.

“Emerging church is a community of faith that is striving to be authentic to the Gospel and the culture,” said the Rev. Jack Terrill-Wilkes, an ordained deacon in the Oklahoma Annual (regional) Conference.

Within a congregation might be two or three people passionate about discipleship and reaching people. Those individuals would create ministries from their passion and also begin to live their passion. “Church then happens,” said conference attendees during focused discussions. “It is about getting back to the roots of Christianity.”

The emerging church has a heart for the poor, the last, the least and the lost,” said the Rev. James Walker, the United Methodist co-leader of Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community in Pittsburgh. The church provides opportunity to experience church in new and unconventional ways, including drama, he said.

Conference presenters affirmed the belief that disciples of Jesus Christ are sent to be Christ’s body in the world. “Christianity is not just about a set of beliefs and propositions that we believe. It is about our lives and about how we live,” Burton-Edwards said.

People studying Jesus’ Great Commission often emphasize the command to “go make disciples” as the way mission is done. However, Burton Edwards says the emphasis should be on making disciples as you go. “Wherever you are, figure out what making disciples looks like there and do that there.”

Making disciples for Jesus has to grow out of and be incarnate in each place, he said. “Just as God became flesh among us, God’s kingdom as it is working throughout the world takes on different forms. Our role is to figure out what those are so that the good news of God’s kingdom can be made known in those places,” he said, adding that the look of those places will vary from place to place.

Characteristics of the emerging mission church are a revived mission or mandate; theological conversations that focus on the kingdom of God and the way of Jesus rather than denominational or ecclesial...
Recent disasters drive UMCOR changes, new chief says
By Linda Bloom*

NEW YORK (UMNS) - Recent major disasters - 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the 2004 Asian tsunami - have led The United Methodist Church’s relief organization “to rethink how we do everything,” according to its new chief executive.

The Rev. Sam Dixon, interim leader of the United Methodist Committee on Relief since Jan. 31, was elected permanently to the position Oct. 10. The election came during the annual meeting of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, UMCOR’s parent agency.

The 58-year-old pastor oversees the board’s Health and Relief unit, which includes UMCOR and the health and welfare department, and he also leads the mission volunteers unit.

In an interview with United Methodist News Service, Dixon said the magnitude of recent disasters - along with the generous response by church members to fund relief efforts - has changed the way UMCOR operates.

The changes include more participation by staff in other parts of the Board of Global Ministries; establishing relationships with new organizations in new areas, such as with Muslim Aid in Sri Lanka and Indonesia; and dealing with other development issues, such as microcredit, sanitation and health care.

The biggest task, Dixon, added, “is just preparing for the next one.”

The ranks of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission are growing, and more of those volunteers are becoming involved in disaster relief work.

At the regional level, more United Methodist conferences have disaster coordinators, and warehouses have opened to store flood buckets, health kits and other emergency supplies.

Individual local churches are joining forces with UMCOR as well. The Ginghamburg (Ohio) United Methodist Church has become partners with UMCOR in Sudan, pledging $1 million in aid this year and $1.5 million in 2008, according to Dixon.

Nearly a decade of service Dixon is no stranger to either UMCOR or the Board of Global Ministries. He first joined UMCOR on July 1, 1998, the same day as his predecessor, the Rev. Paul Dirdak. He was in charge of UMCOR’s non-governmental organization unit, which secures grants from the U.S. and other governments and the United Nations to implement projects assisting vulnerable people around the world.

UMCOR approves $4 million tsunami project
By Linda Bloom*

STAMFORD, Conn. (UMNS) - A $4 million project for continued tsunami recovery work in Indonesia has been approved by the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

That and other actions came as UMCOR directors met during the Oct. 8-11 annual meeting of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, its parent agency.

The “Reconstruction and Development for Aceh and Nias Project” is scheduled to begin in October and continue through March 31, 2010, in the Bireuen, Banda Aceh and Bireuen districts, Aceh Province and the South Nias district.

UMCOR’s $4 million funding, from the $42 million it raised for tsunami relief, will be combined with $1.37 million from the American Red Cross to complete the project.

Aceh was hard-hit by the Dec. 26, 2004, earthquake and tsunami, and Nias Island, also part of North Sumatra, suffered both from those events and a March 28, 2005, earthquake. The project aims to improve community development in both areas through better houses, infrastructure, economic development, health care and community leadership.

“Trust clause continues important work” Watts said the legal wrangling over the foundation’s use of the money from the sale of the hospital for healthcare needs, “is only interested in the foundation’s assets, while difficult at times, has helped all entities understand that the trust clause still is a vital part of our polity as United Methodists, and we certainly want to uphold the polity of the church.”

Holsinger connection Holsinger also served as chairman of the Good Samaritan Foundation’s board.

The appeal of the Payne’s ruling was led by James Holsinger, president of the United Methodist Church’s Judicial Council, the denomination’s highest court.

Holsinger, who was nominated by President George W. Bush last spring as U.S. surgeon general, was quoted by Media Transparency as saying the church is “only interested in the foundation’s money, not its cause.”

Holsinger, who awaits confirmation as the country’s top doctor, has declined interviews on all matters, including the legal battle with the Kentucky conference.

His confirmation has stalled because the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee is awaiting answers to follow up questions it posed to him.

Last August, the committee questioned him about his views on homosexuality, an issue that has drawn opposition to his nomination from health groups and gay rights groups, among others.

*Green is a United Methodist News Service writer based in Nashville, Tenn.
Facebook friendships: a means of grace?

By Andrew C. Thompson

Here’s a new phenomenon: “Facebook Stalking.” It refers to the way some people use the uber-popular social networking Web site Facebook to troll around looking for other people they find attractive. Once an object of desire is located, the Stalker sends a “friend request” in the hope that it will be answered positively.

It’s symptomatic of a growing trend in our increasingly technological world.

The real world is messy. It requires face-to-face communication. Emotional undercurrents play a part in every human interaction. And such interactions are time-consuming and difficult. They require a real investment.

So the answer for many people is to bypass the messiness by delving into the digital world. Online things don’t seem nearly as messy. And the online world is blissfully individual, full of fantasies and completely controllable.

Turning to technology may not be completely anti-social, but it does tend in that direction. Every time a person sends a text message, e-mail or even a “Superpage” it is one more time the person doesn’t have to go through the complexities of real human conversation.

The Facebook Stalker, not creep so much as confused, is just the logical next step in using technology to avoid the anxiety that real social interaction involves.

Lest this description seem a bit too Chicken Little-ish, let me suggest a reason why Facebook Stalking and all its lesser expressions are threatening for society: loss of real community.

When we allow our most significant human interactions to be replaced by online or digital exchanges, we lose a sense of what it means to be part of a real community. Put another way: On Facebook, I have 57 “friends.” In real life, it is impossible to have 57 friends if we understand friendship as deeper than merely knowing someone well enough to say “hi” in the supermarket.

As Wesleyans, we Methodists fortunately have resources from our own tradition that can help us overcome the alienation that technology brings.

In particular, John Wesley always put an emphasis on the idea of “the means of grace,” those practices that are “ordained of God as ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.”

Wesley saw the chief means of grace as prayer, searching the Scriptures and receiving the Lord’s Supper. These are aspects of our faith-in-action that are present in Jesus’ ministry and prominent throughout the New Testament.

But added to these instituted means of grace are prudential means of grace, which can include any private or public action that aids in receiving and living out our faith. Think of having fellowship in a small group, building a Habitat house or having a potluck at church.

Of course, there are means of grace that are individual in nature. But most have an intensely social character. They are done together with fellow Christians.

And just as Jesus traveled around the Galilee in a company of disciples, he comes to us most often in the context of Christian community. The Lord’s Supper, for instance, cannot be done online. It is a real, face-to-face meal where we meet Jesus at his table and together with his friends.

This is the antidote to the individualism and isolation of our age. For every device, gadget and tool that separates us, we should stress the character of Christian community.

We simply cannot text-message our faith to God. We have to witness to it together, joining hand-in-hand with our brothers and sisters in the church.

Jesus doesn’t want us only to be Facebook friends. He wants us to be real friends, face-to-face, with one another.

(Reprinted with permission from The Sept. 21 issue of The United Methodist Reporter.)
him was contentious and challenging. In the end, Jesus did heal her daughter and he was changed by that decision. His mission was no longer exclusively focused on the people of Israel, it now encompassed the entire world.

This construct of mission calls us to be "pilgrims," not "tourists," if we want to evolve into mature disciples of our faith. "To go on a pilgrimage is to set out into the world with the goal of being changed, of being transformed," Jeffrey said.

Modern-day parables

To be in mission means that not only do we have to cross borders, but that we sometimes have to help others cross the borders that prohibit them from living as full and independent human beings.

Jeffrey told the story of a poorly educated, native Bolivian woman, Casimira Rodriguez, who, with the support of the Methodist and Catholic churches, led a 12-year fight to create a union for domestic workers. She then went on to head the Justice Ministry following the election of the country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales.

He praised the positive mission model of the Methodist deaconesses and lay women who, more than 100 years ago, left their comfortable lives to found the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House in East St. Louis. The settlement house was established to meet the needs of Bohemian immigrants who traveled to this Mississippi River community to work in the stock yards. It continues to be in mission to those in need today.

More recent mission heroes include the impoverished lay women who formed Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago “to welcome the stranger – in the process becoming a flagship for the new Sanctuary Movement in the United States.”

The historical context

In examining history, Jeffrey noted that St. Francis of Assisi was moved by his convictions to fearlessly cross all sorts of borders in an attempt to end the bloodshed of the crusades in 1291. Gentle and respectful, he established a friendly relationship with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil of Egypt, a devout Muslim. Francis’ hopes of brokering a peace treaty between the Christian crusaders and the leader of Egypt were dashed when Cardinal Pelagius Galvani, leader of the Christian crusader armies, refused to talk peace. The result is that “the wars continued, at a terrible cost both in human life, and in the centuries of tension between the two great religions.”

Transcending the borders

In stark contrast stand the actions of some well-intentioned missionaries from Germany who traveled to Honduras in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. They brought with them black bags filled with relief supplies and hired an old yellow school bus from a local Christian organization to take them and their donations into some of the poorest and hardest hit areas in Honduras.

The bus would periodically stop and the missionaries would wordlessly heave the black bags filled with clothing out of the windows of the bus. Bedlam broke out as the residents scrambled to retrieve the bags. Curious about those on the yellow bus, Paul forced the bus to stop and banged on the door until it finally opened.

It turned out that the German missionaries had heard that this neighborhood was especially rough and they were too afraid to try and really connect with the residents on a one-to-one basis.