

Financial challenges mirror economic uncertainties in 2009

United Methodists in IGRC remain faithful in their giving even in tough financial times



Photo by John Hartleroad

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer baptizes Samuel Jerome Snider, son of Revs. Justin and Miriam Snider, during the Embarras River District celebration Jan. 25 at Effingham Centenary UMC.

By Paul Black

The ripple effect of the national economy crept into the church in 2009 but United Methodists in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference continue to show tremendous generosity even when their

local and personal economies would invite them to do otherwise.

At the close of November 2009, apportionment receipts were up 2.34 percent over the same time in 2008 with 78.11 percent collected to date. The November finish is the highest since 1998, when 78.40

percent was collected for the first 11 months of the year. That year, IGRC congregations paid just over 96 percent of apportioned amounts.

For the conference, the financial challenges came on two fronts – a variable interest rate on the Conference Center mortgage and the loss of assets due to the economic downturn and how it affects the funding of future pension benefits.

■ Financial challenges

In late 2008 and early 2009, the interest rate on the bonds issued to finance the conference center started rising, reaching as high as 10 percent. Efforts to refinance the bonds were unsuccessful, but members of the Council on Finance and Administration were able to redeem \$1 million of the outstanding \$4.7 million balance.

The effect of the redeeming of the bonds has been to see the interest rate drop to nearly 3 percent and the debt service on the mortgage to once again be within the budgeted parameters of \$500,000 per year set by the 2002 annual conference session.

In October, the conference received final figures on the effect the volatile market and financial returns of 2008 and 2009 had on invested pension funds and the

See Challenges on page 8 ...

Holiday closing

The Conference Center will be closed from Thursday, Dec. 24 through Sunday, Jan. 3 in observance of the Christmas and New Year's holiday.

The Conference Center will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 4.

Deaths

Olive Davis, widow of Rev. Carl Davis and mother of Revs. Raydean and Henry Davis, Dec. 20, 2008

Ruth Henson, mother of Rev. Brad Henson and grandmother of Revs. Jeremy and Matt Henson and Heather Young, long-time lay delegate to annual conference, Dec. 24, 2008.

Carol Holland, wife of retired pastor Dowain McKiou and surviving spouse of Rev. Art Holland, Jan. 6

Marie Beuoy, widow of Rev. Herbert J.

See Deaths on page 13 ...

Church retains missional Four Areas of Focus despite hard times



A UMMS photo by John Goodwin.

United Methodist investments lost significant value in 2008, and church finance leaders say giving by individual congregations is uncertain due to the stock market's decline and weakness in the financial sector. An economic advisory committee of the church's General Council on Finance and Administration met Dec. 5 in Nashville, Tenn., to review the finances of The United Methodist Church in the midst of a U.S. recession.

By Linda Bloom*

NEW YORK (UMNS) — When the stock market takes a hit, so do church collection plates.

Global economic woes had an impact on all levels of The United Methodist Church in 2009 and the results were budget cuts, staff layoffs, canceled meetings and postponed projects. Even the denomination's bishops voted to take a pay cut.

But the denomination continued to pursue its four areas of focus—improving global health, engaging in ministry with the poor, encouraging church growth and developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.

The recession that began in the fall of 2008 translated into lean times for church bodies the following year. In January, the United Methodist Publishing House reported its greatest sales decline in 20

years. A planned revision of The United Methodist Hymnal was put on hold.

The next month, the church's largest agency, the Board of Global Ministries, decided to reduce its 2009 operating budget by \$3.9 million, or 7 percent.

In May, the denomination's bishops voted to roll back their salaries in 2010 to 2008 levels, dropping from \$125,658 to \$120,942, effective Jan. 1.

By June, the Board of Global Ministries was sending letters offering retirement or "voluntary separation" packages to all employees. The agency eliminated 45 positions by the end of July and another 20 open positions were not filled. The Board of Discipleship cut 30 positions during the first half of the year and United Methodist Communications eliminated seven staff positions at the beginning of August.

Staff members of the Commission on

See Missional focus on page 9 ...

News from the Episcopal Office

The new year: a time to claim a life-giving path to which God calls



Bishop Palmer

Dear friends in Jesus Christ,

What a privilege it is to greet you in 2010. I have no clue as to whether you have found making New Year's Resolutions a helpful practice or not. I confess to you that I have been ambivalent about them for many years. I see their value in giving focus and attention to the adoption of new behaviors or practices. But so often I have doubted my own discipline and commitment to keep faith with my resolve.

You and I know that there is nothing special or magical about claiming new best practices on a particular date. What matters is that we live a life where reflection is built in, ongoing. Hopefully this reflection leads to the resolve to act to let go of harmful things and to take on life – giving practices in all aspects of our lives.

Colossians 3:1-17 is a passage of holy writ that speaks to me over and over again. Breathe these words with me:

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.*

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.* But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive* language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal* there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!*

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ* dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.* And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

In this passage two distinct life orientations are juxtaposed and we are invited to claim the way that gives life. The life-giving path is the life patterned after Jesus Christ. Put another way, one pattern of life is focused inward, self absorbed and self gratifying. The pattern or path that leads to life is outwardly focused, oriented toward community. One pattern is violent, degrading and tears down. Contrast this with the invitation to kindness, love and building up others and the community.

I am persuaded that that it is to the latter that we are called. Now would be a great time to claim this pattern for living. It can and will make an enormous difference in the church and in the world. It may seem like a small and insignificant thing to be so claimed by God's love in Jesus Christ that our way of being is marked by *compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience*. But it is the little ostensibly insignificant things that make a world of difference. After all wasn't it just Christmas and we were celebrating the gift of life in a fragile, vulnerable baby; a seemingly insignificant birth of just another poor kid. What a world of difference he has made.

What about us?

Yours in Christ,

Gregory Vaughn Palmer

Corrected pages for 2009-2010 Music and Worship Planner

Abingdon Press recently notified customers that there were errors on three pages of the United Methodist Music and Worship Planner.

Errors were found on pages 55, 57 and 59. Replacement pages as corrected in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) are available on the IGRC website at: <http://www.igrc.org/UM-Worship-Planner-Corrections.aspx>

Persons need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to open the corrected pages. Acrobat Reader is available free of charge at www.adobe.com.

Announcements

Appointments

In consultation with the Cabinet of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer appoints the following pastors:

Dave Hutton to Bluff Springs, LaMoine River District effective Dec.

Deaths

Betty Dees, wife of retired Pastor David Dees and mother of Rev. Rebekah Dees-McMahon, died Dec. 6. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. David Dees at McLean County Nursing Home, 901 Main St. Room 328, Normal 61761, or to Rev. Rebekah Dees-McMahon, P. O. Box 643, Sheffield, IL 61361-0643.

Rev. Charles Tindle, retired pastor from the former Southern Illinois Conference, died Nov. 27 in Mt. Vernon.

Positions

Harvest Ministry Teams, based in Troy, (St. Louis, Mo. area) is looking for **musicians for a 2010 Summer Ministry Mission**. Applications are being accepted. Harvest assembles worship bands to serve at camps, youth conferences and kids events all over Illinois and the Midwest. Young adults commit to serve on the team from June 1 – August 1, 2010 and though there isn't a dollar amount paid to team members, travel, lodging and meals are covered for the summer. Harvest is now in its fourteenth year and the mission is to "equip young adults for ministry while providing a resource to the local church." Musicians, tech people, and ministry minded leaders are needed and applications, information and details can be viewed on the Harvest Ministry Teams site: http://harvestministryteams.com/summer_teams/index.html or contact Tim Price, 618-667-6241 ext 14 or email tim@harvestministryteams.com

Mattoon First UMC is seeking to hire an **Associate Pastor** (Minister of Youth and Children). Seminary or bachelor's degree in religion, theology, or related

area desired as well as compatibility with the Methodist tradition. Training and experience with youth as well as experience and gifts in children's and family ministry sought. Ability to work with volunteers and other staff, spiritual depth, and an ability to coordinate multiple programs also needed. Salary and benefits commensurate with experience, education, and job requirements. For more information or to submit a resume please contact: Dr. Kenneth D. Hutchens, First UMC, 1601 Charleston Ave., Mattoon, IL 61938, 217-235-5676, or email MattoonFUMC@yahoo.com

The GBOD is hiring an **Executive Officer of New Church Starts**. This person will serve as Executive Officer of the division for new congregational development and exercises general administrative oversight of the division. The position requires the candidate to be a person of hope and vision, deeply rooted in Christian faith and practice and have a profound sense of the importance of the making of Christian disciples. For more information or to apply please visit http://www.gbod.org/homepage/jobdescription.asp?item_id=48252

Items for sale or give away

Nashville Grace UMC is selling a Wicks electronic pipe organ, 8 ranks, in good working condition. Best offer accepted. Moving is the responsibility of the buyer. Please call 618-478-5314 or 618-327-8407.

The Clover Chapel UMC (now closed) has a set of special order double exterior doors to give away. They are glass with metal frames (8'4" tall by 5'3" wide) and are in good condition. The door glasses are marked with the cross and flame logo. The members would like to give them away to any church that can use them. Contact Sherry Griffin at 309-342-5925.

Signal Hill UMC has a Lowrey Pageant Organ, Model M-155 to give away to a local church. It is in excellent condition. It has two key boards and 8 foot pedals. Whoever would like it would have to come to Belleville to get it. Contact Signal Hill UMC 618/397-7780 or email pwehrly@igrc.org

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Announcements & Events

IRS announces 2010 mileage rate

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2010 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2010, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 50 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 16.5 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

The new rates for business, medical and moving purposes are slightly lower than last year's. The mileage rates for 2010 reflect generally lower transportation costs compared to a year ago.

The standard mileage rate for business

is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. The rate for medical and moving purposes is based on the variable costs as determined by the same study. Independent contractor Runzheimer International conducted the study.

A taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle after using any depreciation method under the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) or after claiming a Section 179 deduction for that vehicle. In addition, the business standard mileage rate cannot be used for any vehicle used for hire or for more than four vehicles used simultaneously.

Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates.

Fire-Up Conference to be held at Troy UMC

By **Tim Price**
Harvest Ministry Team

Fire-Up Sr. High Conference is scheduled to be held at Troy United Methodist Church on Feb. 26-28,

Marc Sikma is the featured speaker for Fire-Up 2010. Sikma was active as a student at Vandalia First UMC. While he was attending McKendree College in Lebanon, he also served as the youth pastor at Lebanon First UMC. During this time there, both the youth ministry and the college ministry flourished under his leadership. He is currently the founding pastor of Matthias Lot, a unique and growing church in St. Charles, Mo.

Over the years, Fire-Up has grown to be part retreat, part conference, all amazing! The production, lights, media and music help add a distinct Fire-Up flair. But the worship, prayer, learning, growth and focus on Jesus have become the bedrock that has changed hundreds of young lives. One of the unique aspects of Fire-Up is that

there is an option to be housed in host families from Troy UMC. About half the students (approx. 200) utilize this option to not only save the cost of lodging, but also to connect with others in the body of Christ. Other groups choose to stay in motels that are located one mile from the venue.

Each year, a group from Troy UMC forms the hosting team and plans, prepares and gets meals, housing, registration and other hospitality factors ready to welcome nearly 35 different churches during the weekend. A group of youth ministry leaders from around the area form the Core Team and meet on a monthly basis to develop the program, seminars, small groups and worship services. These components, along with Troy UMC host families, to form a powerful witness to the grace and love of Jesus Christ. Students hear, experience, and feel God's presence.

For more information about Fire-Up 2010, please visit www.fire-up.org. You may also call to request a poster and registration packet 618-667-6241 ext 14.

Sweet to speak at men's wellness event

Platform includes Christian comedian Jonathan Slocumb, seven-time Grammy nominee Vanessa Bell Armstrong

SHILOH — Nationally-known speaker Leonard Sweet will be speaking as part of a men's wellness conference to be held at Shiloh UMC on Saturday, March 27, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sweet will be joined by Christian comedian Jonathan Slocumb and International Gospel Industry Award vocalist Vanessa Bell Armstrong as part of the event, sponsored by the Metro East Project, in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Public Health's Center for Minority Health Services.

Free prostate screening will be available through the mobile Wellness on

Wheels, which will be parked on-site throughout the event.

Sweet served from 1995 to 2001 as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Theological School at Drew University, Madison, N.J. He is also a visiting distinguished professor at George Fox University in Portland, Oreg., and President Emeritus of United Theological Seminary. He is a weekly contributor to the online preaching resource, sermons.com.

For more information about the men's wellness conference, visit www.igrc.org.

Clergywomen's Consultation survey online through Jan. 15

Bishops Sally Dyck of Minnesota, Linda Lee of Wisconsin and Deborah Kiesey of the Dakotas are asking women clergy to complete an online survey to guide the shaping of the 2014 International Clergywomen's Consultation.

The survey, which will be live until Jan. 15, is located at the following url: <http://public.gbhem.org/snapwebhost/surveylogin.asp?k=125908485434>

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has in the past

sponsored an international clergywomen's consultation each quadrennium. This quadrennium, each jurisdiction is responsible for implementing its own clergywomen's gathering with the hope that we can have a global one again in 2014.

To participate in the survey between now and Jan. 15, visit: <http://public.gbhem.org/snapwebhost/surveylogin.asp?k=125908485434>



Ignition Middle School Conference to be held in East Moline

By **Tim Price**
Harvest Ministry Team

Ignition Middle School Conference, sponsored by Harvest Ministry Teams, will be held Jan. 29-30 at East Moline Christ UMC. The East Moline area connection happened as the leadership considered ways to reach students who may not be able to travel far for a weekend event. Additionally, as Harvest Ministry has had the privilege to connect with churches, leaders and students in that area, interest was expressed to host such an event.

The theme for Ignition is Fuel – faith for the everyday!

Kale Uzzle is the speaker for the East Moline Ignition 2010. Kale is currently on staff with Intervarsity at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo. He has been serving in this role since graduating from college two years ago. Kale served on the 2007 Harvest Summer Team and has been connected to the ministry since. Uzzle brings a passion for students, clear thinking and a solid faith as he shares the mes-

sage of Jesus.

Ignition weekends being at 7 p.m. on Friday and conclude at 4 p.m. on Saturday. The registration fee covers all the program, meals, recreation, and entertainment. Group / students are responsible for their own lodging for the night. Many times youth groups will connect with another local church and spend the night there if they are coming from a considerable distance.

For more information about Ignition, posters, schedule or registration forms, visit www.harvestconferences.org/ignition. You may also call 618-667-6241 ext 14 or email harvest@harvestconferences.org.

Ignition began in 2004 as a way to connect with middle school students for a quick, inexpensive weekend that would allow for a focus on worship, seminars, fun, music, entertainment, and relationships. The leaders for the weekend events often include young adults from around the conference who help in various aspects of leadership from speaking to music to planning and production.

EAST LYNN LADIES RETREAT

"Bear One Another's Burdens"



Saturday — March 6, 2010
Speaker/Author: Carol Kent
Cost \$30. Deadline: Feb. 22

8:00 – 9:00 Check-in, coffee, book & gift tables
9:00 – 3:30 Retreat

Praise & Worship, Silent Auction, Lunch included
Location: Hoopston Area High School

615 E. Orange, Hoopston, IL 60942

Visit www.KendraSmiley.com for a registration form.

(Registrations are transferable, but not refundable, unless sold out)

Local Church News

Blue Christmas service for those that mourn during the holidays

Chenoa UMC will host a “Blue Christmas” service on Dec. 21, designed for all those that are mourning.

The quiet, 4 p.m. service will end just before sunset on the longest night of the year. The service will include Communion, candle lighting, a time of remembrance, and short message by Pastor Robb McCoy.

“We will mark the longest night of the year by gathering with those that have known the darkness of a cold and lonely night,” McCoy said. “We will gather knowing that the Christmas season is not always one of joy.”

According to the book of Matthew, Jesus said, “Blessed are those that mourn, for they will be comforted.” Christmas can be a time ripe with memories of family, loved ones, joy and merriment. This joy though, can be countered with an equally strong sense of despair because of memories of lost loved ones.

“A couple of days later on Christmas Eve we will light candles as a symbol of joy for the coming of Christ,” said McCoy. “First though, on the longest night, we will light candles in memory of those we mourn.”

Unity Chapel gone...but not forgotten



Rev. Ray and Martha Roberts is pictured at the Unity Chapel UMC homecoming held in October. Roberts, retired IGRC clergy, is the only living former, fill-in/interim, pastor for Unity Chapel, which closed its doors Dec. 28, 1975.

By Gail Hildebrand, Jim and Carolyn Craig

Over time, we have begun to see many of our small churches having to close their doors and then be forgotten. The reasons for closing are numerous and varied.

But one small church that closed its doors 30 years ago may have been down but not out for the count.

Unity Chapel UMC, located 1 ½ miles west of Charleston and 1 mile south of Ill. Route 16, held its last service Dec. 28, 1975. The church that had been a vibrant place to encounter God, to learn the Bible stories and their application, to fellowship with family and friends and to grow a deep personal faith.

The church's history began in 1871 when James Brown and his wife Elizabeth deeded 1 acre of land for the building of a church for use by the United Brethren of Charleston. The church, built with donations and volunteer labor was dedicated in 1872. Because of the close ties to the Brown family for many years, it was often called Brown Chapel. In 1938, it was decided to build a new building and the original building was torn down. The new building was dedicated in 1939. In 1953,

the church became Evangelical United Brethren and in 1968 after a merger with the Methodist Church it became Unity Chapel UMC.

On Oct. 10, there was a “third gathering” of folks from this country church held at Charleston Otterbein UMC. Referred to as a “Unity Chapel Homecoming,” those in attendance tried to re-create some of those wonderful memories of church homecomings past. A catered lunch was served and then a two-hour program of solos, duets and trios were sung; old and new poems were read aloud; past recitations that had been discovered in a box of archives were shared; and a Name That Tune contest to see how many old hymns people could recall. A particular highlight was when “anyone who had ever sung in a Unity Chapel choir” was asked to come to the stage and sing *It Is Well With My Soul* and *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*. About 25 men and women sang in the choir that day. More than 100 attended the third gathering with some coming from as far away as Arizona and Texas. The average age of attendees ranged from mid-60's to 90's.

Unity chapel's first reunion was held in 2003, when it was an attempt to locate for-
See *Unity Chapel* on page 5 ...



A Gift Ark to Heifer International was presented in the name of Orville Mueth during the morning service at Caseyville UMC on Nov. 29. Orville's health has been compromised over the last year and this gift was to honor Orville's years of service to the United Methodist Church, United Methodist Men and Heifer International.

Pictured from left to right are Laura Lane (granddaughter), Carol Ricketts (daughter), Valarie Mueth (daughter-in-law), Sylvia Mueth (Orville's wife), Terry Mueth (son), Orville Mueth, Caseyville UMM President Rick Penny and David Mueth (son).

“One of the causes that has always been close to Mueth's heart is Heifer International. Orville helped build the farm in Arkansas and has been our district and conference representative for many years,” Penny said in making the presentation. “In 2001 Orville was recognized as Volunteer of the Year by Heifer International. It is with this in mind we, Orville's friends and family, wanted to give back a portion of all those gifts Orville has given to us. With the help of friends and family, churches and UMM groups from the Mississippi River District and the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, I am proud to stand here and say that a Gift Ark worth \$5,000 was presented to Heifer International in the name of Orville N. Mueth. This gift will help improve the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of people throughout the country and the world for years to come. As God has blessed Orville so has Orville blessed God's creation.”

Chenoa UMC providing Christmas lunch boxes for students over break

The people of Chenoa UMC are trying to keep Christ in Christmas, by feeding his sheep. They have started a new program called “Christmas Lunch Boxes” so that students at Chenoa Elementary will have lunch over the upcoming Christmas break.

Inspired by the call to “Risk-Taking Mission,” members of a small-group Bible study at Chenoa UMC decided to step out in faith. Sarah McCoy, one of the participants in the Monday night Bible study came up with the idea, and the other six members of the group got on board quickly.

The group was studying the book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase.

“We were reading about these amazing programs that just started with a few people and a good idea,” McCoy said. “And we thought, ‘Why can't we do it too?’ We could not come up with a reason not to try it.”

The idea is simple. There are many families that are put under serious financial stress at Christmas. Instead of celebrating the joy of the coming of Christ, many parents are worried about the increased

demand of childcare and food because their children are not at school.

“Around three-quarters of the children at Chenoa Elementary qualify for reduced-cost lunch,” said Jenny Johnson, a member of the group and a teacher at Chenoa Elementary. “How are they supposed to get a healthy lunch when they're not coming to school?”

The group started collecting food the next week at church. Food and cash donations have started to come in, and Pastor Robb McCoy has worked on the other end to help with distribution.

“We received cooperation from the school to help send a letter to all of the children at Chenoa Elementary,” Robb McCoy said. “The letter will tell parents to call the church if they are interested, and that we will do our best to fill Christmas Lunch-Boxes for as many children as we can.”

The group has no idea how much food will be collected, or how many families will respond. They are putting their faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“It is possible that we have bitten off
See *Chenoa* on page 5 ...

Local Church News

Layman, church continue their support of Russian church

ROANOKE – Pete and Carol Hughes, representing the Roanoke UMC, traveled to Novgorod, Russia, on a short-term mission trip Nov. 5-17.

For Pete Hughes, it was his 19th trip to the Evangelical Christian Church of Pastor Anatoli Korabel. It was Carol Hughes' fourth trip.

The Russian Mission program of the Roanoke UMC formally began in 2001. A certified lay speaker, Pete Hughes raises funds during the course of a year to support the outreach. All funds raised goes to mission as the Hugheses pay all of their own travel expenses to the former Soviet Union.

The support taken on the 2009 trip followed a traditional pattern. A total of \$10,000 was taken to support the church and its operational expenses. Another \$4,000 went to support the operation of an alcohol/drug rehabilitation center in the village of Vibitie, Russia, through June 2010. An added \$1,000 was extended to the church pastor for his support.

A large supply of medicines was presented to the doctor of the church, as well as 25 pair of new reading glasses. For eight years, Hughes has extended support to the English Department of a school, taking materials to assist in the teaching of English to Russian students. On the November trip, three series of American Classics in condensed version, 10 copies

each, were taken. A supply of learning materials, an annual gift, was extended to the orphanage in Vibitie. New underwear was taken to the men at the rehabilitation center.

During the trip, Hughes spoke numerous times at church services and presented a seminar to men of the Novgorod Church. Carol Hughes also presented a seminar to the church's women. A connection with a university teacher allowed the couple to visit with university students helping them to sharpen their speaking of English.

Hughes notes that a key focus of the total program is the support of the alcohol/drug rehab center in Vidibitie. In the summer of 2003 Hughes attended a meeting of the men of the church and was asked if it might be possible for the Roanoke Mission to support a rehab center at a projected cost of \$6,000 per year. The center would be housed in a building purchased in 2001 through Hughes at a cost of \$10,000.

Responding to the question, Hughes advised that he believed it was "possible to support the center." The program began in 2004. To date, a total of \$47,000 has been raised for the operation of the program. Hughes notes that men who come to the center are at the "absolute end of their lives due to their addictions." Hughes observes, "we have successes and failures, but we are

community and even into the world. Some became pastors, Sunday School teachers, Bible Study leaders and church administrative leaders. Others have served in various mission opportunities as well as directing ongoing camping events and some have published articles and books. In retrospect, it was determined that this little country church had certainly been good training ground for outreach and ministry "to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the



Photo courtesy of Pete Hughes

Pete Hughes, fourth from the left, and wife Carol attended the wedding of Ira and Andrew during a November mission trip to Russia. Every man in the wedding party, including Andrew, is a graduate of the alcohol/drug rehabilitation center supported by the Roanoke UMC. Dema, far right, was the best man and serves as the rehab center's director after going through the Vibitie program in 2004 to treat his own alcoholism.

seeing more and more men who are recovering from their addictions to lead productive lives. The work is so rewarding."

Hughes advises that since the Roanoke Mission program begun in 2001, he has been able to raise about \$182,000 of total support for the Russia church. Hughes suggests that any church can carry out a long-term mission program. The key is to identify a clear set of activities and have a

focus person or persons of the church who will lead the effort. Hughes notes that it is the "same old thing, just work hard and keep at it consistently. Small gifts over time do make a real difference." Hughes is always willing to share about the Russia Mission and can be reached at P. O. Box 1055, Roanoke, IL 61561, by phone at 309-923-7370 or by email: phughes@mtco.com.

Unity Chapel

Continued from page 4

mer attendees and get them together to reconnect 28 years after the church closed. A second reunion was held in 2006 – once again reconnecting, but adding another dimension to the day – sharing where our faith journey had taken each family since they left Unity Chapel UMC.

Many of its people went on to service and ministry in numerous churches in the

KSU Choir to sing at HIV/AIDS prayer service at Shiloh UMC Feb 6

SHILOH – The Metro East Project, in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Public Health's Center for Minority Services and the Gateway Chapter of the KSU National Alumni Association will host the Kentucky State University choir on Saturday, Feb. 6, beginning at 4 p.m.

The concert will be part of a National Black Church HIV/AIDS Week of Prayer.

High school seniors may audition for a

KSU scholarship by contacting Rev. Dr. Beverly Wilkes Null at revbev@shiloh-umc.org no later than Feb. 2. Childcare will also be available if a request is made to vikki@shiloh-umc.org or by calling 618-632-6913 prior to noon on Feb. 2.

For more information, contact the Metro East Project at 618-741-7169 or by email at: metroeastproject@sbcglobal.net.

Intentional Messaging workshop Feb. 6

Quincy Vermont St. UMC will be hosting a one-day Youth Specialties training on Intentional Messaging from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The workshop will have an enhanced focus on developing one's communication skills that you can use in whatever church ministry role you serve. Special emphasis

will be on commonly-used media.

Lunch will be offered for a donation to the Vermont St. UMC youth group or local restaurants are within four to 10 blocks. Contact Randy Azbell at 217-222-7468 or by emailing randy.azbell@yahoo.com

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.ysoneday.com>

world."

We would never advocate that churches be closed, but perhaps the dispersing of disciples could not have occurred as it did had this little country church not closed its doors in 1975. When we experience a church having to close its doors for whatever reason, then perhaps we should look at it not as an "ending" but as a "beginning" of something mightier that God may have in store!

Chenoa

Continued from page 4

more than we can chew," Robb McCoy said. "Yet that is what risk-taking mission is all about. The Kingdom of God happens when the needs of a community intersect with the resources of a loving congregation."

For a few families of Chenoa, that will mean a few extra peanut butter and jelly sandwiches over Christmas break.

Congregations invited to share in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

By Linda C. Harrod
Illinois Conference of Churches

The theme for the 2010 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes from the Gospel of Luke Chapter 24:48: *You Are Witnesses of These Things*. This year's Week of Prayer focuses on the Church's call to mission, the same mission Christ gave his disciples. The Church is the community of those who have been reconciled with God and in God, and who can witness together to the gospel of salvation in unity that respects diversity. The Week of Prayer resources provide congregations a daily reflection on chapter 24 of Luke's Gospel, as we think about how we are already witnesses to the Risen One, but how we might become better witnesses.

The Church Unity Octave, a forerunner of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, was developed by Father Paul Wattson, SA, at Graymoor in Garrison, N.Y., and was first observed the week of Jan. 18-25, 1908. In 1967 representatives from the Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches agreed to jointly observe a time of prayer called the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity." Since 1968, the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have collaborated annually to select scriptural themes and helpful materials to promote prayer for the unity of all Christian Churches.

If your congregation would like to participate in the 2010 Week of Prayer for Unity (Jan. 17-24) various resources, *See Christian Unity on page 6 ...*

Local Church and Conference News

Making an ecumenical connection

Illinois Conference of Churches looks forward to 2010 with new direction, leadership

By Bishop Gary Wollersheim, Co-Chair, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Rev. Terry L. Clark, Co-Chair, The United Methodist Church

The Illinois Conference of Churches looks forward to a new year and new opportunities to fulfill our mission of “being an inclusive community of churches that celebrates and makes visible our sacred bonds of unity in Christ.” We have embarked on a new direction under new leadership and with new staff members to renew our commitment to public outreach and warmly extend offers to speak in person with any and all judicatories and churches who are interested in our mission and vision.

The Illinois Conference of Churches is holding the Bi-Annual Statewide Gathering on March 19-20, at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the

Snows in Belleville. The focus of the gathering is Seeing with New Eyes – Persons Who are Poor Teaching Us.

In addition, the 2010 Annual Assembly has been scheduled for Sept. 23. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield. The focus of this gathering will be Standing Apart – Standing Together ... developing harmony and peace within our churches and communities.

The Illinois Conference of Churches has also developed a new look and feel, publishing a new newsletter format called Ecumenical Connection and publishing a brochure about the ICC. The new website, located at www.ilconfchurches.org, was officially launched on Dec. 10.

The Public Policy Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches is committed to addressing those issues and concerns that impact the Church. With the overarching theme of poverty, in 2010 the ICC will

focus on the following items for the 2010 Annual Assembly year:

- Abolition of the death penalty
- Medicaid if there is an opt-out for Federal Healthcare Reform
- Ensuring the safety net for state programs and services that serve the most vulnerable
- Concerns for the incarcerated; especially the youth who have barriers to employment because of prior convictions
- Monitoring operational issues that impact the church.

The Leadership Team governs the Illinois Conference of Churches as needed including all personnel matters and planning the ICC Annual Assembly. The two Co-Chairs of the ICC Leadership Team for the 2010 Annual Assembly Year are Bishop Gary Wollersheim, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Rev. Terry L. Clark, The United Methodist Church. The Public Policy

Coordinator is Rev. Linda Harrod, also of The United Methodist Church.

Pamela Tackett began working with the ICC on Oct. 19 as the new Administrative Coordinator. She comes from the corporate world and brings with her a background in marketing, writing, graphic design, website development, and non-profit management. Pamela is currently completing her bachelor's degree in Communications from Kaplan University and will then pursue a master's in Organizational Leadership at Lincoln Christian University. Tackett's office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. She looks forward to furthering the mission and vision of ICC and fostering an organization of respect, understanding, and service.

For additional information about the Illinois Conference of Churches, please visit our website at www.ilconfchurches.org or contact Pamela Tackett at 217- 522-7099 or pamela@ilconfchurches.org.



Photo courtesy of MacMurray College

MacMurray professor, musician, and alumna, Terri Benz, received the 2009 United Methodist Board of Higher Education Award for Teaching Excellence, during a reception held in her honor Dec. 10 at the college. College president, Colleen Hester, left, and Dr. David Fitz, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the college, right presented Benz (center) with a certificate from the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and a monetary award of \$1,000. The annual award is given to a professor who demonstrates excellence in teaching, civility and concern for students and colleagues, commitment to value-centered education, service to students beyond the classroom, service to MacMurray College, service to the community beyond the campus and service to a local church. Benz earned her bachelor of music degree from MacMurray College in 1983, and her master of music degree, specializing in choral conducting, from Western Illinois University in 2008. She is also music director and organist at Centenary United Methodist Church in Jacksonville and director of the Jacksonville Children's Choir.

Christian Unity

Continued from page 5

including daily scripture and prayer guides, pulpit and bulletin announcements, an exegetical reflection on the scriptural theme, as well as suggestions

for promoting and observing the week of praying together in unity, are available on-line at www.geii.org. You may also contact the Illinois Conference of Churches office at 217-522-7099 for further information and assistance.

South Korean leaders visit Chaddock



Photo courtesy of Chaddock

QUINCY — The Korea Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and Korea Foundation for the Advancement of Science & Creativity (KOFAC) sent four representatives to Quincy Dec. 2 to study Chaddock's successful program of educating children who have experienced extreme trauma.

The joint effort of the MEST and KOFAC is to establish, expand and develop an integrated system for student safety at schools for those who are under threat. During the research gathering stage, the MEST and KOFAC searched internationally for examples of successful strategies to address, engage and educate trauma-impacted children. Their search ended at Chaddock which is internationally known

for ground-breaking work in the trauma field along with providing expert care of children who have experienced life-altering trauma.

Kyongbok Lee, a school commissioner in the Chungbuk Province, and Hoiweon Lee, a school commissioner in the Chungnam Province, along with Kyuyup Mo and Jihun Park, who are both journalists with the Kookmin Daily (a renowned new company in Korea) toured the Chaddock campus and school, receiving an overview of the treatment philosophy, participating in a roundtable discussion of school/educational interventions and hearing a presentation on organizational information, structure and functioning.

Forming Spiritual Leaders

Marked Leadership Camp raising up new leaders

For the last three years, high school students have been descending upon Living Springs Camp in Lewistown for a week of in depth leadership training known as *Marked: Leadership Development Camp*.

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and that is very much the case when it comes to Marked.

Marked was the product of several months of discussion between a few IGRC youth leaders and Peggy O'Neal, conference coordinator of Camping and Youth Ministries. They noticed that there was a lack of leadership at the high school level and very little was being done to train up a new generation of leaders. These discussions, coupled with much prayer, inspired a vision of a one-week camp, part of a four-year academy, for high school students that would focus on developing the

skills and hearts of leadership students.

Rev. Sarah Wanck, pastor of Victoria and Maxey Chapel UMC's and Chuck Hilman, director of youth ministries at Geneseo Grace UMC serve as co-directors of Marked and work with a diverse group of volunteers including ordained elders, youth directors, teachers, police officers and others who are all passionate about developing young people into leaders.

The goal of Marked is to raise up a generation of Christian leaders, regardless of their chosen future profession. The world needs young leaders, be they clergy or laity, who can lead from a biblical perspective.

Marked Camp trains student leaders by focusing on four areas of instruction: leadership characteristics, spiritual disciplines, strengths-training and working in a team.

The camp staff believes these areas are vital for developing students into strong leaders.

Each year the camp focuses on five characteristics of leadership that are found in the lives of biblical leaders and set them apart from the crowd and marked them as a leader. Each day, a speaker who has a high level of experience in the subject, is brought to camp to lead a morning workshop that focuses on the practical aspect of the day's leadership characteristic. That evening the speaker preaches at the camp worship service and looks at a biblical character that exemplified the characteris-



tic and inspires the students to put the characteristic into practice.

The camp staff also strongly believes that any Christian leader needs to consistently practice the spiritual disciplines. Rev. Mike Mayfield, the camp chaplain, spends time daily with the students and helps them discover the beauty of the spiritual disciplines, how valuable they are to godly leadership and provides practical

See Marked on page 15 ...

First lay witness mission team member training event a success



Several times of sharing were experienced in the various groups to simulate what takes place during a Lay Witness Mission weekend.

By Ava Williams
Conference Director of Lay Speaking Ministries

A total of 34 persons from nine of the 10 districts in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference participated in the Lay Witness Mission team member training event that was held Nov. 13-14, at West Salem Trinity UMC in Mt. Vernon.

Both days were interspersed with times of worship, instruction and fellowship. On Friday evening, using the illustration of fishing with a net and Scripture from Luke 5:1-15, participants were given a visual demonstration of the dynamics of team ministry. A video titled "Cardboard Testimonies" was shown illustrating several silent testimonies given by individuals and couples who simply wrote out a few words on large pieces of cardboard as the way of sharing their testimony of the mighty works that God has done in their lives.

On Saturday several opportunities were given to share in small groups. Participants first wrote out their witness in

preparation for sharing their testimony in one of the small group times, and then shared as they walked through the different small group sessions that take place during a Lay Witness Mission weekend. Instruction was also given for leading small group discussions and tips were shared for offering prayer team ministry at the altar.

At the end of the day on Saturday participants were anointed with oil for ministry by the leadership team.

Rev. Frank Billman, instructor for the event, tells us that this is the largest group of team members to be trained outside of the Aldersgate Renewal Center (the ARC), the Aldersgate Renewal Ministries (ARM) "headquarters" in Goodlettsville, Tenn.

Besides Rev. Billman, other leadership was provided by Peggi Billman, also from ARM, who served as worship leader and shared in the giving of instruction. Jack Stodgell and his wife Tina of Peru, Ind., were present to lead portions of the time as well as give insight from the Lay Witness Mission Coordinator's point of view. This event also gave Stodgell an opportunity to

get acquainted with new potential team members that he can suggest congregations invite to be a part of a team for a Lay Witness Mission being held at their church.

We were also blessed to welcome Sandy Jackson, Director of Connectional Laity Development with the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) and her husband, Brian Jackson, who works with curriculum for the GBOD, in attendance as participants.

The Jacksons tell me that the GBOD is particularly interested in this pilot event because it meets with requests for training that are being made across the denomination. As a result of offering this training in a format compatible with Advanced Lay Speaker training, Jackson has asked Rev. Billman to make a presentation to the Association of Conference Directors of Lay Speaking Ministries at their annual Convocation in Philadelphia in January. She has told Rev. Billman that if this trial course works the GBOD can advertise Lay Witness Mission Team Member Training as an Alternative Advanced Course.

Also at the event was Rev. Cindy Jones, new District Superintendent of the

Kaskaskia River District and former Lay Witness Mission Team Member, who came to meet and greet us as we all gathered.

This same training event will be repeated on Friday evening and Saturday, April 23-24, at Bloomington: Wesley UMC in the Vermilion River District. While the format being offered meets the minimum requirements of an Advanced Lay Speaking Course (and Lay Speaker Continuing Education credit will be available), you do not have to be a lay speaker to attend.

This event is open to all laity who would be interested in learning how to be better able to share their witness and testimony with others as well as receiving training to become a team member or to see what Lay Witness Mission is all about. Clergy are also welcome to attend so that they can find out what a Lay Witness Mission weekend would be like for their church(es) and to also be better able to share their own witness and testimony.

If you are interested in the April event in Bloomington, you can contact Ava Williams by phone or e-mail at 618-966-3870 or adwilliams2@juno.com to be included on a list to receive a brochure copy when it becomes available.

Ethical leadership, the church and the global economy conference at Garrett

EVANSTON — Bishop Gregory V. Palmer will be one of three United Methodist bishops that will be participating in The Ethical Leadership, the Church and the Global Economy Conference to be held Feb. 25-27 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Palmer will be joined by Bishop Sally Dyck of the Minnesota Conference and Bishop John Hopkins of the East Ohio Conference as part of the conference panel. The conference will bring key academic,

business and church leaders together to explore ways faith communities can become agents of transformation in the new economic reality of the Midwest and the world.

"The changing global economy is having a dramatic impact on our communities, our congregations and the mission of the church itself," says Dr. Mark Fowler, Garrett-Evangelical vice president for vocation in ministry. "In order to have

See Garrett on page 15 ...

2009 — Year in Review

Challenges

Continued from page 1

news was sobering.

According to actuarial valuations done by the General Board of Pensions, IGRC's bill for pastor's pensions in 2011 will be \$2.9 million more than the current \$3.2 million in an attempt to make up drops investments earlier in the 2008 and 2009 years.

"On bad days, you don't see a way out," said Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, in addressing the conference's Connectional Table. "On good days, it is an opportunity to look at what we fund and what are our ministry priorities."

At the request of the Connectional Table, Bishop Palmer has formed a task force to look at the ministry's individual budgets and formulate a plan that will be presented to the Connectional Table in early 2010.

Financial challenges were also apparent among conference health and welfare agencies, some of which receive funds to provide social services.

On Nov. 20, 2008, Bishop Palmer issued a pastoral letter asking for assistance for the struggling Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, who averted a Thanksgiving 2008 shutdown due to slow reimbursement payments from the State of Illinois.

The year has continued to be a challenge and agencies are still waiting payment 60 to 90 days following the providing of services. In essence, the State of Illinois is being provided an interest-free loan by delaying its payment for services.

■ Direct billing of pensions

At the 2009 annual conference, members narrowly approved a proposal for direct billing of pension payments to local churches beginning in 2010.

The direct bill proposal, which was recommended by the Connectional Table Process Team, the Connectional Table and the Council on Finance and Administration, shifted the payment for defined-benefit portion of the clergy pension bill from the conference budget and thereby, apportioned to all churches by formula, to a direct bill, which would be paid by churches that have a pastor under appointment and a participant in the pension program.

The result of the measure meant all churches received a reduction in their apportionments, but some churches will receive a pension bill that exceeds the reduction. In an effort to transition into the new process of payment, an additional \$100,000 was added to the conference budget to assist those churches that face financial hardship with the change, allowing time for them to make ministry adjustments.

■ Annual conference

The 2009 annual conference focused on radical hospitality and was the first for

Bishop Palmer as the presiding bishop.

The bishop used the morning time for a devotional time called Morning Manna with Bishop Palmer, which was well-received by the conferees and provided a context for each day of the session.

In his Episcopal address, Palmer noted that the key to the journey of Christian faith is answering the question, "to what end are we making disciples of Jesus Christ?" Palmer answered, "It's for transformation of the world." Palmer answered, "We are always on a journey of sharpening our articulation of who we are and whose we are."

Cabinet co-chairs Janice Griffith and Keith Zimmerman noted that the journey is one in which the church is "outbound, unbound and active."

"Hospitality is about compensating or equalizing the stranger to the host, making him feel protected and taken care of, and at the end of his hosting, guiding him to his next destination," Griffith said.

"There are bills to pay and the cost of basic expenses continue to increase," Zimmerman said. "Many congregations are aging. For some, the youngest active participants are of retirement age. And many pastors and lay leaders are tired, worn out, and even spiritually weary unable to find peace themselves let alone proclaim the Gospel in a hope-filled way."

Conference Lay Leader Rhonda Whitaker, in her address, told how becoming a grandparent caused a change in her perspective. "With a new granddaughter, I'm asking questions like 'What kind of a world am I leaving for her? What can I do to insure that she will have the advantages that her mommy and daddy had? What about the other 140,000 babies that were born the same day as my granddaughter Lily?'"

The conference welcomed Theologian in Residence Dr. Christine Pohl who led two learning in radical hospitality. The conference also was honored with the presence of Bishop John Innis of Liberia as the conference celebrated nearly \$1.8 million in giving that has flowed to the west Africa country in the past two years.

David Malloy, annual conference liaison for the General Board of Global Ministries, presented the conference with a certificate as one of 17 conferences to have paid 100 percent of apportionments to general funds in 2008.

■ Disaster relief and tragedy

The year 2009 was also a year of disasters and tragedy both near and far and United Methodists were there to help.

On May 8, straight-line winds, severe thunderstorms, tornados and flash flooding pummeled a seven-county region in southern Illinois, leaving 64,000 residential customers without electrical service for several days. The storm, which drew comparisons to the March 1925 Tri-State Tornado, packed a devastating one-two punch.

See Challenges on page 16 ...



Photo courtesy of Bunny Wolfe

Sherry Harding assists her Liberian friend with some landscaping work as part of the LaMoine River District mission trip Jan. 8-18.



Photo by Paul Black

Steve Miller, worship leader at Pawnee UMC leads attendees of the first of three Forged in the Fire events that drew 1,000 attendees in total. A follow-up event was held in October.



Photo courtesy of April Turner

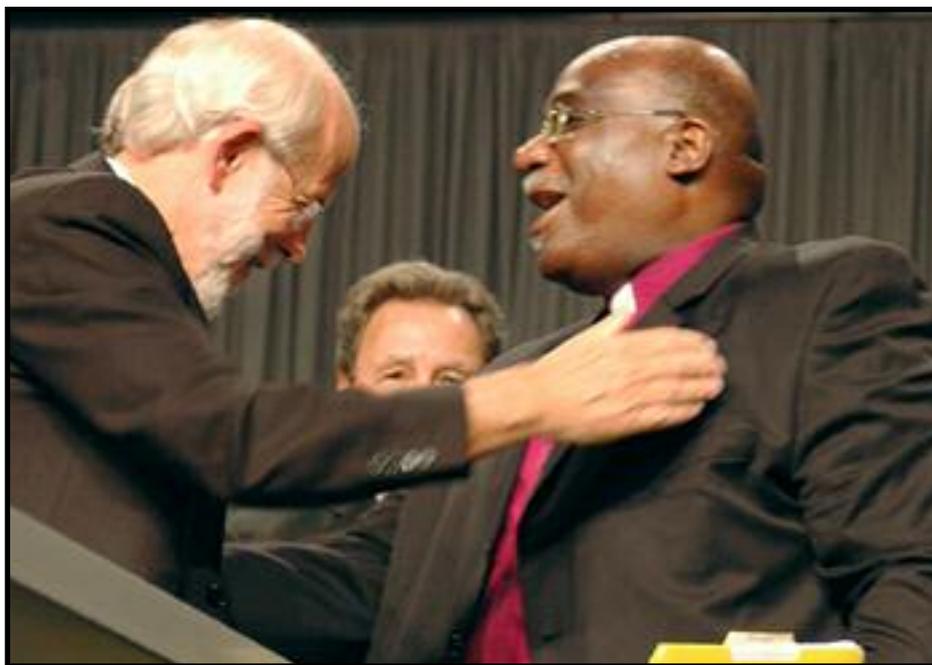
Stained glass windows at Cedar Grove UMC in Cache River District were blown out by a May 8 storm that ravaged southern Illinois.

2009 — Year in Review



UMNS file photo by Jay Mallin

Young volunteers watch the inauguration of President Barack Obama in Washington on Jan. 20.



A UMNS photo ©2009 ELCA News Service.

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (left) hugs United Methodist Bishop Gregory Palmer following the approval of a full communion agreement between the two denominations during the Lutheran body's Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis.



A UMNS photo by Kathy L. Gilbert.

United Methodists are among the estimated 3,000 demonstrators rallying Feb. 28 in Phoenix to protest the crackdowns on illegal immigrants by Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Under a deal allowing them to enforce federal immigration laws, deputies have arrested more than 1,500 people that they determined were in Arizona illegally. The detainees are housed in a tent city in the desert.

Missional focus

Continued from page 1

the Status and Role of Women took voluntary pay reductions and the Commission on Religion and Race decided in October to reorganize itself, cutting some positions and adding others but at lower salaries.

“The reality across the connection is that budgets have been realigned, expenses curtailed or eliminated, and lives impacted because of the decrease in monies received and a projection of a recovery,” said A. Moses Rathan Kumar, treasurer of The United Methodist Church and head of the General Council on Finance and Administration.

■ Reaching out with assistance

Despite their own decline in finances, United Methodists reached out to others hurt by the economic crisis, joining rallies for victims of foreclosure, helping job seekers with resume preparation and networking opportunities and keeping food pantry programs stocked for an expanding client list.

In Elkhart, Ind., the 850-member Trinity United Methodist Church is doing what it can to minister to the community.

Trinity filled gallon-sized plastic bags, called “bags of grace,” with snack-sized food for distribution to community soup kitchens and homeless agencies. Each bag contained four meals. The Matthew 25 program also sent gift cards anonymously to families suffering from job losses.

The economic crisis affected church programs around the world. In September, Africa University in Zimbabwe opened the 2009-10 school year with its lowest enrollment in more than a decade—865 students instead of the expected 1,200 students.

More than 300 students were unable to register. “I have had mothers come to my office with their children trying to find a way to help their children continue their education,” said Africa University Vice Chancellor Fanuel Tagwira. “They break down crying.”

For about 60 of those students, however, there was a “saving grace.” Grace Muradzikwa, a successful executive in Zimbabwe, raised \$100,000 for scholarships from the business community there.

■ Attracting young adults

As it continues to assess its economic situation, The United Methodist Church is going forward with a plan to do a systemwide study. The Connectional Table at its Nov. 6-8 meeting agreed to fund a proposal approved by the Council of Bishops to consider changes in the church’s structure, from annual conferences to General Conference, from national agencies to the bishops’ council.

Part of the point of the study is to figure out how to attract young people to the denomination—both in the pews and the pulpit.

“It is critical to the survival of the denomination to lower the age of United Methodist Christians by a decade in a decade,” Bishop Larry Goodpaster said about a Council of Bishops’ plan to emphasize mission work and leadership development among young people. The average age of United Methodists in the pews is 57, he said.

The need to recruit younger clergy is critical, research shows. The number of people under 35 ordained or on the track to be ordained dropped from 3,210 in 1985 to 910 in 2008, according to a study by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. The average age of elders is 52; for ordained deacons it is 51.

Young clergy have established their own Web site, www.umcyoungclergy.com, and have created campaigns such as “40 Days of Prayer” and “6 Questions for The United Methodist Church.”

■ A part of civil society

United Methodists were both observers of and participants in the Jan. 20 inauguration of Barack Obama as the first African-American U.S. president.

The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, 87, a dean of the civil rights movement, gave the benediction. Dorothy Height, 96, was among the special guests on the inaugural platform. Both had worked alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday was celebrated a day earlier.

In August, Lowery, who co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with King, was one of 16 people who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest honor for a civilian, from President Obama.

During the inaugural festivities, 40 United Methodist churches in the Washington area opened their doors to people from across the United States, offering food, fellowship and a place to sleep.

Michelle Gilstrap, 17, came to Washington with a group from Cascade United Methodist Church, Atlanta. She told her mother that she wanted to attend the inauguration because “Barack Obama is the George Washington of our generation.”

■ In communion with others

On Aug. 20, the largest Lutheran body in the United States entered into full communion with The United Methodist Church, which had approved the agreement in 2008.

After the vote, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hugged Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, and thanked all who had labored in dialogue between the religious traditions founded by towering figures in Christian history—Martin Luther and John Wesley.

See Missional focus on page 13 ...

Forming Discipleship Systems

A windy approach to disciple formation



By Rev. Patty Johansen
Pastor, Tuscola UMC

My family took a trip to Kansas in 1976 to visit a university my brother would be attending the next year. I don't remember much about the university, but I do remember standing out on the Kansas plains and experiencing wind in a profoundly new way.

Growing up in the flatlands of Central Illinois I knew the strength of wind, but this was different. The power of the wind was breath-taking, and exhilarating. I saw examples of how the wind could carve, shape, and form the land, the vegetation, and even people. And although I couldn't see the wind, there was no doubt it was there. It provided a reminder of the power of the Holy Spirit to form my life as a disciple — I can't see the Holy Spirit, but there is no doubt it is here.

Tuscola UMC sits on a windy corner on the northeast edge of town. The positioning of the building creates a wind tunnel that can blow open the front doors, and we are often buffeted on all sides by blasts of wind in the different seasons. We've had trees blow over and drifting snows are always a challenge. The power of wind has meaning for us. And as we began developing a disciple formation process, we grounded the whole process in the wind of the Holy Spirit, and named stages of faith around the power of the wind.

The Holy Spirit has provided powerful guidance and direction to this congregation as we have moved forward in fulfilling our mission to make and form disciples of Jesus Christ. We have laid a good foundation for disciple formation with a group of leaders reading and implementing the workbook *Charting the Course*, along with a congregational study of the book *Three Simple Rules* to understand what a disciple is and does. As we explored what it means to grow in deeper love of God and neighbor, the role of spiritual disciplines was vital. We discovered that we practice spiritual disciplines both personally and corporately, and the church provides opportunities for practicing disciplines regularly.

As we have grown into deeper understanding of the traditional spiritual disciplines, our prayer ministry has ramped up significantly. A number of people are regularly praying for our church, for ministries, and for people, and different prayer ministries are offered for people at different stages of faith. For instance, for those who are committed to living out of the mission and investing in the lives of others (the "Strong Wind" stage), there is

a group called Deep Prayer, which gathers twice a month in the power of the Spirit to pray for people and situations that need a more intense saturation of prayer. For those who are just beginning to develop a life of prayer (the "Gusty" stage), there is a weekly email prayer chain with specific requests and needs.

In order to establish a baseline of familiarity with scripture, the entire congregation was invited to read through the New Testament in a year. Approximately 150 booklets with the reading schedule and reflection questions were given to those planning to participate. During the time the congregation was "on the same page" reading the New Testament, and opening ourselves to the leading of the Spirit, a couple of significant new ministries were developed to reach out to the community.

PASS (Providing After School Safety) is a child care ministry for students from Kindergarten — 6th grade. PASS reaches out to the families in the community who might not be able to afford child care from established providers. This ministry provides low cost care for up to 40 children, where they have time for recreation, a snack, a time of spiritual formation, and homework help. A director, two teachers, and a number of volunteers work with the kids every afternoon. The congregation tries to further reach out to our PASS families who are not connected with any church, by inviting them to special events, meals, worship, etc. It's an exciting ministry that is now in its second year, and we feel blessed to be able to offer it. This ministry helps us remember to create places for new people.

The Abundant Market idea surfaced about the time when many were beginning to experience the effects of the recession. The Abundant Market is an open air farmers market of locally made or created goods, which particularly encourages entrepreneurs to develop a small business to supplement their family income and become vendors on Saturday mornings from June — September. Vendors pay a very low rental fee for space each week, and the community has the opportunity to purchase fresh garden produce, homemade baked goods, craft items, and other unique items. This ministry can provide a way to reduce poverty as we empower people to use their imaginations and support the establishment of a business. This also gives lay people and the pastor the opportunity to represent Christ and the Church in the community, as the sponsoring body of the Abundant Market. The market was abundant enough last summer, we intend to offer it again next summer.

Where will the Spirit blow us next? We're not sure, but the people of Tuscola UMC try to be open to experiencing the wind of the Holy Spirit in profoundly new ways.

Senior High YAR registration underway

Registration is underway for the 2010 Senior High YAR to be held Feb. 26-28 at the Lake Williamson Retreat Center in Carlinville.

Colin McCartney, founder of UrbanPromise Toronto, will be the keynote speaker and music will be provided by the Scott England Band.

Colin and his wife Judith started UrbanPromise Toronto in 1998. UrbanPromise is a para-church ministry that was started in the USA under the direction of Dr. Tony Campolo. UrbanPromise Toronto's mandate is to "proclaim the love of Jesus, and to express it through educational, social, and spiritual development of children, youth and families in government housing projects in Toronto, Canada."

UrbanPromise Toronto targets children, teens and single moms in high-risk communities through after school tutoring programs, summer camps, youth leadership and employment development and single Mom's ministry. UrbanPromise Toronto also has an extensive intern program where young adults, 18 — 26 years

of age, can serve in the city.

The Chicago-born Scott England now makes his home in Atlanta, Ga. In the summer of 1996 the rock/pop artist, singer/songwriter and worship leader stepped out and began his music career. With years of experience crafting his gift, England continues to encourage, uplift, and inspire listeners through his music. With three bands, six albums, numerous recording productions, frequent performances, multiple accolades, and over a decade of preparation under his belt, Scott England is slowly but surely loving his way into the people's hearts all across the globe.

"I like to consider myself a 'musicianary.' You will find me at youth camps, school campuses, coffee houses, clubs and amphitheaters all over the world, as well as serving youth and music in the local churches," England says.

For more information or for a registration packet, contact Peggy O'Neal, coordinator of camping, retreat and youth ministries at 217-529-2646, 217-529-3007 or by email at camping@igrc.org.

Certified lay ministry training offered Jan. 22-23 in four modules, sites

The conference Board of Ordained Ministry will be offering certified lay ministry training Jan. 22-23 at four sites across the conference. Each site will offer a specific module of training.

Module 1 at Jerseyville UMC: Call and Covenant for Ministry: Understanding of theology and call for ministry, exploring spiritual gifts, and developing a ministry covenant.

Module 2 at Galesburg First UMC: The Practice of Ministry: Leading Worship, Preaching/Sharing Faith, Discipleship Ministries, and Caring for a Congregation.

Module 3 at Mahomet UMC (Saturday only): Organization of Ministry: Focus on the leader's task of organizing a congregation for mission and ministry. It provides specific guidance on topics central to a congregation's health.

Module 4 at Mt. Vernon First UMC:

Connection for Ministry: United Methodist theology, practice, and polity are explained with the roles of the local congregation district, conference, and general church.

Modules 1, 2 and 4 will meet Jan. 22 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. and Jan. 23 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Module 3 will only meet on Jan. 23. Registration is \$40 per person which include most materials, meals and snacks. Online registration is available by visiting: <http://layministry.eventbrite.com>. Registration deadline is Sunday, Jan. 10

Certified lay ministry, which was approved by the 2008 General Conference, has an approval process in which persons serve primarily within their own local church and a place of ministry is identified before approval is granted.

Participants can take modules in any order and can participate in as many as they wish in a calendar year.

Fruitful Congregations Leadership Institute

The Office of Congregational Development is already receiving covenants for the new Fruitful Congregations Leadership Institute (FCLI) to begin in March 2010.

FCLI requires that a team (pastor and at least 3-5 laity) covenant to participate in a series of five workshops based on the concepts of the *Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Bishop Robert Schnase. The first workshop is scheduled for March 6-7, in Normal, and is entitled **Radical**

Hospitality: How to Reach More People.

For more information about the FCLI, the commitment made by the local church, and the workshops and support offered by the Office of Congregational Development, visit the Conference website.

Note: Because of space limitations, the FCLI is currently limited to 30 participating churches.

Developing New Congregations and Revitalizing Existing Ones

Confirmation Retreats slated on four different weekends at three sites

Four weekend retreats, designed to enhance a confirmation journey, will be held in February and March at three conference campsites.

Persons who are going through confirmation or are considering confirmation are invited to join in a weekend of fun as the group explores the meaning of belonging to the church and the support the church family provides. The camps will be using Claim the Name curriculum provided by Cokesbury.

The camps are designed to complement, not replace confirmation classes in the local church.

Registration is limited to a certain number so early registration can ensure your choice of campsite.

Cost for the weekend is \$85 and is all-inclusive room, board and materials.

Dates of the Confirmation Retreats are as follows:

Feb. 5-7 at Living Springs Camp in Lewistown, led by Bill Pyatt and Wally Carlson

Feb. 5-7 at Little Grassy in Makanda, led by Kim Stuby

Feb. 19-21 at East Bay Camp in Hudson, led by Keith Michaels

March 12-14 at East Bay Camp in Hudson, led by Keith Michaels

One adult must attend with each group of five or fewer youth. For more information, contact Peggy O'Neal, coordinator of camping, retreat and youth ministries at 217-529-2646, 217-529-3007 or by email at camping@igrc.org. Registration forms and materials are available at <http://igrcamp.org>



ISU Wesley begins health ministry

By Laura Powers
Communications Intern

NORMAL — Illinois State University Wesley Foundation is setting an example for other campus ministries by starting the first United Methodist young-adult focused health ministry.

At the ISU Wesley Foundation, all of the student leaders choose their passion to be a concentration of their leadership for the year. This year, Miranda Kennedy, a nursing major, decided to focus on health. Miranda identified a call to combine her passion for nursing with her passion for global missions while serving the campus ministry. As a result, the health ministry was born. She researched United Methodist Health Ministries and contacted Patricia Magyar. This turned out to be the first young-adult focused health ministry in The United Methodist Church.

In their grant proposal they stated a three-fold mission to resource young adults with age-appropriate health information; equip young adults for volunteer service promoting health to the Bloomington-Normal community, and to educate young adults about global health-care concerns and challenging them to respond.

The title of their ministry is "Balance." Their goal is to help students realize the connection between mental, physical, and spiritual health. The idea is that once they are more balanced, they will be better equipped to reach out to the community.

"It's been interesting," said campus minister Jennifer Edwards Bertrand, about being an example as the first young-adult focused health ministry. She said it's been a learning semester figuring out how to

Balance ministry ... goal is to help students realize the connection between mental, physical, and spiritual health.

turn something so theoretical and turn it into something practical.

They started out with a four-part message series that had a challenge along with it. Students will find out the winner after Thanksgiving break.

Because of the messages and new ministry, the health committee has become a very popular one for students to become involved in. They have started offering yoga and cardio workouts, even students who were previously not involved with exercise have participated.

Bertrand has also noticed students drinking more water and just becoming more aware of health matters. They have been noticing the connection between spiritual, mental, and physical health and have been holding each other accountable.

They have promoted their new ministry through their website and message series. Next semester they plan on expanding their focus to the whole campus and connecting with other students through a health fair. They also see this as a way to bring other students into the ministry.

Bertrand said that Kennedy has really taken ownership of the project and did the research on her own about health ministries and how to start one. Miranda is the health minister of the Wesley Foundation. She remains in close contact with the missions committee, is accountable to the student leadership team, and reports to Bertrand.

"I've just been so incredibly proud of Miranda," Bertrand said.

Retreat to focus on worship and hospitality

Drinking Deeper and Sharing the Cup: Experiencing Worship and Hospitality, the second event in the Deeper Still series of retreats sponsored by the IGRC New Streams Team, will be held



Friday and Saturday, April 16-17, at West Salem Trinity UMC in Mt. Vernon.

Bishop Gregory Palmer is the featured speaker for this event, which will focus on worship as a way to grow in our love for God, and hospitality as a way to grow in our love for our neighbor. Through hands-on participation, along with times

of teaching and reflection, participants will be encouraged to deepen their experience of and participation in these two spiritual disciplines.

Participants will have the option of receiving overnight hospitality in the home of a Mt. Vernon area family or arranging their own lodging in a local hotel. Child care will be available for a limited number of young children.

For more information or to register, visit <http://drinkingdeeper.eventbrite.com>.

Prayer 24/7 week deepens faith

By Laura Powers
Student Intern

NORMAL — Students at Illinois State University's Wesley Foundation found an October journey in prayer as an experience that deepened their faith.

This is the third time the campus ministry has participated in a week-long, 168-hour continuous time of prayer. Their nonstop prayer for a week is affiliated with 24-7 Prayers, a national movement started when a group prayed all through December 1999 through the New Year 2000. Their website is 24-7prayer.com and one can register on the site when you'll be prayer to continue the 24/7 prayer.

Campus Minister Jennifer Edwards Bertrand has known about the movement for a long time. She and a student -- both whom has read the founder's book -- decided it was something the Wesley Foundation could do and was needed. They held their first prayer room in March of 2008 and another one in March of 2009. The fall 2009 prayer room is their third

time but first time doing this in the fall.

The prayer room was set up so it was divided into three spaces. When one first walked in, there were scriptures hanging from the ceiling to help students focus. Then they walk straight up to an altar. To the right was a wailing wall for personal prayer. To the left of the altar there was a world wall, Bibles, and an answered prayer journal.

Bertrand said the prayer vigil was different because it didn't have the "surprise factor" that came with the other ones wondering if they could accomplish the task.

"I think the whole room was a deeper experience," Bertrand said.

Students even went in together, praying out loud together for personal requests and issues around the world. Bertrand said the way students were changed by this experience was twofold, and they became more serious about their faith and commitment to the ministry. They also connected more with each other as they shared the experience.

Grow Your Church Where You Are workshop to evaluate church systems

The Office of Congregational Development will offer a workshop *Grow Your Church Where You Are* on Saturday, April 17, at the Savoy UMC.

Grow Your Church Where You Are will help participants evaluate all the major systems of their church. They will walk away with dozens of practical new ideas for promoting growth and reaching their community in a new way. This workshop will help identify areas of great strength, as well as weaknesses that can be improved. The principles taught are designed to fit any size congregation and any age church.

Guest speakers Brad Kalajainen and Ken Nash are pastors of Cornerstone UMC in Caledonia, Mich. Kalajainen started Cornerstone UMC in 1990, and it has grown to more than 1,500 in worship. They relocated to a new campus on Nov. 1,

2009, and had more than 2,000 congregants on the first weekend. Ken has been the teaching pastor at Cornerstone since July 2006. Prior to that, Ken served a church in a small community in rural Michigan that grew from 80 to over 400 persons in attendance.

The cost for the workshop is \$60 for up to three people from a church and \$20 for each additional person (i.e. one person, \$60 total; three people, \$60 total; four people, \$80 total). There is an early bird discount if registered with full payment by March 15. The registration fee includes payment for lunch. All participants MUST pre-register no later than April 7.

Contact the Office of Congregational Development at congdev@igrc.org or visit the Conference website to download the registration form.

Mission and Outreach — Locally and Globally

John Kofi Asmah United Methodist School project begins in Liberia



Photo courtesy of Bunny Wolfe

Students from the John Kofi Asmah School in Liberia are all smiles as they carry sand to the building site to make bricks for construction of a new school building, financed by the 2008 IGRC Annual Conference laity session. Students of all ages will benefit from the new building which will provide day-long education for children and youth that wish to learn despite less than favorable conditions. Students recently tested with very high scores in spite of such obstacles as they continue rebuilding following a 14-year civil war.

By Bunny Wolfe

Coordinator of Missions and Outreach

The United Methodist School project for the John Kofi Asmah United Methodist Church in West Point began during the most recent IGRC work team visit to Liberia in late October.

Funds for the John Kofi Asmah UM School were collected by the laity of IGRC during the 2008 Annual Conference. These donations were placed in a designated conference account until a plot of land was identified and the project was ready to begin.

Land of a former United Methodist Church in the West Point area, just a short walk from the John Kofi Asmah UM Church, has been officially turned over to the Liberia Annual Conference for the

construction of the John Kofi Asmah UMC School. Permission to construct a UM School in West point was obtained from the Liberia Minister of Education in mid-October. This project is now officially underway.

The IGRC mission team witnessed the prior building on the new school site being demolished the week of the groundbreaking ceremony. Nearby residents quickly appeared with large dish pans, buckets and whatever else they could find to carry off debris. By the time the building was down, all debris was carried away on the heads of local residents as people scrambled for whatever could be salvaged from the building. Chunks of concrete now line the narrow pathways between the homes of that community to help eliminate mud and deep running water during the rainy sea-

son. Within a few days the building site became an empty lot ready for the new construction and the ground breaking ceremony.

On Friday before the ground breaking, school was dismissed and all students carried sand to the construction site from the riverside to make concrete bricks. It was a 10 to 15-minute walk from the source of sand to the building site, yet lines of students excited about the prospect of a new school carried sand on their heads all day. Plans are made for other work days to include the students.

The ground breaking ceremony on Nov. 1 was attended by church members, local and national government officials, members of the West Point community and several members of the Liberia Annual Conference Staff. Monrovia District Superintendent, Rev. Jerry Kulah, presided over the ground breaking ceremonies and spoke during the worship service on the theme it is time to build. A local fundraising event was also a part of the ground breaking ceremony.

The government of Liberia currently states no private schools can remain within church buildings or inadequate space. John Kofi Asmah United Methodist Church has been conducting classes in the crowded space of their sanctuary so, indeed, it is time to build.

Space is crowded, the noise level is high and yet students attending the John Kofi Asmah scored received an average score of over 93 percent on the most recent government educational testing. This is a testimony to the quality education happening and the desire of students to learn even in less than ideal conditions. Currently there is no bathroom facility on site. Drinking water is dipped from a couple of buckets just inside the door of the sanctuary. Classrooms are simply benches overflow-

ing with students with classroom space separated only by chalk boards in the sanctuary of the John Kofi Asmah UMC.

West Point is situated along the Montserrado River on the outskirts of Monrovia. It is a community of fishermen and small merchants selling their wares along a crowded dirt road too narrow for two cars to pass. One can walk through most of this area with outstretched hands and reach the walls of the mostly tin structures used for homes. Thousands of children live in this area with no chance to attend school. West Point could be considered a crowded slum, but it is a community with great hope and faith excited about the construction of a new school. Residents of West Point and members of the John Kofi Asmah UM Church have begun their own fund raising efforts to see the completion of this school.

The John Kofi Asmah UM School has long been the dream of this crowded, impoverished section of Monrovia. In fact, the John Kofi Asmah UM School will be the ONLY junior high and high school in that section of Monrovia.

Members of the John Kofi Asmah UMC and the community of West Point believe God will provide for the construction of this school. I, too, believe God will provide! Our friends in Liberia routinely teach and remind me about faith for seemingly impossible projects and that God is able!

In early December, \$25,000 was sent by IGRC to begin this school project. This will complete the first phase of a three story building and additional funding is needed. Donations may be directed to IGRC fund # 6990 - John Kofi Asmah UM School. For more information on this project, please contact Bunny Wolfe, IGRC Mission and Outreach Coordinator, at bwolfe@igrc.org.

Older Adult Ministry seminars to explore spirituality and aging

Going On to Perfection? Our Spiritual Journey Continues is the theme for the upcoming March 2010 seminars sponsored by the IGRC Older Adult Ministries Task Force. This seminar is scheduled for the week of March 14 in four different locations.

- **Monday, March 15** at Marion Aldersgate UMC. Rev. Larry Gilbert seminar leader

- **Tuesday, March 16** at Lebanon First UMC, Rev. Dr. Beverly Wilkes Null leader

- **Thursday, March 18** at Galesburg First UMC, Rev. Terry Clark leader

- **Friday, March 19** at Champaign First UMC, Rev. Paul Unger leader

Each seminar will run from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Cost is \$20 per participant and includes a continental breakfast, light lunch and all seminar materials.

Register for all of these events by call-

ing Sidna Young at 217-529-3257 or e-mail Sidna at syoung@igrc.org or sangamonriver@igrc.org. Registration costs for groups or individuals may be mailed to Sidna at: Sidna Young, Sangamon District Office, P O Box 3487, Springfield, IL 62708-3487. **Registration deadline is Friday, March 5.** A brochure of the seminars will soon be available by contacting Sidna and on the IGRC website.

Each seminar location will include a morning presentation and discussion on spirituality and aging led by one of our IGRC clergy. The afternoon session will be led by Rev. Anna Kpann, Director of Ministry to the Aged for the Liberia Annual Conference. Rev. Kpann visits in the homes of retired clergy and homebound senior citizens throughout the Liberia Annual Conference, distributing rice and clothing and offering encouragement and support.



Photo courtesy of Bunny Wolfe

Rev. Anna Kpann visits with retired Liberian pastor Edward Kofa during one of her pastoral visits as Director to the Ministry of the Aged in the Liberia Annual Conference. Rev. Kpann visits in the homes of retired clergy and homebound senior citizens throughout the Liberia Annual Conference, distributing rice and clothing and offering encouragement and support. Illinois Great Rivers Conference and its churches have provided some of the rice that Kpann distributes during her visits.

Embracing Communications & Technology

Media Resource Center catalog now searchable online

The Communications Ministry Team has just completed a project where the entire catalog of the United Media Resource Center is now searchable online to assist congregations and persons within the IGRC with their resource needs.

The search engine, which can be found in the lower right-hand corner as part of the rotisserie of items that can be clicked, provides a way to search by keyword and the search can be limited by media type. The advanced search provides a more detailed way to search and persons can

request items by putting them in their shopping cart and checking out. There is also a link indicating items that have been added in the last 30 days.

The checkout generates an email to the UMRC, which checks the requested dates against other reservations.

Remember: the services of the UMRC are free and the only cost to churches is the price of return postage if they are not returned some other way to the Conference Center.

Mission focus

Continued from page 9

“You have taken up centuries of differences and found centuries of commonalities,” Hanson declared.

The two denominations also joined with Catholics at a spirit-filled Oct. 1 service in Chicago to celebrate an historic agreement on justification by faith—how individuals are forgiven and brought into a right relationship with God. The three groups vowed to move toward greater unity.

■ Immigration

United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño of Phoenix helped launch a national interfaith campaign for humane immigration reform, declaring at a Feb. 11 press conference in Washington that people of faith “cannot and will not stand by in silence while young people die, families are separated, individual freedoms are ignored, and the immigrant community in the U.S. is treated unjustly and inhumanely.”

Prayer vigils on immigration reform followed across the country during the Feb. 13-22 Congressional recess. Later that month, Carcaño and other United Methodists joined in a solidarity march against alleged abuses of power by Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Phoenix related to the detention of immigrants.

In November and December, houses of worship in Arkansas, Iowa, Ohio and Texas were holding special prayer services to press Congress to pass immigration reform that keeps families together—part of a larger campaign sponsored by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.

■ Health care

United Methodists were among the nearly 30 top leaders of Christian, Jewish and Islamic organizations who gathered July 7 at the U.S. Capitol for a day of dialogue and planning on health care reform. “We must speak on behalf of the poor and marginalized here in the halls of power,” said Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, one of the event’s sponsors.

Three United Methodist pastors participated in an Aug. 19 live Webcast call-in forum on health care reform aimed at the

faith community. The call, which featured President Obama and drew more than 140,000 listeners, launched a “40 Days for Health Reform” campaign to ask people of faith to press Congress to finish work on a health plan.

The denomination is embarking on a new campaign to fight malaria, Imagine No Malaria, with a public launch set for the next World Malaria Day—April 25, 2010. The fundraising goal of \$75 million will expand grassroots programs like Nothing But Nets and develop more comprehensive efforts to promote prevention and education activities, strengthen health delivery systems and train health care workers to more effectively treat the disease.

Dealing with disaster

In Africa, United Methodists continued to respond to the political, economic and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe, keeping church-related hospitals and clinics open. The United Methodist Committee on Relief coordinated emergency relief efforts through The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and other groups.

In the United States, the swollen Red River left residents in the Dakotas and Minnesota scrambling to stop floodwaters in late March.

The Rev. Rich Zeck, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Fargo, N.D., was exhausted after spending 10 days bagging sand for the emergency dikes. “We are tired, but the saying here is ‘God is good and so is Advil,’” he said when reached by telephone. “Everyone is tired, but I am amazed that whenever a call is put out for volunteers, we have more than we need and we keep responding.”

UMCOR worked with Church World Service and Muslim Aid over the spring and summer to assist the 2 million Pakistanis who fled the Swat Valley during fighting there between government forces and the Taliban.

Those celebrating the July 24 grand opening of the UMCOR’s new office and resource warehouse in the Philippines, based on the campus of Union Theological Seminary in Cavite, did not know the office would soon be assisting Filipinos as they dealt with the consequences of multiple typhoons over the fall.

2010 Program Calendars have arrived

The 2010 IGRC Program Calendars arrived in the Conference Center Dec. 11. Shipments were sent Dec. 14 to those that placed an order for them.

Any remaining copies will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. If you haven't received a complimentary one, the first will be free for clergy and laypersons holding conference leadership positions. Each addition-



al copy is \$8 postpaid.

Contact Michele Willson at mwillson@igrc.org or 217-529-3122 to request your copy while supplies last. Each additional copy is \$8 postpaid. Contact Michele Willson for those orders at mwillson@igrc.org or by calling 217-529-3122. laypersons holding conference leadership positions. Each additional copy is \$8 postpaid. Contact Michele Willson for those orders at mwillson@igrc.org or by calling 217-529-3122.

The United Methodist Council of Bishops issued a Churchwide Appeal for Philippines Disasters on Nov. 19 in response to the multiple typhoons that have struck the country. UMCOR was distributing emergency supplies to more than 11,000 displaced families.

■ Court rulings

The United Methodist Church’s top court ruled in April that Southern Methodist University could lease campus property for the George W. Bush presidential library, museum and public policy institute, saying the agreement does not violate church law. Critics opposed to many policies of the Bush administration, including the war in Iraq, argued placing the institute on university property would be inconsistent with church teaching.

At its October meeting, the Judicial Council ruled that the Baltimore-Washington Annual (regional) Conference went too far in adopting its own sexuality statement, which declared “a more authentic and truthful representation of The United Methodist Church” is that “we disagree” on gay and lesbian issues.

The court said that while such statements can be “aspirational in nature,” an annual conference “may not negate, ignore or violate” the Book of Discipline, “even when the disagreements are based upon conscientious objections.”

■ In the company of bishops

A new bishop—the Rev. Christian Alsted, 48, a pastor from Copenhagen, Denmark—was elected in February to succeed retiring Bishop Øystein Olsen in the Nordic and Baltic Area.

Three retired bishops died in 2009: Bishop Melvin E. Wheatley, Jr., 93, of Laguna Woods, Calif., on March 1; Bishop Ole Edvard Borgen, 83, of Norway, on March 24; and Bishop Eugene M. Frank, 101, of Kansas City on Oct. 13.

Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster of Western North Carolina was elected in November as the next president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops and Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany was designated as president-elect.

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

Deaths

Continued from page 1

Beouy, Jan. 7

Ida Ruth Glose, widow of Rev Ralph Glose, passed away on January 9, 2009

G. Albert Murphy, retired pastor, Jan. 11

Eugenia Hanna, wife of former Conference Chancellor Phil Hanna, Jan. 13

Sally Gallaway, wife of retired pastor Ira Gallaway, Jan. 14

Faye Cook, widow of Rev LaVerl Cook, Jan. 15

Robert Lee Sayre, husband of retired diaconal minister, Margaret Sayre, Jan. 23

Caroline Canny, widow of Rev. James W. Canny, Jan. 23

Pearl Marie Edwards, widow of Rev. Harvey A. Edwards, Jan. 30

Neva Price, widow of Rev. Maurice Price, Feb. 3

Rev. Carl B. Fox, retired pastor, Feb. 22

Lorraine Wise, wife of retired pastor James Weiss, Feb. 25

Joan Althoff, wife of retired pastor Nathan Althoff, Feb. 27

Frank Deninger, retired pastor, March 7

Dorothy E. Gross, widow of Rev. Victor Gross, March 20

Gilbert P. Shimanek, retired pastor, March 21

Christine Scott, widow of Rev. Arthur Joseph Scott, March 29

Peggy A. Ford, wife of retired pastor Marion C. Ford, April 2

Harriet Esther Baker Trolia, wife of retired pastor Norman E. Trolia, April 3

Elsie Lee Minder Nobbe, widow of Rev. Clarence F. Nobbe, April 10

Marjorie Banks, wife of retired pastor Oren Banks, April 29

Rev. Harvey B. Wright, retired pastor, May 11

Rev. Robert Christopherson, retired pastor, May 21

Rev. William Fester, retired pastor, June 27

See Deaths on page 14 ...

Conference National News

Sending a child to camp with a scholarship can change their world

By Peggy O'Neal
Coordinator of Camping, Retreat and Youth Ministries

Have you ever been on a mission trip? Have you or your church provide funds for the Liberian initiative? Have you been to Annual Conference or read the articles in *The Current* regarding the financial support that has been raised that will help provide education opportunities, food, and the building of homes and churches, all because of what you and your church made a commitment to do? Your commitment makes the world a better place for those that society has deemed less worthy, or worse, doesn't even see.

Do you believe that within the doors of our churches and in our community there are many who go without? Sometimes it the family that has lost a job and not sure what the future holds for them. Or the

grandparents that are raising their grandchildren and love them dearly, but it adds a financial struggle. In the midst of difficult time we ask ourselves "How can we impact lives, how can our resources be used to further the kingdom of God?"

May I suggest that giving to the Advance Special Camping Scholarships can make a difference in the lives of children whose families are caught in financial struggles. When you provide resources for camp scholarships, children, youth and families have an opportunity to be a part of a ministry where there is much love and laughter. The programs in camping are developed so that not only is it fun but most importantly you have daily interaction with God, through worship, Bible study and games, and learn what it means to live in Christian community. It is a time where there is no one to judge you based on what sports you play or type of shoes you wear.



There is no one to compete with; it is about you and God. And the friendships that are made with campers, counselors and clergy, provide support during the good and difficult times of our lives.

So as you or the church looks at their mission budget, as you think about a special offering, please think about Camping Scholarships and how sending just one child to camp can change their world.

United Methodist Men receives grant for mentoring youth

La'Donte moved from Illinois to Tennessee to live with his Aunt Sherry. His mother was incarcerated on drug-related charges.

La'Donte was defiant, angry and depressed.

Sherry enrolled La'Donte in the Big Brothers/Big Sister program to provide a positive male role model with whom La'Donte could express his feelings.

La'Donte was matched with Robert. For the first several months, La'Donte was quiet and expressionless. With encouragement from the program staff, Robert continued to talk about himself and his feelings hoping La'Donte would join him in those discussions.

La'Donte grades began to drop. After incidents at school with another student, La'Donte pleaded guilty to assault and was placed on probation with community service. He also was required to attend mandatory anger-management sessions and was moved to an alternative school.

A positive outcome of these experiences was that La'Donte finally began to talk with Robert about his mom, her incarceration and other difficult experiences.

La'Donte completed his probation and

all other court-mandated sanctions. He expects his record to be expunged. He can articulate what he has learned through his involvement with the justice system.

Robert admits that La'Donte has become a regular part of his life.

Nationally, 7.3 million children have at least one parent in jail or prison, and these children are five times more likely than their peers to commit crimes.

The good news is that at least 70 boys whose fathers are in jail or prison will be mentored by big brothers as the result of a \$7,200 grant to United Methodist Men (UMM) from the General Board of Church and Society. UMM will begin securing big brothers in 11 annual conferences in 2010.

Funds for the program come from Human Relations Day offerings. United Methodists will celebrate Human Relations Day Jan. 17, 2010. Please give generously!

Adapted from a story by Carly Southworth on the United Methodist Men Web site.

lish relationships across the church and the academy to think strategically and ethically in order to address the changing realities in our communities and institutions; and 3) to shape the work we will do as leaders and members of the church and the academy to impact the effects of the global economy in this time of change.

For more information, including the conference schedule, and to register online, visit www.garrett.edu/elc or contact Wendy Kneer at 847-866-3961 or wendy.kneer@garrett.edu.



Human Relations Day
Jan. 17, 2010

United Methodist Communications announces InfoServ change

NASHVILLE -- InfoServ, the official information service of The United Methodist Church, will become exclusively an e-mail and online information service effective April 1, 2010. At that time, telephone support services will be discontinued.

InfoServ is a ministry of United Methodist Communications, which announced in August some program and staff reductions in response to a growing budget deficit and a restructuring plan.

"In these challenging economic times, we must find ways to continue providing high-quality service in a more cost effective manner," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications. "Telephone calls to

InfoServ have been decreasing over the past couple of years as more people take advantage of the Web or use e-mail to request information. We're committed to continuing to provide answers quickly and accurately, but technology allows us to do so more economically."

Customers will be able to submit questions via e-mail at infoserv@umcom.org. Answers to the most frequently asked questions are also available online at www.infoserv.umc.org. In addition, other customer-friendly options such as live chat and leaving a callback number will be explored during the transition period. Depending on the demand, some limited hours for telephone availability may be offered after April 1.

Deaths

Continued from page 13

Vivian Simpkins, widow of Rev. Charles Simpkins, July 14

Mary Beasley, widow of Rev. Eugene Beasley, July 29

Patricia Simpkins, wife of retired pastor Paul Simpkins, Aug. 19

Rev. Harold E. Hedden, retired pastor, Sept. 5

Maxine Ava Kearns, wife of retired pastor Irvin Lee Kearns, Sept. 9

Louise V. Flessner, widow of retired pastor Harold B. Flessner, Sept. 14

Marietta Webb, wife of retired pastor Edgar Webb, Sept. 20

Rev. Dorothy B. Fellhauer, retired pastor, Sept. 21

Frances E. Forbush, widow of retired pastor Wilson Forbush, Oct. 6

Rev. Esther Louis Burk Hilling Main,

retired pastor and widow of Revs. William Hilling and Fines Main, Oct. 7

Marjorie Butler, widow of Rev. Edward Butler, Oct. 11

Robert R. Stevens, husband of retired pastor Jeanette E. Stevens, Oct. 11

Ruth E. Fenton, wife of retired pastor Elmer Fenton, Oct. 14

James P. (Mick) Johnson, spouse of former conference United Methodist Women President Annie Johnson, Oct. 29

Rev. Bill Hesseldenz, retired local pastor serving at Bluff Springs, Nov. 3

John E. Simpson, retired pastor, Nov. 16

Patricia F. Keller, wife of retired pastor John N. Keller, Nov. 20

Charles Tindle, retired pastor, Nov. 27

Betty Dees, wife of retired pastor David Dees and mother of Rev. Rebekah Dees-McMahon, Dec. 6

Garrett

Continued from page 7

some focused conversation and to look at possible responses for church leaders, congregations and the academic community, we have organized a conference that brings together the best of those who have led us in thinking about these issues.

Conference goals are threefold: 1) to refine and focus the impact of the global economy and formulate strategic directions for the church's response; 2) to estab-

Christian Conversation

A Christmas perspective

By Mike Rayson

Well, I think I've been living in the USA too long! I complain too much. Now, let me throw an olive branch here to the gnashing of teeth currently directed at the computer screen by my American friends – that's not necessarily a bad thing. Australians by and large don't do much as much complaining as Americans. If our food isn't quite right in the restaurant, we tend to eat it anyway. When someone takes our parking space at the mall, we tend to think unkind things for a moment, but rarely will we pull out a gun and shoot them! Hahaha.

Tuesday evening, I took my extended family out to eat at one of my favourite restaurant chains in the land down under. Hog's Breath Café. Hog's Breath is a steakhouse, not unlike Longhorn or Texas Roadhouse. Generally, whilst its pretty pricey, the food is great, and so is the service.

Not so Tuesday night. My 'medium rare' steak was 'well done'. There was no moo left in the cow so to speak. So, I complained. And got a VERY "un-American" response. If your food isn't cooked properly in the States, they'll re-cook it, or comp you the meal with their apologies. Not in Australia. The manager went, to use an Aussie term, bunta! He was angry, he was ticked, and he was not happy! He made excuses, he said he was too busy to deal with us, he said that whilst he would refund the 'steak' I had to pay for the salad and the fries! (expensive salad and fries too - \$14!).

I left deciding not to go back. And I must admit, thinking quite unkind things towards the manager of the Ipswich Hog's Breath Café (don't go there!).

Directly after dinner, I drove south to the Gold Coast. It's an hour and a half drive, and I had plenty of time to get even angrier at the fella from Hogs Breath. I don't like rude people, especially in the service industry. And he just got under my skin.

I had to drive to the Gold Coast to quickly visit my friend Josh – who lives in our Condo in Nashville, but is home with his parents for a couple of months. Josh plays in the band 'Alabaster Box'.

Josh's dad is dying of cancer.

I've heard a whole lot about Neil from his son. Josh loves his dad, and is not afraid of telling all he knows what an amazing man his Dad is – even while facing an insidious disease that has robbed him of much of his mobility and energy, and left him gaunt and frail.

Meeting Neil put many things into perspective Tuesday night.

Most people are aware that I had an accident shortly before I left the USA for this Australian tour. I fell down the stairs at home and injured my coccyx – tearing up the sacrum. It's quite painful (especially on

a 14 hour flight!!). I'm still getting around with the help of a cane. This injury makes it difficult to sit on a hard chair for very long.

I arrived at Josh's parents house Tuesday night armed with his keys and other assorted sundry items he had accidentally left in my car on the weekend. After making introductions, Josh and I, and his Mum and Dad, sat around the table to chat for a brief moment before I headed on my way to visit friends at Beaudesert.

The very first words from Neil after we sat down at the table were... let me pray for you.

I have sat with many terminally ill men and women over the years, but never one so gracious as this. Obviously in pain, and facing the evil of death himself, this man concerned himself with my discomfort – and paused to pray for me. Many people staring at death in the face exhibit a range of emotions – anger, depression, grief... but it's a rare person who exhibits the grace and peace of Jesus in the midst of discomfort and extreme pain.

It was a humbling moment of perspective. Here was I, still angry at my lack of evening meal, and in a bad mood because of my lower back... and here was this man, who paused in his pain to offer a prayer for me and my family.

Sometimes, especially close to Christmas, we need a dose of perspective in our lives. We get so caught up in everything that we lose sight of the bigger picture. There are trees to decorate, Christmas puddings to make (hint Amy!), parties to attend, presents to buy, food to cook... and on and on and on. We get so caught up in the trimmings that we lose sight of the turkey.

Into a painful world came a gift of grace... hands that crafted the universe and hung the stars in their place were confined to the sacred space of a mother's womb... the Creator became created. And into a hurting world, was whispered... 'behold... I make all things new'.

Neil may not see many more Christmas seasons in his life. It may be that he celebrates the birth of Jesus somewhat closer to the source of the celebration soon. Of course, there is always the possibility of physical healing – but if not, even in the evil of death is the miracle of life – with no more pain, no more sorrow, no more tears.

I glimpsed a sight of the miracle of eternity this side of heaven in a man boldly living out his eternal life in the here and now. Thank-you Neil for praying for me in my discomfort – even when your pain and discomfort was far greater than mine. Jesus is surely alive and working in you my new friend.

(Mike Rayson is pastor of Pleasant View UMC in the Tennessee Annual Conference. Reprinted with permission from Rayson's Facebook page.)

VIEWPOINT: To get Christians into rhythm, church must correct missteps

By Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles
Special contributor



Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles

"When I think of God, I hear a song," says Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., in his video

Rhythm.

"It's a song that moves me And people have heard this song They've heard the song and found it captivating."

When I took dance lessons, I would quiet down the day's noise to hear the song's melody. Then I approached the barre.

The barre is the ballerina's foundation. It's the floor on which she can jump and turn. It teaches her the technique so that when performing, she doesn't have to pay attention to her feet. She only has to hear the song.

As I worked on my foundation in class, my instructor sat at her desk and ate peanuts. When questioned as to why she didn't work with us on technique, she responded that she didn't want the girls to get mad when she corrected them.

I felt betrayed. I trusted her to teach me to swim through air, but by denying me instruction, I didn't really become a ballerina. I was just a copper penny convinced of being a golden coin. Her kindness wasn't kind at all.

The church is our barre. It is where we tune out the noise of everyday to learn the techniques of Jesus. We repeat them until they have been engrained into hurting muscles.

The church trains us to go into the mission field of daily life without watching our feet because the feet know how the song goes. We can allow ourselves to be moved by it.

My generation wants to look like the barefooted Jesus who healed and loved. For that, we need technical training. The United Methodist churches in Arkansas have the wisdom and experience to train us.

Give us small groups with mentors that will correct our posture. Deliver sermons that will work out our hearts.

Challenge us. We need to know that we're loved, that we're doing a good job and that we're great dancers, but please don't render the genuine compliments empty by eating peanuts at the desk in the corner instead delivering godly rebuke and criticism.

Don't tell us what will make us happy. Tell us what's going to make us whole. Help work our lustful desires, material dependence and busy lives out of our hearts.

I'm in the process of discussing the three fragrances of an attractive church. In the middle of the second aroma, authenticity, I overwhelmed myself by trying to pour all the ingredients into one article.

I decided that saying too much takes away from what needs to be said; therefore, I'm going to sit in authenticity until my spirit nudges me to move on.

In conclusion, be authentic about our shortcomings.

I'm not going to promise we won't get mad. I'm not even going to promise we won't put up a fight.

I will promise that if we are captivated by the song and if you challenge us to learn the rhythm, we'll keep coming back to the barre.

(Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles is a junior at Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma, a United Methodist institution. She can be reached at mmiles.stu1@my.okcu.edu. Reprinted with permission from the Arkansas United Methodist).

Marked

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instruction on how incorporate the disciplines into their lives.

The third focus, strengths training, comes out of the belief that leaders are most effective when they are leading out of their God-given strengths. To do that we require all students to complete the Strengthfinder 2.0 survey to discover their natural strengths. Rev. Jeremy Henson, a certified Strengthfinder Trainer, then spends time each day with the campers helping them understand and develop their strengths.

The final focus is teamwork. Every leader needs to be able to work in a team and to utilize the strengths and weaknesses of all team members in order to achieve their goals. To that end, time is spent each day on a team challenge course designed to

stretch their abilities and intelligence to the max and require them to lean on their teammates.

Marked is a four-year academy in which each year builds on the previous year. This year was the third year of the camp and students who have been to the previous two years were sent off to Peoria each day on a service project to put their skills and strengths to work in a real world setting. Next summer, those who are accepted into the fourth year of the program will spend much of their time working with the first year campers and putting their leadership skills to work.

Marked Camp is an excellent opportunity for students to grow as leaders. Next year's camp will be June 13-20th at Living Springs Camp. We are always looking for new students, so if you know anyone who might be a good fit for Marked please encourage him or her to apply.

2009 Year in Review

Challenges

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Stained glass windows at Cedar Grove UMC in the Cache River District, took a direct hit, while volunteers came into the area to assist with cleanup and recovery.

Little Grassy Camp was also hit as trees were down on power lines and buildings and roads in and out of the campsite were blocked with downed trees, hindering assessment efforts.

On Aug. 19, two Springfield area communities — Williamsville and Loami — took the brunt of separate F-2 tornados. In all, 25 homes were damaged in the Williamsville with 17 determined to be uninhabitable. In Loami, storm damage was inflicted on farmland which surrounds the village. Loami experienced three tornados in three years and the second in six months.

The IGRC Disaster Response Team was dispatched to both sites and assessments were made for cleanup and relief efforts. The Midwest Mission Distribution Center delivered flood buckets and two electric generators to assist with cleanup efforts in Williamsville.

Earlier in the year, a March 8 shooting at a Metro East Baptist Church, had Methodist connections. That morning, a shooter entered First Baptist Church in Maryville, killing the pastor, Rev. Fred Winters and leaving three others, including the shooter injured.

Police later identified the shooter at Terry Sedlacek, 27, who contracted encephalitis and lyme disease from a tick bite in either 1998 or 1999, leaving him unable to function in society independently.

Rev. J. Michael Smith, a former pastor of New Bethel UMC in Glen Carbon, knew Sedlacek and his family from his pastorate there. Sedlacek's grandmother was one of Smith's closest friends.

"No one knows what happened this morning," Smith said in a pastoral letter that evening. "We do not believe he knew this pastor — or had any relationship to this church whatsoever. Our family asks you to pause and lift this grief to God — for the family of Pastor Fred Winters — and for this one who was such a gentle lamb in my flock for many years — and for my dear friend and her family."

■ A time of training

During 2009, United Methodists gathered in several settings to receive training and honing of skills to enhance local ministries across the conference.

In February and March, three Forged in the Fire events across the conference, sponsored by the conference Evangelism Committee, drew a combined crowd of 1,000. A follow-up event in September saw 200 return for further training with author Paul Nixon and Dr. Elaine Robinson of St. Paul School of Theology's Oklahoma City campus.

The Forged in the Fire event was pre-

ceded in January by an experiential workshop by author Martha Grace Reese, author of *Unbinding the Gospel*. Reese directed a four-year, national Lilly Endowment study of effective evangelism in seven mainline denominations and found that the individuals that have the most difficulty of sharing their faith with others are those who have grown up in the church. The workshop sought to help persons deepen their prayer and faith lives in such a way that they felt at ease sharing it with others.

IGRC Lay Speaking Ministries hosted the first of two lay witness mission training events in November, aimed at training lay speakers to share their faith and create new opportunities for service. The training was part of a pilot program of the General Board of Discipleship. A second event is scheduled for April 2010 at Bloomington Wesley UMC.

Bloomington Wesley UMC was also the site of the 2009 IGRC Outreach Conference, in which more than 500 heard Bishop Robert Schnase speak on the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations. Debi Nixon from the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., spoke on Radical Hospitality and Bunny Wolfe, IGRC coordinator of outreach and mission, spoke on Risk-Taking Mission.

■ A witness in the public arena

United Methodists were also part of the social witness of the church this year as the financial realities saw the state looking for new revenue sources.

Legislation which legalized video gambling across the state passed the Illinois General Assembly and was signed by Gov. Pat Quinn. However, lawmakers faced a grassroots effort aimed at exploiting a loophole in the law.

Groups such as Illinois Church Action on Alcohol and Addiction Problem (ILCAAAP) began mobilizing citizen groups to petition governments to "opt out" of allowing the activity in their jurisdictions.

To date, 42 communities — including Carbondale and Rochester, and five counties — all in the Chicago area have voted to ban video gambling. Another 29 communities — including Champaign, Morton, Springfield and Urbana, and four counties — including Champaign and Effingham are currently discussing the issue. Only two municipalities have not banned video gambling.

Other issues were slightly more controversial. In late April, mainly faith-based groups opposed the legalization of medical marijuana, including ILCAAAP, noting the legislation encourages recreational use of the drug.

More than 60 religious leaders in Illinois, including Protestants for the Common Good endorsed the legislation which would allow patients to use marijuana with a doctor's recommendation and not be subject to criminal prosecution.



Photo by Bob Baker

Members of the annual conference engage in Christian conferencing as part of two presentations given by conference speaker Dr. Christine Pohl during the 2009 session. The 2009 theme was *Welcoming All God's Children* and focused on *Radical Hospitality*.

In 2008, the United Methodist General Conference stated, "The medical use of any drug should not be seen as encouraging recreational use of the drug. We urge all persons to abstain from all use of marijuana, unless it has been legally prescribed in a form appropriate for treating a particular medical condition."

Since the issue did not clear the Illinois House in the fall veto session, it may still get a vote some time after the General Assembly reconvenes in January 2010 for the second half of the current session. Since Gov. Quinn's spokesperson recently said that the governor would give "serious consideration" to a medical marijuana bill the legislature passes you can expect these

faith groups will be once again advocating for their position.

Ecumenically, the Illinois Conference of Churches has reorganized staff and have identified several public policy priorities for the upcoming year. The priorities include abolition of the death penalty, advocating for Medicaid especially if there is an opt-out provision in federal health care reform and ensuring a safety net for state programs and services that serve the most vulnerable.

IGRC retired pastor Rev. Terry Clark co-chairs the ICC board and Rev. Linda Harrod, IGRC clergy, serves as public policy coordinator.

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