



# The Current

News of Illinois Great Rivers Conference of The United Methodist Church

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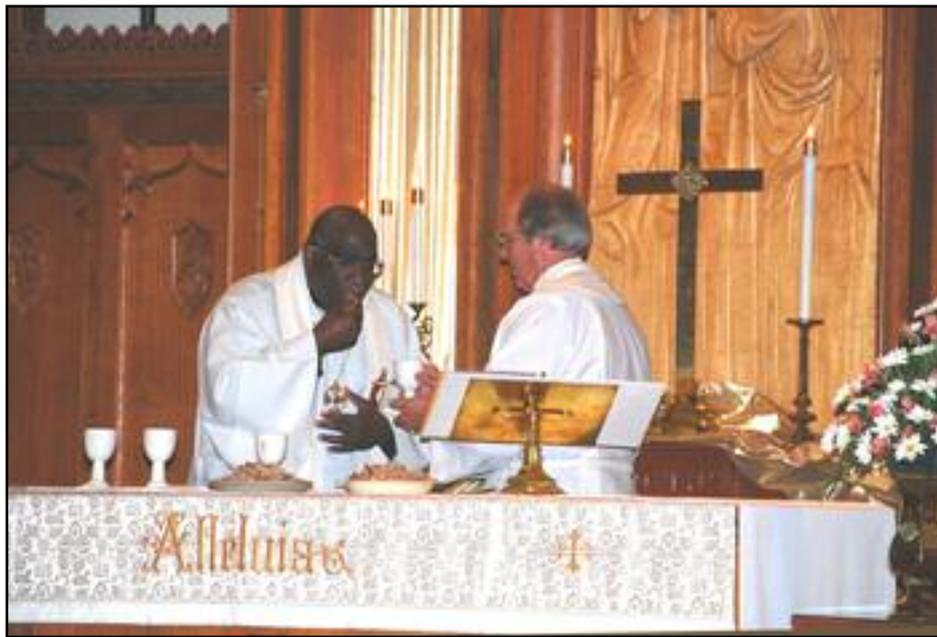


Photo by Paul Black

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer receives communion from Bishop Warren D. Freiheit of the Central-Southern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America during a May 15 celebration of the full communion agreement between the two denominations in Springfield. The ELCA ratified the agreement in August 2009 and The United Methodist Church ratified it at its 2008 General Conference. For more information on the full communion agreement, visit the conference website.

## Agreement celebrates common ground

By Paul Black

**SPRINGFIELD** – Bishop Gregory V. Palmer remembers clearly a conversation on an air flight from Atlanta, Ga. to Bloomington, Ill., that was instructive.

Palmer tells that a woman on that flight spotted his clerical collar which he was wearing from a speaking engagement.

“In those times, I am often asked what I do and I usually start by saying I am a preacher,” Palmer said. “But when the woman found out I was a bishop of The United Methodist Church, she asked the question, ‘What’s the difference between United Methodists and Catholics (the faith of her childhood. I found in that moment I am constitutionally unable to start by describing where we differ.’”

Palmer shared the story May 15 as he delivered the sermon at a celebration service for the full communion agreement between The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church.

The full communion agreement is not a merger of the two denominations but a recognition of those things we hold in common. The agreement also allows for greater shared ministry and deployment of pastoral leadership, although each denomination retains the choice of using or not

using particular pastors or ministries jointly.

Palmer, quoting the poet Maya Angelou, told the gathered crowd, “We are more alike than we are unlike.”

“We should always begin with what we share in common with each other. It changes the conversation; it writes a different story,” Palmer added. “If we stay on that street always (of how and what we differ), we will do less good than if we look at what we hold in common.”

Utilizing the text of the Prodigal Son, Palmer quoted the father in the story when talking about the full communion agreement.

“We had to celebrate,” Palmer said. “It is meet and right to begin with a party. Too often, we don’t party enough and when we do, we keep the party to ourselves. There is a deep yearning for a sense of unity within the human family.”

Palmer pointed out that the church has the opportunity to model to the world ways in which to remain engaged even in times of differences.

“Don’t we have something to say about the acrimony in the halls of Parliament and Congress, state legislatures or city hall, where the acrimony keeps persons from finding resolution for the common good?”

*See Agreement on page 9 ...*

To listen to Bishop Palmer’s sermon from the ELCA Celebration Service, visit [www.igrc.org](http://www.igrc.org), click on Bishop in the top banner and then click on Bishop Palmer’s sermons from the right hand column.



## 2010 Annual conference reminders

### Special offerings for Annual Conference

John Kofi Asmah School in Liberia – Memorial Service

Africa University for scholarship for Liberian student

Tom Brown Scholarship, Wiley College

Ordinands’ mission trip -- Ordination service



### Special collections

■ Rice – bags no larger than 5 pounds.

Include \$1 per pound for shipping costs

■ Soap – bars of soap (still boxed) -- 3 oz. for health and hygiene kits

■ Toothbrushes – single toothbrushes still sealed in packaging

■ Toothpaste – 6.4 oz size with expiration date at least 1 year from the current date

■ Tools for Haiti – collection will be at selected times at Peoria First UMC parking lot.

### Rayson looking for volunteers

Worship leader Mike Rayson is looking for a few volunteers to help facilitate our times of corporate worship. People willing to light candles (ever wanted to be an acolyte?) or perhaps read a piece of scripture. Email Rayson at [info@mike-rayson.net](mailto:info@mike-rayson.net) if you would like to be involved in this way.

### Bishop is asking clergy to robe for Memorial Service, Ordination

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer is requesting that clergy robe for the Service of Ordination on Friday evening during Annual Conference. Persons participating in Wednesday evening’s Memorial Service will also be robing. Clergy may hang their robes in Hall D where a rack will be available. Reminder: stoles are red for Ordination, white for Memorial Service.

Attendees need to bring recent service

bulletins

The 2010 Annual Conference speaker, Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards, is requesting that all lay and clergy members bring at least one copy of a recent service bulletin to annual conference. The bulletins will be used during the teaching sessions Thursday and Friday.

### Clergy choir information

For the second year, a clergy choir is being assembled to sing during the Service of Ordination on Friday evening.

There will be two rehearsals and the ability to read music is not required. First practice is following the clergy session at Peoria First UMC on Wednesday. Questions can be directed to Ted Hartley at 618-694-4303 or by email at: [tubat-ed1@yahoo.com](mailto:tubat-ed1@yahoo.com)

### Lay member credentials

If the lay member attending annual conference is different from the person that was elected at last year’s charge conference, the change must be approved by the district superintendent.

Getting this approval prior to annual conference will expedite matters once your lay member arrives in Peoria.

### Web streaming

Annual conference will be streamed on the IGRC website at [www.igrc.org](http://www.igrc.org). A link will be included on site along with all of the stories and photos of annual conference. You may also use the address <http://sms8.omniproductions.net/IGRC> with your Media player and make a direct connection to the feed.

## News from the Episcopal Office

### Claiming the future God holds for you



**Bishop Palmer**

*Dear friends in Christ Jesus:*

All around us are observable signs of change. We see them and experience them in the landscape, the weather in our gardens and our activities. This is also a time change in the church. This is especially true for those pastors and their families and congregations where there will be a pastoral change in a few weeks. Change can without a doubt be anxiety producing and stressful. To that end I want to commend all of those who have worked in good faith to make this an effective season of change for in pastoral appointments. The list is long. But many people have labored for things to

go well. I am grateful.

One of the most profound changes in life is retirement. We have this year a fairly good size class of clergy who are retiring from full time itinerant ministry. Our hats are off to them for running the race well. And we pray that the next season of life will be filled with meaning and joy. I cannot help but note that retirements are a key driver in appointment changes.

Retirement has come close to my office this year. Mrs. Linda Smith who serves as the Executive Secretary to the bishop will be retiring on June 30 after 14 years in that role. Before serving in the Bishop's office she was on the staff of the Conference Council on Ministries in the former Central Illinois Conference. So after 18 years of ministry in the conference and Episcopal Office she is looking forward to tending life in a different way. She has run her race well and served with diligence, dignity and grace. I am grateful and I know I speak for all whose lives she has touched through her work. Elsewhere in this issue of *The Current* you will be able to read more about this important transition.

I started this piece by talking a bit about change. I want to assure you that I affirm that change for the sake of change is foolhardy at best. But I also affirm that change is real and often necessary. So I invite you to experience change (whether you sought it or it sought you) – in your life, ministry, relationships – as an opportunity to claim the future that God holds before you. Harry Emerson Fosdick said, “Christians are supposed not merely to endure change, nor even to profit by it, but to cause it.” Let's embrace the changes before us as blessed opportunity and every now and again even summon up the courage to initiate change.

Yours in Christ,

† Gregory V. Palmer

### Deaths

**Rev. Sondra S. Newman**, retired IGRC clergy, died May 15 in Geneva, N.Y. Further details were not available at press time.

**Sue Ellen Biggs Greene**, wife of Rev. Robert D. Greene, pastor at Industry-

Vermont UMC's, died May 10.

Memorial contributions may be made to Cunningham Children's Home 1301 N. Cunningham Ave. Urbana, 61802. Please sign guestbook at [www.dodsworthfh.com](http://www.dodsworthfh.com) or expressions of sympathy can be sent to Rev. Greene at: P. O. Box 161, Industry, IL 61440-0161.



Photo by Paul Black

*Linda Smith, the administrative assistant to Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, chats with Michelle Hammitt about her duties in the Area Office. Smith is retiring July 1 after 14 years of service with Bishops Sharon Brown Christopher and Palmer. Prior to her tenure in the Area Office, Smith served as secretary to the Conference Council on Ministries Director Larry Lawler in the former Central Illinois Conference office. Hammitt began her employment May 17.*

### Appointments

The following appointments are effective July 1.

**Bong-Choul Hwang** to Tolono and Pesotum, Embarras River District.

**John Eisfelder** to St. Elmo, Embarras River District.

**Walter Miller** to Oakland and Westfield, Embarras River District.

**Peter J. Wehrly** to Knoxville and Galesburg Cooperative Parish, Spoon River District.

**Cathy Jean Clark** to Peoria: First Associate, Illinois River District. (moving from full-time to ¾ time)

**Robert Herath** to Mossville, Illinois River District.

**Adrian Garcia** to Peoria: First, Associate, Illinois River District.

**Amy A. Holman** to Bradford: Leet Memorial and Boyd's Grove, Illinois River District.

**Darrell Howard** to Logan County Parish, Associate, Sangamon River District.

**Steve Kettelkamp** to Cambridge, Spoon River District.

**Larry Frank, Jr.** to Cornell-Blackstone and Flanagan New Church Start, Vermilion River District.

**Dennis R. Hutchison** to Normal: First, Associate, Vermilion River District.

**William Adams** to Glen Carbon: New Bethel, Mississippi River District.

**James N. Wheeler** to Belleville: Signal Hill, Mississippi River District.

**Scott Eugene Carnes** to Pontiac: First, Associate, Vermilion River District.

**Melvin Nielsen** to Tonica, Five Points Charge Parish: Minonk and Wenona, Vermilion River District.

**Danira Parra** to Tonica, Five Points Multiple Charge Parish: Lostant, Richland and Tonica, Vermilion River District.

**Deborah Lynn Melzer** to Neoga: Grace and Etna, Kaskaskia River Districts.

**Alice True** to West Salem: Zion, Kaskaskia River District, effective July 1.

**James Crozier** to Loraine, Spoon River District.

**Roger Perry** to East Moline: Christ, directing pastor, Spoon River District.

**Ivy Silas** to Fisher, Iroquois River District.

**Joye Perry** to East Moline: Christ, Associate, Spoon River District.

**Kevin P. Treptow** to Argenta and Warrensburg, Sangamon River District.

**Janeen Lee Tronc** to Colfax, Vermilion River District, effective May 1, 2010

### Charge realignment

**Casey Taylor** to Lacon, Sparland and Varna, Illinois River District.

### Change of status

**Timothy L. Bias** transfer to West Ohio Conference, Ohio Valley District.



Photo by Paul Black

*An ecumenical choir joined voices in singing Joy in the House during the celebration of the full communion agreement between The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church. The choir, under the direction of Jean Clark, director of music at St. John's Lutheran Church in Springfield, featured voices from several Springfield-area United Methodist churches.*

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## Announcements & Events

### Children and violence focus of Christian Educators event

By Beth Fender

If you work with children or youth in your local church or other settings, you may be concerned about the effect on children and youth of the violence so prevalent in our society today.

The Illinois Great Rivers chapter of Christian Educators' Fellowship is sponsoring an event this summer addressing this critical issue.

The event, to be held on Thursday, July 15, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Sharon UMC, 4363 W. Center St., Decatur, is open to everyone. Registration is available online at [www.igrc.org/ceftraining](http://www.igrc.org/ceftraining). The cost is \$7 for IGRC CEF members and \$10 for non-members, and includes lunch.



Jeff Rasche

Rasche, associate director of stewardship for Chaddock, a Golden Cross Ministry of the IGRC, will be the featured speaker for this event. Rasche is enthusiastic about "telling the story" of the needs of children and families, including the many families and children who are served by

All proceeds beyond the cost of the meal will be given as a donation to Chaddock. For further information, please contact Beth Fender at 217-529-2611 or via email at [bfender@igrc.org](mailto:bfender@igrc.org).

The Rev. Jeff

Chaddock.

One of his specialties at Chaddock is to encourage individuals and congregations to prayerfully consider giving of their time, talents and resources in creative, meaningful ways to make a difference in the world and offer a powerful witness for Jesus Christ.

Prior to his appointment to Chaddock in 2007 he served a total of 23 years as pastor of local congregations. Jeff has also written numerous books, articles and curriculum materials for the United Methodist denomination. He has recently finished his 17th book in an annual series called *My Devotional Companion* for Abingdon Press.

### IGRC to sponsor *Engaging the Hispanic-Latino community*

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference will sponsor a workshop to be held at Grace United Methodist Church in Decatur on September 24-25 titled *Engaging the Hispanic-Latino Community*.

The purpose of the workshop is to prepare non-Hispanic/Latino clergy and laity to be in ministry with Hispanics and Latinos within their communities. The workshop will focus on providing training in building relationships with Hispanic and Latino immigrant populations, discerning ministry initiatives that include

Hispanic neighbors, and equipping churches for first steps in community outreach programs.

The registration fee will be \$30 per person with an early registration discount of \$5 off per person if registered by Aug. 24. An online registration link is available at <http://www.igrc.org/engagement>. Checks should be made payable to IGRC and mailed to the Office of Congregational Development, IGRC, P.O. Box 19207, Springfield, IL 62794-9207.

A block of rooms has been reserved at a discounted rate of \$55.00 plus tax per

room per night at the Baymont Inn and Suites, 5100 Hickory Point Frontage Road, Decatur. Please identify yourself as attending the IGRC Hispanic Workshop when making your reservation in order to receive the discounted rate. The phone number for the reservation desk is 217-875-5800.

A brochure for this event is available for download on the Conference website. Please direct questions or requests for more information to the Office of Congregational Development at 217-529-3219.

### Change in law widens assistance in Medicare drug plan

The Social Security Administration has announced that extra help is available through Social Security to help pay Medicare Prescription Drug premiums.

Medicare recipients with limited income and resources may be eligible for assistance on monthly premiums, annual deductibles and prescription co-payments. The assistance, worth an average of \$3,900 per year, can be used to pay monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and prescription co-payments.

A change in the law in 2010 has made it easier to qualify for assistance.

To qualify, an individual must be receiving Medicare and:

- Have income limited to \$16,245 for an individual or \$21,855 for a married couple living together. Even if annual income is higher, one still may be able to get some help with monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and prescription co-payments. Some examples in which income may be higher include if she or her husband:

- Support other family members who live with them;

- Have earnings from work; or

- Live in Alaska or Hawaii; and

- Have resources limited to \$12,510 for an individual or \$25,010 for a married couple living together. Resources include such things as bank accounts, stocks and bonds. Social Security does not count her house or car as resources.

The change in the law allows the exclusion of any life insurance policy as a resource, and Social Security no longer counts as income any financial assistance the Medicare recipient receives regularly from someone else to pay her household expenses like food, mortgage or rent, utilities or property taxes.

Application can be made online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp). To apply by phone or have an application mailed, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) and ask for the *Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs* (SSA-1020), or go to the nearest Social Security office.

**Information about the Medicare prescription drug plans and special enrollment periods can be found at: [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227; TTY 1-877-486-2048).**

### CEF grant deadline nears

The application deadline for the next round of grants from the Christian Education Sunday offering is **July 1, 2010**.

Grant funding is available for new or expanded Christian education ministries for any age group. Ministries that will enhance the ministry of other district or conference churches (such as through partnerships or training opportunities) are encouraged.

For complete grant criteria and an application form, please visit <http://www.igrc.org/cef>, or contact Christy Blickensderfer at 217-529-2473.

### Tornado and flood offerings

Donations to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR) U.S. Disaster Response relief efforts can be placed in local church offering plates or sent directly to UMCOR, P. O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087-9068. Designate checks for UMCOR Advance #901670 and "U.S. Disaster Response." Online donations can be made at [www.methodistrelief.org](http://www.methodistrelief.org). Those making credit-card donations can call 800-554-8583.

### College of Christian Life registration online

Online registration is underway for the 2010 College of Christian Life to be held Aug. 9-11, at the Peoria City Centre Holiday Inn.

Registration and information is available at: <http://ccl2010.eventbrite.com>

Doug Anderson, executive director for the Reuben Job Center for Leadership Development, will be the keynote speaker.

This year's event will focus on *Developing Congregations for the Mission*.

### Clergy Benefits Academy

The General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will host a Clergy Benefits Academy Oct. 4-6 at West Des Moines Marriott Hotel in West Des Moines, Iowa. The academy includes classroom workshops that provide age-focused coursework with one-on-one consultations with GBOPHB staff. Continuing education units are also available.

Online registration begins in May 2010 by visiting [www.gbophb.org](http://www.gbophb.org) and clicking on "Events and Education."

### New Haiti VIM website

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission are collaborating with the Eglise Methodiste D'Haiti to provide volunteer mission team to aid in recovery efforts in Haiti.

A new website, [www.umvimhaiti.org](http://www.umvimhaiti.org) has been launched this week. Susan Meister is coordinating the scheduling of teams and she reports that 91 teams have been scheduled in the first three weeks of operation.

### Ashram slated for Lake Junaluska

**LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.** — The North America Christian Ashram, *Kingdom Living in the 21st Century*, will be held July 13-16, at Lake Junaluska Camp and Conference Center (<http://www.lakejunaluska.com>).

The 2010 retreat will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Christian Ashram movement in the United States.

This Christian Ashram is designed for the entire family and keynote speakers will include Bishop James Swanson, Dr. Maxie Dunnam, Bishop William W. Hutchinson, Dr. Evelyn Laycock, Bishop Richard Looney and the Rev. Dr. Diane Walker.

Registration for the event is \$60 per person ages 21 and over, \$30 per person ages

6-20. The maximum family fee for registration is \$150. Information requests and registration fees should be mailed to B. Fosmire, NACA Registrar, P. O. Box 85, Flat Rock, NC 28731, or by email at [bfosmire@christianashram.org](mailto:bfosmire@christianashram.org)

Room reservations must be made directly with Lake Junaluska Camp and Conference Center at 1-800-222-4930. Each room holds up to four persons and rates vary with the number of persons in the room. Meals are \$29 per person per day.

The United Christian Ashram movement was founded by missionary and author E. Stanley Jones in 1930. For more information, visit [www.christianashram.org](http://www.christianashram.org)

## Local Church News



Photo courtesy of Dunlap Prospect UMC

Members of Dunlap Prospect UMC pick up trash and debris around town as part of the April 24 Change the World event.

### Dunlap Prospect UMC shares God's love

By Clara Miles  
Dunlap Prospect UMC

When Mike Crawford, the Director of Congregational Development for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, visited with the Administrative Council at Prospect United Methodist Church in Dunlap, he told them about his own church's free—completely free—car wash. They were intrigued by his words and began to consider the possibilities. When the Change the World event was shared with them only a few weeks later, it all started coming together.

There was no question about their participation in the weekend. Community outreach has always been a focus for the people of Prospect, and they had been helping support the denomination's fight against malaria for several years. There was no question—they would show the Village of Dunlap what happens when church leaves the building.

On the morning of April 24, over 50 devoted members—clad in their red "Impact Community" t-shirts—hit the streets of Dunlap to pick up trash and other debris around town. Having split their community into sections, four teams swarmed the various neighborhoods leaving a wake of...nothing behind. For two hours, they toiled, and then, they all reunited at the local Legion Hall for what many have called "a true God moment."

The Legion was hosting an all-day fundraiser for Multiple Sclerosis, starting with a hearty breakfast. Prospect's team needed some nourishment. What better way to get into the community than to get involved—all dressed in red—supporting a very worthy cause? Several members were asked about the large group and beamed as they spread the world of their



mission.

Despite the questionable weather, they continued the day with a free car wash and free throw contest in the church parking lot. The car wash, in appreciation of Crawford's suggestion, was completely free—not even donations were accepted; the free throw contest, a fundraiser for Nothing But Nets. But they didn't stop there!

The next morning brought the results of the prior week's challenge: raise \$1,000 for Nothing But Nets and Rev. Mary Kathryn Pearce would match it. The congregation not only met her challenge, but exceeded it. A grand total of \$2,760 was raised for this pivotal United Methodist ministry—a wonderful way to kick start the United Methodist Imagine No Malaria campaign.

Later that morning, everyone gathered in the fellowship hall for another fundraiser—and lunch. The chicken noodle dinner was established to raise money to help fund a summer medical mission trip to Kiev, Ukraine. And even after all the time and money they had already given, their generosity continued with free-will donations totaling over \$1,000!

The entire weekend was one of joy, and giving, and love. Prospect showed their community how God can work through his people to make a difference in the lives of others to Change the World!

### Mt. Vernon UMC 'reels' in young fish

By John Kraps

CHAMPAIGN — Jesus called Simon and Andrew to become "fishers of people."

People from Fisher and members of Mt. Vernon UMC in Champaign, are reeling in pre-adolescent fish from their community to the new fourth through eighth grade youth group hosted by the church. After just a few months, attendance in the new ministry averages 20 young people.

The youth group is the brainchild of the Rev. Dr. Rachel Berry. She says there are several keys to the success of this ministry: "Great youth who invite their friends, great counselors who pick up and drive all the kids, great team leaders like Johnny who really know how to work with kids.....and LOTS of prayer!"

Johnny Kraps, Berry's son, leads counselor training, games, the 4-6th grade Bible study group, and the MTV Praise band. "At all times, I look for where kids are shining to compliment them, and find out what's going on in their lives," he says.

Adult leadership of the ministry is a family affair in more ways than one. Ruth Brock, a teacher at Fisher High School, and her son, Mike, round up youth every Thursday night, then lead crafts and Bible study. High schooler Aaron Weckhorst and his mother, Lynn, help with registration, games, group Bible discussion, and dinner. Rod Cameron transports his grandson, Carter, five of his friends, and participates in the Bible lesson. Berry's daughter, Imy Berry, leads the drama workshop preparing skits to perform during closing worship or on Sunday morning. Other counselors include Debra McCall, Kenny Zahnd and Donald Ugartes.

Amy Spenard, works at the Fisher Middle school and her four children attend. Through her job and her kids, Spenard has befriended many Fisher youth. Asked why she goes about the trouble of tracking down the pre-teens and driving them to

church, she replies, "I enjoy bringing them so the kids can learn and have the church experience."

Illustrating what makes the time and effort worthwhile, she recalled, "One young person came up to me in school and asked if we could say a prayer at youth group for a fellow student who was dying of leukemia."

"Transportation can make or break a youth group," Kraps notes. "Not only does it physically get kids to church, but it also proves to the youth how much people care for them." Both Berry, who has a Ph.D. in psychology, and her son emphasize the positive environment which the counselors establish for the youth.

"Our counselors try to give the kids attention and praise when they do something well or treat someone the way Jesus would," Kraps says.

By limiting the attention given to disruptive behavior and recognizing the kids' successes, a safe environment is created so that even the youngster who's normally a class clown can join a serious discussion.

One essential ingredient in the safe environment is the "No Put-Down Rule," which requires any youth who gives another a put-down—even jokingly—to heal the hurt by giving the recipient three compliments.

What do the "fish" have to say about it? Drayton Purvis, a sixth grader at Fisher Middle School, explained, "It's really fun. There's so much stuff to do. I love all of it."

Drayton participates in the Praise Band, the drama and craft workshops. He quickly felt accepted in the group to the point where he volunteered to lead the closing prayer one evening. He confessed, "I was nervous."

His classmate, Quentin Roganbuck, summed it up for most of the kids: "I get to hang out with my friends and worship God."



Photo courtesy of John Kraps

Johnny Kraps, lower left hand corner, leads the MTV Praise Band at Mt. Vernon UMC near Champaign, Ill. L-R: Rob Spalding, bass guitar; Jake Spalding, drums; Back Row: Ana Cruz and Debra McCall, vocals; Front Row: Juan Cruz, Carter Oye, guitar.

## Local Church News

### Sibley UMC completes its mission

*(Editor's note: Sibley UMC will be one of the churches which will be remembered for completing its mission at the 2010 annual conference. The service of remembrance will be held at 10:30 a.m. Friday.)*

From 1873 in Burr Oaks when Mrs. Fannie Wills Sullivant organized the first Sunday School class in her home, until 2010 under the pastorate of part-time Pastor Karen Martin, the residents of Sullivant Township have felt the presence of God through the ministry of the Methodist Church.

Throughout the many years various projects were undertaken to keep the building, grounds and parsonage in good repair and the bills paid. Through the generosity of members and friends of the church, memorial gifts and many money making projects (from the 4th of July food stand to selling cookbooks, holding food stands for farm sales and business open houses, not to mention all the fried chicken and noodle suppers and bazaars), Sibley UMC has been able to keep its doors open to ministry in the community.

The ecumenical services with St. John's Lutheran Church, Community VBS, after school Kingdom Kids programs, feeding those in need with food pantry donations were some of the major ministries of the congregation. Not only local ministry has been given, but also support for state, national and world relief ministry. God has blessed the ministry of the members of this church and community.

#### History of the church

When the village was moved from Burr

Oaks to the area around the Wabash Railroad, the Sunday School class would meet in the upper floor of the Sibley Seed Barn which became known as the Village of Sibley. A man by the name of Harris would deliver the messages.

In 1878 after the first school house was built on the present site, the group of worshippers, under the leadership of James McCallister, would share the site with the Lutherans until 1889. When the first actual church was built and dedicated in December 1889, A.M. Lumpkin was the minister of the congregation that had its new home on the piece of land Mrs. (Hiram) Elizabeth Maria Tinker Sibley had donated for the purpose of a church and parsonage. She so strongly approved this endeavor that she was one of the biggest contributors to the building of both the church and parsonage. Wm. A. Bicket was known as the founder of the church, named Sibley Episcopal Church, and was the chairman of the Board of Trustees from its beginning until his death in 1896.

In 1919, a more modern parsonage was built just east of the church at a cost of \$6,000. That parsonage was sold in 1990 after Dr. and Mrs. William Garrett donated their home to be used as a newer parsonage. The parsonage was a huge asset and was eventually sold in 2008 after the Sibley UMC no longer could support a full-time pastor.

On Easter Sunday 1924, a remodeled church was dedicated. The beautiful Hinner's pipe organ was given by Harper



Photo courtesy of Sibley UMC

*A Hinner's pipe organ graces the sanctuary of the Sibley UMC*

Sibley in honor of his mother and the large stained glass window was given by the Bicket family with the two smaller windows being donated by E.D. Cameron and the Stare family. In 1939 the church name was changed to "Sibley Methodist Church".

In 1964 the Sibley Methodist Church and the Anchor Evangelical United Brethren Church established a Yoke Field Parish and in 1968 when the EUB and Methodist churches united, the church then became known as the Anchor-Sibley United Methodist Church and it functioned sharing a pastor until 2002 when

Anchor decided to close its doors.

In 1972-73 the beautiful pipe organ was electrified, new keyboard manuals installed and all working parts of the organ were repaired. The music from the organ has been a cherished gift to all who have heard it.

From 2002-2005 Sibley UMC Church shared a pastor and ministry with the Gibson City UMC Church followed by a shared ministry with the Colfax UMC until June 2006 when once again Sibley changed its ministry focus, this time with the Melvin UMC Church and a shared pastorate with Pastor Karen Martin.



Photo courtesy of Pat Wright, MMDC

The Midwest Mission Distribution Center celebrated its 10th anniversary on May 1. Persons in attendance began by making kits in the Center followed by campus tours and a Power Point presentation in the chapel.

10th Anniversary tote bags were available for a donation to the Center with dinner served by Sugar Creek UMC.

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer sent a video greeting, congratulating the Center for 10 years of helping those in need.

Bunny Wolfe, IGRC Missions and Outreach Coordinator, was the keynote speaker, with recognition paid to those present were are former and current Board members and staff, and to those who completed their terms of service this year.

A certificate of appreciation was given to the Center from Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach in Springfield for its partnership in mission through the years.

### Reynolds, Petersburg top Bible Bowlers

By John Hauck

The 2010 Conference Bible Bowl was held at East Bay Camp May 2. The final results were:

**Elementary:** First Place – Reynolds UMC; Second Place – Washington Evangelical UMC; Third Place – Oblong UMC; Fourth Place – Payson UMC

**Junior High:** First Place – Petersburg UMC Team 2; Second Place – Petersburg UMC Team 1; Third Place – Payson UMC; Fourth Place – Oblong UMC; Fifth Place – Atlanta UMC

**Senior High:** First Place – Reynolds UMC; Second Place – Payson UMC

Youth who have participated in the Conference Bible Bowl for four years or

more are: *Oblong UMC:* Anna McMorris (4 years), Taylor Musgrave (4 years), Erin Leggitt (4 years); *Petersburg UMC:* Sydney Hopps (4 years); *Reynolds UMC:* Maggie Bowman (6 years), Justin House (6 years), Kevin McCutchan (5 years), Sarah Brooks (4 years), Anna Brooks (4 years).

Special thanks to Michael Plezia and Andy Black for helping with the Bible Bowl by reading questions for the competitions. Also, special thanks to all of our volunteer scorekeepers.

The dates and Scriptures for the 2011 Bible Bowl will be announced this fall. Please contact John Hauck at [john.hauck@gmail.com](mailto:john.hauck@gmail.com) or 309-363-1901 if you are interested or want information about the Bible Bowl.

### Peoria Bethel UMC hosts worship workshop

Peoria Bethel UMC will present a Praise and Worship workshop June 25-26.

Resource leaders for the event are Minister Ronda Kingwood, Director of Magnification Ministries at St. Mark UMC in Wichita, Kan., and Rev. Junius Doton, St. Mark's senior pastor.

Praise and Worship Workshop session

will be held Friday evening and Saturday. Registration is \$25 per person.

For more information contact Bethel United Methodist Church, 309-676-7321 or email [bethelumc1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bethelumc1@sbcglobal.net).

Kingwood is an exceptional praise and worship leader and oversees all aspects of

*See Peoria Bethel on page 8 ...*

## Local Church News

# New website provides easier navigation, more information

By Paul Black

A new IGRC website, aimed at taking the next step in utilizing web technology for ministry, was unveiled May 17.

The new website features easier and more intuitive navigation, provides a greater amount of information, allows for interactivity with the user and puts place a framework that can grow as we grow.

The website was a collaborative effort between the IGRC Communications Ministry Team and Brick River Technologies of Exeter, N.H.

The look of the new site includes a banner that incorporates the five ministry priorities of the conference:

- Forming spiritual leaders
- Developing discipleship systems
- Starting new churches and revitalizing existing ones
- Engaging in mission – both locally and globally
- Embracing technology and relationships

The new website seeks to embrace the latest in technology so that our connectional relationship is strengthened. In turn, the other four priorities are empowered with additional tools in which to accomplish their mission and the tasks associated with it.

### ■ Basic design

The basic structure of the website is built upon several major areas:

**About Us:** this section not only includes basic information about mailing addresses and phone numbers for the Conference Center, but the area is organized in a series of searchable directories, that includes a clergy locator, a church locator, conference staff, and lay leadership. It is also here that you can sign up for various e-newsletters published by IGRC ministries. You can reach this area from the right-hand column of the Home Page.



**Annual Conference:** this area not only refers to the yearly session but also to the conference structure. Here is where you will find groups, committees and boards that function conference-wide, such as Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Archives, Lay Speaking, Preachers' Aid Society, United Media Resource Center, the United Methodist Foundation, United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women. You can reach this area from the top navigational bar.

**Bishop:** this area includes a biography of Bishop Palmer, all of Bishop Palmer's

pastoral letters and columns for *The Current*, presented in a blog format. The area will also soon expand to include other pieces of information from the Area Office as well as an area for audio and video recordings. You can reach this area from the top navigational bar.

**Communications:** this area includes all the various communication vehicles – List Serv, *The Current*, e-newsletter archive for *The Current Week in Review* and IGRC Events-full. You can reach this area from the top navigational bar.

**Districts:** located in the Quick Links of the home page, Our Districts provides a clickable map to any of the 10 districts within the IGRC.



**Events:** located within the website is a much more robust Conference calendar. Although some features are still in development, events will be able to be categorized and filtered when the user wishes to find dates. District dates will also be incorporated into the calendar. Events can also be submitted for inclusion in the calendar by clicking to the list view of the Conference Calendar and then clicking Submit an Event from the right-hand column. You can reach the Conference Calendar from the right-hand column of the home page.

**Finance and Benefits:** This area will be used to provide information on conference and local church finances, stewardship, health insurance and pension benefits. You can access this area from the top navigational bar.

**Ministries:** This area, also located in the top navigational bar, includes the ministries of the Equipping and Connecting Team. Also included is a page for Conference agencies, which is subdivided into Health and Welfare agencies, Higher Education and Campus Ministry and Conference-related organizations.

**News:** This area, located in the Quick Links section of the Home Page, includes Appointments, Blogs, Classifieds, Obituaries, Faith in Action stories, and an Idea Bank for Churches, where persons can submit best practices they have discovered that assist in ministry. The Conference News link on the Home page takes you to the main listing of stories with the most recent at the top and can be searched by subject. This area also feeds



the District pages so that news of particular interest to a district will also appear on the district page as well.

**Mission opportunities:** Click on Mission Opportunities within the Home Page Quick Links and you will see a listing of volunteer opportunities for mission.

Organized locally (within the IGRC), nationally and internationally, persons are able to locate contact information for various trips and missions. Persons looking for a trip can also submit information to this data bank as well as team leaders looking for additional volunteers.



**Galleries:** Located on the right-hand column of the home page, galleries will include areas for displaying photos, videos and audio files.

**Search:** A more robust search function is a part of the new website. Click on the Search button on the top navigational bar and a box will appear for a site-wide search of a word or subject.

### ■ Friendly URL's

Although the website's database assigns a random URL to each page, certain pages of the website have been given specific URL's to aid navigation. These include all of the major sections listed above. These are direct links to particular pages that can be bookmarked:

About Us: [www.igrc.org/aboutus](http://www.igrc.org/aboutus)

Annual Conference:

[www.igrc.org/annualconference](http://www.igrc.org/annualconference)

Bishop: [www.igrc.org/bishop](http://www.igrc.org/bishop)

Communications:

[www.igrc.org/communications](http://www.igrc.org/communications)

Districts: [www.igrc.org/districts](http://www.igrc.org/districts)

Events: [www.igrc.org/events](http://www.igrc.org/events)

Conference Calendar:

[www.igrc.org/events/calendar](http://www.igrc.org/events/calendar)

Finance and Benefits:

[www.igrc.org/financebenefits](http://www.igrc.org/financebenefits)

Ministries: [www.igrc.org/ministries](http://www.igrc.org/ministries)

News: [www.igrc.org/news](http://www.igrc.org/news)

Appointments:

[www.igrc.org/appointments](http://www.igrc.org/appointments)

Blogs: [www.igrc.org/blogs](http://www.igrc.org/blogs)

Classifieds: [www.igrc.org/classifieds](http://www.igrc.org/classifieds)

Faith in Action stories:

[www.igrc.org/faithinactionstories](http://www.igrc.org/faithinactionstories)

Obituaries: [www.igrc.org/obituaries](http://www.igrc.org/obituaries)

Districts also have friendly URL's, and are found at: [www.igrc.org/cacheriver](http://www.igrc.org/cacheriver) for Cache, [www.igrc.org/embarrasriver](http://www.igrc.org/embarrasriver) for Embarras and so forth.

United Media Resource Center is found at: [www.igrc.org/umrc](http://www.igrc.org/umrc) and the UMRC catalog search is at: [www.igrc.org/umrcsearch](http://www.igrc.org/umrcsearch)

Other friendly URL's will be added as the site is more fully developed.

### ■ Greater interactivity

Although a vast majority of folks visit the IGRC for information, the new website provides avenues for them to be a part of sharing information.

Whether it is commenting on news items or blogs, submitting faith in action stories or It Worked for Us items, posting a classified or a work mission opportunity, the full resources of 150,000 United Methodists in the southern two-thirds of Illinois are unleashed in new and exciting ways to connect the United Methodist connection with the world.

And that communication becomes easier, as the new website also takes our stories and pages and translates them on the fly to other languages. The website then becomes more hospitable for those whom English is not their native language or for persons around the world wanting to connect with folks in Illinois.

It is our hope that you will "kick the tires" of the new website and let us know your thoughts. Perhaps you have suggested improvements; we continue to listen and hope you'll see the difference the new IGRC website will make in assisting United Methodists with the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

## Conference News

### UMW Assembly 2010 draws women in person around the world and online

ST. LOUIS (UMNS) — The Haitian-American women were not sitting in the dome of the St. Louis convention center, where about 6,500 United Methodist women had gathered for worship.

But their greeting to sisters in the faith from the pews of a Florida church was heard and seen via a Skype Internet connection.

For decades, the United Methodist Women's Assembly has drawn thousands to a quadrennial event focusing on worship, education, advocacy and celebration. This year, with the help of technology, many more women were able to view selected portions of the April 29-May 2 assembly streamed live on the Internet and, in a few cases, the women could interact with on-site participants.

Taped video greetings came from women in Sierra Leone, Honduras, Costa Rica, Russia and El Salvador.

Bishop Joaquina Nhanala of Mozambique, the first female United Methodist bishop elected in Africa, preached afterward and spoke about a program ministering to vulnerable women in her country. "My sisters, when we understand and realize how much God loves us,

we translate that love in practical ways into our lives," she said.

Harriett Olson, top executive of the Women's Division, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, reinforced that call to action as the assembly ended, urging participants to connect to the needs of the world. "In the economy of God, we don't have limits," she said. "There's still more to do."

#### Practical, spiritual, inspirational

The Women's Assembly has always been a combination of the practical, spiritual and inspirational.

On the practical side, participants could learn how to spend or invest their money in a way to encourage corporate change, set up a Twitter account, attend a "green cleaning party" or march for immigrant rights.

In a well-attended town hall-style meeting on April 30, Joycelyn Elders, a United Methodist who served as the U.S. surgeon general under President Bill Clinton, offered her perspective on health care reform.

Elders said she was not concerned that the law finally approved this year had some flaws in it. "We've been talking



*The Della Lamb Children's Choir sings during opening worship at the United Methodist Women's Assembly in St. Louis. The April 29-May 2 assembly drew 6,500 participants.*

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBoise.

about universal health care since 1912," she said. "At least we've got a start, and we've got something to work from."

She reminded United Methodist Women that they have the power to help fix a system that "costs too much, delivers too little."

On the spiritual side, women could get advice on strengthening and transforming congregations, watch a liturgical dance performance and explore the biblical basis

of the church's position on immigration.

The Rev. Anita Phillips, a member of the Cherokee nation of Oklahoma and executive director of the denomination's Native American Comprehensive Plan, drew from her background to underscore the "central interconnectedness of all creation," which, she added, "tells us what our deepest yearnings are for."

*\*Bloom is a United Methodist News Service news writer based in New York.*

## Come to the Quiet

Sponsored by the Upper Room's Academy for Spiritual Formation and The Illinois Great Rivers Conference

**What:** Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

**When:** May 1, 2011, 3 p.m. - Fri. May 6, 1 p.m.

**Where:** Nazareth House, Henry, IL

**For Whom:** Clergy and laypersons

**Cost:** \$475

*If registered before March 15, 2011, cost is \$450*

#### Retreat Leaders

**Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Canham**, author of *Heart Whispers* and *Praying the Bible*, speaking on being attentive to God's word through meditation, reflection, silence and holy listening.

**Rev. Dan Wolpert**, author of *Leading a Life With God: The Practice of Spiritual Leadership* and *Creating a Life With God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices*, speaking on spiritual leadership as seen through prayer practices.

Full registration information to be announced later.

**For information on scholarships, contact Rev. Stan Haxton, 217-454-5543, or email at [shaxton@igrc.org](mailto:shaxton@igrc.org)**

## Kids are struggling to go to camp ... using a little VISA can help!

**Help United Methodist camps without spending an extra nickel!**

Your United Methodist Ministries Credit Union is partnering with the camping programs of Illinois Great Rivers and Northern Illinois Conferences to give them a boost.

**Your part? Just shop with your UMMCUCU VISA Card, and we'll make a contribution to camping!**

Purchase groceries and help kids get to camp. Buy gas and help kids get to camp. Use your UMMCUCU VISA Card for anything for the next year, and you will be aiding United Methodist camping ministries all around Illinois.

Don't have a UMMCUCU VISA Card? No problem! Just contact the *United Methodist Ministries Credit Union* office at 309-827-8636, and the friendly staff will help you with the application right away! (Website: [ummcu.com](http://ummcu.com))

As an added bonus, everyone who becomes a **new member** of the *United Methodist Ministries Credit Union* and gets a UMMCUCU VISA Card will generate an extra \$5 gift to the camping programs. The more folks who participate, the more funds for camp. Everybody benefits!



## Conference News



Photos courtesy of Marcus Holland, UMCH

Youth in the United Methodist Children's Home's Residential Treatment Program have been given the opportunity to join 4-H and start a garden this spring. The seeds and seedlings were planted and the youth are in charge of watering, pulling weeds, and tending to the garden. They will see the plants mature and celebrate with every fruit or vegetable produced. Activities, like the garden, are a great way for the youth to focus their energy and develop positive results. The garden is a 32-square-foot, raised-bed garden. Each 1' x 1' section is divided for different types of plants including: lettuce, cabbage, strawberries, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, and flowers at each corner. The boys and girls meet as a 4-H club every Friday. It is a great way for the youth to not only learn about gardening, but learn about leadership and life skills. University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Theresa Greene and 4-H Youth Development Educator Jamie Wheeler were instrumental in getting the gardening program started.

## United Methodist Children's Home honors volunteers' time and support

The United Methodist Children's Home hosted its annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner April 27.

In attendance were special volunteers who visit with youth on a weekly basis. These mentors are called Visiting Resources, and their help is invaluable to every UMCH program. Also present were volunteers from the Governing Board of Directors, Foundation Board of Directors, Mt. Vernon Friends Auxiliary, and Centralia Friends Auxiliary. The Friends make an impact on youth in UMCH programs, by helping with lunches, picnics, birthday parties, and holiday celebrations.

"We see how valuable your contributions are every time a youth gets excited when her visiting resource pulls up on campus, every time a youth gives a big hug to their favorite Friends lady, and every time a youth benefits from a prayerfully reached board decision... the real value of volunteers is measured in smiles," explained Joan Minor, Volunteer Coordinator for UMCH.

In 2009, UMCH totaled 118 volunteers who donated 1,400 hours of their time. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, one volunteer hour in Illinois is valued at \$22.50. If we were to calculate a monetary value on volunteer time at UMCH in 2009, it would come to approximately \$31,500.

The Corporation for National and Community Service bases the value of volunteer time on the average hourly wages of all subordinate workers (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Then this

figure is increased by 12 percent for benefits.

### Special Recognition

Debra Chauncey has been volunteering as a visiting resource since August of 2008. For two hours nearly every week, Debra mentors a 16-year old Residential girl named Danielle. They have formed a great relationship, and Danielle's face lights up every Tuesday when "Mrs. Chauncey" arrives. In 2009, Debra donated about 64 hours of her time to UMCH.

Dawn Eggemeyer began with UMCH as an intern with the Professional Foster Care program. Before her internship even ended, Dawn made it clear that she wanted to continue working with the youth whom she had already formed relationships. She officially became a volunteer in November 2009, and just in two months, Dawn donated 63 hours to UMCH!

Wish Sims is a member of the Mt. Vernon Friends Auxiliary, where she has served as treasurer for the past several years. Wish is another face the youth recognize as a dedicated volunteer who takes the time to get to know them when she sees them. Wish volunteered 40 hours in 2009.

Lisa Thatch started volunteering in April of 2008 as a visiting resource for a 15 year old girl named Mikayla. If you happened to stop on campus while Lisa was there, you would most likely see her kicking a soccer ball with Mikayla who loves to stay active. Lisa donated about 40 hours to UMCH in 2009.

Ellen Walker has been an integral UMCH volunteer for many years as both a

## Crawford running marathon for new churches

Starting new churches is more of a marathon than a sprint. It doesn't happen instantly. It takes time, patience, hard work, and persistence.

Mike Crawford, the IGRC Coordinator of Congregational Development, knows this all too well. So when he decided to run a marathon this summer, he thought it would be a great opportunity to highlight the work of congregational development. Mike is taking pledges to raise money for new churches in Liberia and the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

He will be running the Charlevoix (Mich.) Marathon on Saturday, June 26. He started training for the race in February. By the time the race is over he will have run 630 miles (604 in training and 26.2 on race day).

## Peoria Bethel

*Continued from page 8*

worship, which includes, planning, developing and implementing new styles of creative worship that embraces all ethnic, generational and cultural backgrounds. Since becoming the Director of Magnification, Ronda has raised the level of worship that is experienced by thou-

Individuals and churches have made pledges or given gifts to support the cause. As of May 14, Mike had already reached his initial goal of \$3,150 (amounting to \$5 for every mile he will have run). He really wants to at least double or possibly even triple that amount. Some have pledged \$26 (\$1 for each mile of the race). Others have pledged \$63 (\$.10 for each mile run). Still others have pledged \$100 or more. No matter the size of the gifts, they will all make a difference for God's kingdom.

You can make a pledge and/or gift online. Go to [www.igrc.org](http://www.igrc.org) and toward the bottom of the home page you will find a link where you can submit a pledge.

If you have any questions about this effort, contact Mike Crawford at [mcrawford@igrc.org](mailto:mcrawford@igrc.org).

sands on any given Sunday morning.

She is also a gifted workshop facilitator leading classes at national events such as, the United Methodist Church Congregational Development and Aldersgate Renewal Conference. She developed creative worship styles; "The Holy Spirit: Your true Worship Leader;" and "The Worshipper that God seeks: Is God looking for you," just to name a few.

board member and as the founder of the Mt. Vernon Friends Auxiliary group. Many of the youth recognize Ellen by sight as the sweet Friends Lady who is at nearly every birthday party, the Christmas party and the picnic. In 2009, Ellen donated 41 hours to UMCH.

### Volunteer of the Year

Mary Suddarth has been volunteering at UMCH for years. In 2009, Mary was the Mt. Vernon Friends Auxiliary president and served on the UMCH Governing

Board of Directors. She also spent many hours working with the CEO Search Committee to secure the new UMCH president and CEO. Her passionate support for the youth and families we serve is clear – nearly every UMCH event included Mary as a volunteer, from the chili cookoff, where she stood in freezing rain to help sell baked goods, to the annual golf tournament, where her help was invaluable to setting up the event. In 2009, Mary donated over 70 hours to UMCH.



Six volunteers were given special recognition for their dedication and support to UMCH. Each of these volunteers received a plant symbolizing the night's theme, "Thank you for helping plant the seeds of healing." These volunteers are (front row, from left) Lisa Thatch, Debra Chauncey, Dawn Eggemeyer, Wish Sims, Volunteer of the Year Mary Suddarth, and Ellen Walker. They are pictured with UMCH President / CEO Gary Lemmon, Volunteer Coordinator Joan Minor, and Vice President of Operations Kay Zibby.

Photos courtesy of Marcus Holland, UMCH

## Conference and National News



Photo by Paul Black

IGRC Facilities and Maintenance Manager Bob Stelte shares a laugh while opening cards at his retirement party May 12. Stelte, who has been with the IGRC for six years, announced his retirement. His last day of work is May 27 and he plans to spend his retirement fishing and having more time for his family.

## Agreement

*Continued from page 1*

he asked. “Jesus prayed that we all might be one as He and the Father were one. I am committed to finding the sweet spot in our unity and inspiration for the hard work of unity in our world.”

Bishop Warren D. Freiheit of the Central-Southern Illinois Synod of the ELCA, presided over the Service of Communion and persons from both denomination served in a variety of capac-

ities within the service.

Rev. Jonathan Dixon, pastor of Riverton UMC, served as a reader and India Hammons of Springfield Grace UMC, served as a prayer leader.

Sharon Brown of Springfield Kumler UMC and Guerry Suggs of Springfield Douglas Ave. UMC were communion assistants with a combined choir under the direction of Jean Welch, provided an anthem accompanied by the St. John’s Lutheran Church orchestra.

## McFee to lead worship at 2012 General Conference

**PORTLAND, Oreg.** (UMNS) – The Commission on the General Conference has selected Dr. Marcia McFee of Truckee, Calif. as worship and music director for The United Methodist Church’s 2012 General Conference.

McFee is a well-known worship designer and leader with experience in music, theater, and dance who has taught workshops, preached and led worship at numerous United Methodist gatherings. She served as worship and music co-director at

the 2008 General Conference.

As worship and music director, McFee will be responsible for the overall worship and music program management at the 11-day event. She will oversee liturgy and music throughout the assembly, including inviting choirs and worship groups from across the church to participate.

McFee received a Master of Theological Studies degree at Saint Paul School of Theology and a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies at the Graduate Theological Union.

## The \$100 challenge: it doesn’t take a lot to do good as long as they do it regularly



By Dan Dick

A young man came up to me the other day and led off with the line, “You probably don’t remember me, but...”

Having worked for the national church for almost 15 years, I have met an awful lot of people, and I must confess that I don’t remember too many of them, but this young man went back even further to my days in New Jersey. He said, “We only attended your church one time when I was like 15, but I still remember you.”

I don’t think there is anything a preacher likes hearing more than that he or she said something to a teenager 22 years ago that made a lasting impression. Most of what we say seems to be forgotten before the majority of people exit the sanctuary... Anyway, what he remembered was “the \$100 challenge.”

I haven’t thought of this in years. I went to two small churches that had a terrible track record paying their apportionments. (Apportionments being the “fair share” of missional and denominational support each congregation gives through the annual conference to support the work of the church.) The combined apportionment for the two churches was no more than \$8,000, but generally each congregation only paid in the hundreds. Leaders in the congregations were fuzzy about what apportionments were and did.

Paying apportionments in full was one of my top priorities, but the skeptical lead-

ership didn’t share my commitment. I remember the chair of Trustees telling me, “if you can think of some way to raise the money, we’ll gladly pay them.” I took the dare and came up with the \$100 challenge.

I listed out 20 of the missions and causes supported by apportionments in our conference. I asked people for a few weeks if they would be willing to donate just one dime to each of them to see that these ministries could continue. Just \$2 per week per person could support not just these 20, but dozens others as well. I challenged every person — man, woman, and child — to commit to raise and/or give \$100 over the year.

I also issued the challenge to the UMW, UMYF, UMM, each of our committees, classes, study groups, etc., thinking if we could just get about half the congregation to commit, we would more than cover our apportionments. That year, we ended up paying 121 percent — our best giving ever.

We never had problems paying our apportionments from that day forward. It simply became part of what we did. Most people waste more than \$2 per week, so for the vast majority of people it was no hardship at all.

The young man who approached me told me that he never forgot the basic message: it doesn’t take a lot to do good, but it requires that many people are needed to do a little on a regular basis.

In a lump sum, an apportionment might seem like a large amount, but when it is broken down to a manageable level, virtually no church can’t rise to the challenge.

When we first issued the challenge, most people paid their money right away, or over a very short period of time. UMW held a fund-raiser and paid \$1,000 to help

cover the challenge for those in our congregation struggling financially. The UMYF had a candy sale and gave \$350. Two Sunday school classes dedicated their weekly offering to apportionments once they understood the local missions they helped support. We even had nominally active members send us checks to cover “their share.”

What comes to mind with this challenge was that it was simple, fairly easy for almost everyone, optional — no one was forced to “pay up,” and it was tied into telling the story of what apportionments actually do, instead of approaching them as “church taxes” or “membership fees.” People liked paying their apportionments. People felt good about their simple gifts. People were happy to be doing good. I wonder how often we inadvertently make apportionments — and giving in general — harder than it needs to be?

People want to do good. Most people wish they could give more. It makes great sense to help people feel better about the giving they can actually do, instead of making people feel guilty for what they aren’t doing. In 1988, the per member apportionment was approximately \$69. Today it is in the \$85-90 range most places. The \$100 challenge can still work. It still covers the membership. And almost everyone can find a way to free up a couple bucks a week for good causes. I’m talking movement here. I would love to see churches across the country struggling to meet apportionments to issue the \$100 challenge. See what happens. The worst outcome is nothing changes. The best case? We fund our church at a 100% level and take pressure off the system so that we

can worry less about money and get our focus back on mission. Help people do a little, and we might just change the world.

*(Dan Dick is the Director of Connectional Ministries for the Wisconsin Annual Conference a former staff member of the General Board of Discipleship. Reprinted from Rev. Dick’s blog, United Methodevations, <http://doroteos2.wordpress.com>)*

## Mai Hutson Gray dies

**ST. LOUIS (UMNS)** – Mai Huton Gray, who was instrumental in building leadership within the church’s Central Jurisdiction, created in 1939 to separate African-American congregations from their white counterparts, died May 6 at the age of 88.

As a member of United Methodist Women, she helped craft the organization’s current Charter for Racial Justice and presided over the 1978 assembly at the Louisville, Ky., convention center where it was adopted. The charter was adopted by the denomination two years later.

When the 2010 Women’s Assembly opened April 29 in St. Louis, Gray was there, just as she had been at every other assembly.

But she fell during the event, suffering a head injury, and died May 6 in a St. Louis hospital. The date for a memorial service has not been set.

Jon R. Gray, one of her sons, said she would not have wanted to miss the assembly. “My mom was in a place she wanted to be with people she wanted to be with,” he added.

## General Church News

### Court backs clergy dismissal over affair

**MORRISTOWN, N.J.** (UMNS) — The United Methodist Judicial Council upheld the dismissal of a South Carolina clergyman accused of having an affair with a married woman.

But members of the denomination's top court raised questions about the handling of DNA evidence and frequent use of off-the-record conferences at the minister's trial.

At the conclusion of its April 21-24 meeting, the Judicial Council affirmed the verdict against Jimmy J. Montgomery, a married clergyman who served as a chaplain for 19 years at United Methodist-related Claflin University. He was accused by the South Carolina Annual (regional) Conference of having an ongoing affair.

### Council strikes down Indiana budget process

The Judicial Council has struck down the 2010 budget and financial policies adopted by the Indiana Conference, saying the actions amount to "reductions in general church funds."

The Council reversed a decision of law by Bishop Michael Coyner.

Church law requires that conferences build budgets that include items mandated by general church apportionments. It is clear, the council said, that the Indiana Conference Council on Finance and Administration used "the poor apportionment performances" of the two former conferences rather than the full apportionment amount to project income levels for a new budget.

"It is laudable for a conference to seek means for increasing revenue," the council said. "But creating devices to generate higher revenue for the annual conference that might lead to full payment of apportionments established by the general Church does not relieve the annual conference from fulfilling the church law."

In other business, the Judicial Council:

- Decided that the new structure of the Dakotas Annual Conference must abide by all mandates of the Discipline and past Judicial Council decisions and, in this case, include a Conference Commission on Archives and History.

- Affirmed the decision of law by Michigan Area Bishop Jonathan Keaton that the West Michigan Annual Conference has the authority to implement a mandatory conference-wide property and casualty insurance plan.

- The full text of the Judicial Council decisions can be found at: [http://archives.umc.org/interior\\_judicial.asp?mid=263](http://archives.umc.org/interior_judicial.asp?mid=263).

## Goodpaster takes over as Council of Bishops president

By David Briggs\*

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** (UMNS) — A former Mississippi pastor who is committed to engaging United Methodists in hands-on mission took office May 7 as president of the denomination's Council of Bishops.

Bishop Gregory Palmer, outgoing leader, handed the presidential gavel over to Bishop Larry Goodpaster with the words, "May you direct and assist us in the building up of God's work."

Goodpaster, spiritual leader of the Charlotte (N.C.) Area, promised to fulfill the office "for the glory of God and for the transformation of the world."

Following the installation service, United Methodist bishops stood and applauded while Palmer embraced Goodpaster. Palmer, leader of the Illinois Area, had served as president since 2008.

Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader of Chicago said she looks forward to Goodpaster's leadership.

"He is a man with solid gospel presence and great integrity in all the work he does," she said. "He engages everyone with whom he works."

The council comprises The United Methodist Church's top clergy leaders, who guide the 11.5 million-member denomination in Africa, Europe, Asia and the United States.

In an interview, Goodpaster said he is ready to assume the office.

"I want to be where God wants me to be," he said. "I want to be available. I want to trust God."

Advocate of growth

Goodpaster received his bachelor's degree from United Methodist-related Millsaps College in Jackson, Miss., in 1970 and was ordained deacon in 1971 and elder in 1974.

He served several Mississippi churches while earning a doctorate from Candler School of Theology in 1982. He has served a five-church rural charge, a new congregation and several large-membership churches.

He was elected a bishop in 2000 and appointed to the Alabama-West Florida Conference. He was appointed to the Western North Carolina Conference in 2008. He also provides oversight to the church in Vietnam.

During his two-year term, the new president will face several issues, including an effort to establish structures that more fully reflect the growth of the church overseas and efforts to revive a declining and gray-ing membership in the United States.

As Palmer's successor, Goodpaster said he wants to play a role in bringing the church together in mission. In particular, the bishop said, he wants to embed the denomination's four areas of focus (leadership development, congregational growth, global health and ministry with people in



*Bishops Larry Goodpaster and Gregory Palmer embrace following the passing of the president's gavel from Palmer to Goodpaster at the close of the United Methodist Council of Bishops' spring meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Palmer, who leads The United Methodist Church's Illinois Area, began his two-year term in 2008. Goodpaster, leader of the Charlotte (N.C.) Area, will serve as president until 2012. The Council of Bishops met May 3-7 in Columbus.*

poverty) into the life of the church.

As part of that effort, he wants to continue informal conversations among several groups looking at the church's future, including the Call to Action Committee, the Connectional Table and the Committee to Study the Worldwide Nature of The United Methodist Church. All of these groups, along with the Council of Bishops, need to be sure they are working together, said Goodpaster, author of the 2008 book "There's Power in the Connection."

In a rapidly changing world, there is a special challenge in finding ways to serve the church in a timely way between the General Conference gatherings, which occur every four years. Shortly after the 2008 legislative assembly approved the four-year budget, the economy soured. The budget crisis that followed showed the need for the church "to be able to respond quickly," Goodpaster said.

**New life**

Amid its challenges, there are signs of

new life throughout the denomination, Goodpaster said.

He sees it in his own conference, which plans to start eight churches this summer. In addition, he sees it throughout the church in Southeast Asia, which continues to grow despite many challenges.

"There is a certain amount of excitement and passion about extending the gospel from village to village, from neighborhood to neighborhood," Goodpaster said.

When the going gets hard, he said, church members in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have the attitude, "We're going to trust God to get us through this."

It is also Goodpaster's attitude as he assumes the presidency of the Council of Bishops.

"God's grace is bigger than any of us and always sufficient," Goodpaster said. "That's what I'm going to rely on."

\*Briggs is news editor of *United Methodist News Service*.

### Weaver to deliver 2012 episcopal address

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** — Bishop Peter D. Weaver of the Boston Episcopal Area has been chosen to deliver the Episcopal Address at the 2012 General Conference in Tampa.

Meeting this week in Columbus, Ohio, the Council of Bishops elected Weaver to prepare and deliver the address on behalf of the entire council, which comprises 69 active bishops and 91 retired bishops from the U.S., Africa, Europe, and Asia. The bishops provide spiritual leadership for the 11.5-million member denomination.

"There is a lot to celebrate as we try to live out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and continue our work around the four foci," said Bishop Weaver. "It's also a time of change and challenge, and we will

invite the General Conference into prayer and decision making that helps us be a more effective instrument of God's mission in our world."

Weaver, who was president of the Council from 2004-2006, said that the development of the address would include a listening process.

"Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher set a new model of collaboration in the development of the Episcopal address, which I expect to follow," said Weaver. "There will be collaboration with bishops which has traditionally happened, but also boards and agencies, local churches and annual conferences. It's out of that collaboration that in a sense we corporately try to listen for God's word to lead us forward."

## Christian Conversation



A UMINS photo by Kathleen Barry

*The Belle Meade United Methodist Church is reflected in the rising flood waters in Nashville the morning of May 3.*

### Churches respond to floods, tornados

By United Methodist News Service

United Methodist churches across the U.S. Southeast opened their hearts and their doors to people stranded by weekend storms that killed at least 20 people in Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky and Arkansas.

In Nashville, Tenn., interstates were closed, thousands displaced from their homes, and hotels and nursing homes evacuated. Streets and parking lots were transformed into raging rivers. Parts of the state received as much as 20 inches of rain over the first weekend in May.

Damage to United Methodist churches and property throughout the region is being assessed. Even after the record-breaking rains stopped and clean-up began, rivers and creeks continued to crest. On May 3, the Cumberland River in Nashville was 11 feet above flood stage.

The United Methodist boards and agencies in Nashville struggled to do business as usual. The United Methodist Publishing House opened an hour late to allow employees time to find alternate routes to work. United Methodist Communications staff arrived to find telephones down but computers connecting them to the rest of the world.

The storms began overnight April 30, spawning at least 12 tornadoes in Arkansas. Thunderstorms producing tornadoes and heavy rains moved into Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee on Saturday. The slow-moving system soaked north Georgia on Monday as it continued leaving thousands of people displaced or stranded.

#### Tennessee Conference

On Saturday afternoon, May 1, extensive flash flooding began in Antioch, a suburb southeast of Nashville.

May 3 found the Rev. John Collett, Nashville District superintendent, delivering flood buckets. As he and Lynn Taylor, district secretary, continued to identify

**Donations to UMCOR's "U.S. Disaster Response" relief efforts can be placed in local church offering plates or sent directly to UMCOR, P. O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087-9068. Designate checks for UMCOR Advance #901670 and "U.S. Disaster Response." Online donations can be made at [www.methodistrelief.org](http://www.methodistrelief.org). Those making credit-card donations can call 800-554-8583.**

churches with damage, they also were "compiling a list of outposts to host people overnight, provide meals and be staging areas for relief workers and supplies," Taylor said. The Nashville District staff will work closely with Jason Brock, Tennessee Conference director of mercy, mission and justice, and follow his direction.

"We are continuing to gather information, make connections, and set up our ability to connect volunteers," Brock said in his blog on the Tennessee Conference Web site, found at: <http://tnumcrelief.blogspot.com>

Brock said flood buckets are appreciated since they are easy to store and ship. The conference office is trying to connect the 250 flood buckets it has with Centerville, Antioch and other hard-hit Nashville-area locations. UMCOR is shipping 1,800 buckets and will provide more as needed. The North Georgia Conference is sending 350 buckets.

For those helping their neighbors clean up from floods, Brock said the conference soon would have a six-page guide advising "what to keep, throw away, and how to sort."

#### Memphis Conference

Near Memphis, the Mississippi River was cresting on Monday morning, May 3, and south Dyersburg was being evacuated. First United Methodist Church, Dyersburg, opened its 200-person-capacity Red Cross shelter to the evacuees.

### Constitutional amendment canvass

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** - The United Methodist Council of Bishops announced May 5 that only five of 32 amendments to the church's constitution passed by the 2008 General Conference have been ratified by the annual conferences. The ratified amendments will become effective immediately.

The process for amending the Constitution of The United Methodist Church requires a two-thirds majority vote of General Conference delegates. Annual conferences must then ratify the amendments by a two-thirds affirmative vote. The results of the voting are reported to the Council on Bishops, where they are verified and counted. The results are then reviewed and certified by the Council of Bishops.

The vote counts for each of the amendments were as follows:

#### Approved Amendments

- **Amendment VIII**, adds "gender" to the list of categories ensuring the rights of membership regardless of race or status: passed 41,434 yes; 7,712 no

- **Amendment IX**, which ensures every jurisdictional conference have at least 100 delegates: passed 39,333 yes; 9,122 no

- **Amendment XVII**, which allows laity on the committee on investigation to vote on matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy: passed 33,810 yes; 14,712 no

- **Amendment XIX**, which allows all clergy members of annual conference to vote to elect clergy delegates to general, jurisdictional or central conferences: passed 38,604 yes; 10,432 no

- **Amendment XXII**, which recognizes Bermuda congregations as part of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference: passed 43,049 yes; 5,539 no

#### Failed Amendments

- **Amendment I**, which clarifies all people are eligible to attend worship services and receive the sacraments: 23,614 yes; 25,764 no

- **Amendment II\***, which requires all United Methodist organizations to adopt ethics and conflict of interest policies for members and employees: 32,413 yes; 16,596 no

- **Amendment VI**, allows newly established conferences be represented

on a non-proportional basis for two quadrennia: 25,969 yes; 22,990 no

- **Amendment XV**, which allows definition of the lay and clergy membership of the annual conference by the General Conference without going through the constitutional amendment process: 31,233 yes; 17,218 no

#### Failed Amendments related to structures of the worldwide church

- **Amendment III**, 21,126 yes; 28,218 no

- **Amendment IV**, 19,219 yes; 30,178 no

- **Amendment V**, 20,768 yes; 28,486 no

- **Amendment VII**, 20,840 yes; 28,588 no

- **Amendment X**, 19,386 yes; 29,920 no

- **Amendment XI**, 20,711 yes; 28,539 no

- **Amendment XII**, 20,825 yes; 28,568 no

- **Amendment XIII**, 19,566 yes; 29,819 no

- **Amendment XIV**, 20,851 yes; 28,505 no

- **Amendment XVI**, 20,823 yes; 28,586 no

- **Amendment XVIII**, 20,856 yes; 28,546 no

- **Amendment XX**, 20,639 yes; 28,653 no

- **Amendment XXI**, 20,921 yes; 28,425 no

- **Amendment XXIII**, 19,184 yes; 30,185 no

- **Amendment XXIV**, 20,575 yes; 28,853 no

- **Amendment XXV**, 20,581 yes; 28,688 no

- **Amendment XXVI**, 19,277 yes; 30,061 no

- **Amendment XXVII**, 20,711 yes; 28,657 no

- **Amendment XXVIII**, 20,588 yes; 28,656 no

- **Amendment XXIX**, 20,652 yes; 28,703 no

- **Amendment XXX**, 20,584 yes; 28,703 no

- **Amendment XXXI**, 20,658 yes; 28,685 no

- **Amendment XXXII**, 20,698 yes; 28,591 no

Millington, north of Memphis, was flooded when a levee at the nearby naval base was breached, sending water into the southern part of the city of 10,000. "One trailer park was completely covered," Cleveland said, and "several businesses were damaged."

This was the second time the church's family life center was used as a shelter. "It was a good thing, because some folks did-

n't have any other place to go," Cleveland added.

First Church members helped shelter workers serve meals and ensured personal needs were met. Stephen Ministers from the congregation were available to listen to the survivors.

*\*Compiled by Barbara Dunlap-Berg, Heather Hahn and Kathy Noble, United Methodist News Service.*

## Annual Conference News

# Church rejects move toward regional bodies

By David Briggs

**COLUMBUS, Ohio (UMNS)** -- The United Methodist Church rejected several amendments that could have paved the way for making the church in the United States one of several regional bodies throughout the world.

More than 49,000 representatives of the worldwide church rejected 23 amendments to the denomination's constitution that would have allowed for the organization of groups of annual conferences in a single nation or area into a larger regional conference. The term "central conference," referring to the church outside the United States, could have been replaced by "regional conference" in other parts of the world.

Proponents of the changes said the new structure would reflect the growth of the church outside the United States, but some opponents expressed concern that it would lead to the division of the church into national groups.

The United Methodist Council of Bishops on May 4 announced and ratified the results of voting from some 135 regional conferences on constitutional amendments approved by the 2008 General Conference, the denomination's top law-making body. For a proposed amendment

to be ratified, two-thirds of the aggregate number of voting annual conference members must approve.

Five of the 32 proposed amendments were ratified:

- Amendment 8, adding "gender" to the categories of persons protected in the list of duties of General Conference.
- Amendment 9, setting minimum levels of support for the election of bishops.
- Amendment 17, allowing lay people to vote on ordination matters.
- Amendment 19, permitting all clergy members of annual conferences to vote to elect clergy delegates to general, jurisdictional or central conferences.
- Amendment 22, recognizing Bermuda congregations as part of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

Illinois Bishop Gregory Palmer, council president, announced May 5 that Amendment 2, requiring ethics policies in United Methodist organizations, did not pass. The amendment failed to get the two-thirds approval required, with 32,413 votes in favor and 16,596 opposed.

The proposals for restructuring the church were denied, in many cases drawing more than 28,000 votes against and about 21,000 votes in favor.

An amendment on the inclusiveness of church membership, which some interpret-

ed as a challenge to church teaching on homosexuality, also did not receive a majority of votes. The amendment would have clarified that "all people are eligible to attend worship services and receive the sacraments."

In other business at its spring meeting, the Council of Bishops unanimously decided not to call a special session of General Conference on issues dealing with pensions and the reorganization of the church. The assembly's next regular gathering will be in 2012 in Tampa, Fla.

**Charges of colonialism**

Some members of the Council of Bishops, which backed the proposed amendments on the restructuring of the church, criticized the "imperialistic mindset" of the church-wide votes.

"Those who have power have refused to share power," said San Francisco Area Bishop Warner Brown.

Retired Bishop Emilio DeCarvalho of Angola said the votes keep in place a "40-year-old colonial structure" that is a denial of the worldwide nature of the church.

Shortly after the voting results were announced, the bishops decided to continue their conversation in executive session, closing the meeting to the public.

In looking at preliminary figures broken down by conference, voters from the cen-

tral conferences in Africa were the strongest opponents to the proposed changes, rejecting the amendments on restructuring by as many as 4,900 votes out of 5,165 votes cast. European voters, in contrast, overwhelmingly supported the amendments.

In the United States, the proposed changes were most strongly supported in the Western Jurisdiction and soundly defeated in the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

### Next steps

Bishop Palmer said church leaders will have to "think anew" about opportunities to adapt structures to reflect the growth of the denomination outside the United States.

The Committee to Study the Worldwide Nature of The United Methodist Church said in a statement that there were many lessons to be learned from the vote.

"We believe members of annual conferences around the world are sending a strong message that this specific vehicle for change was flawed," the statement said. "It left many issues open to broad interpretation. It was unclear how the changes, if approved, would have been implemented."

But the votes do not change the fact that the focus of the church is moving from North America to other parts of the world.

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