

*Morning teaching session***Conference encouraged toward a culture of extravagant generosity**

The Rev. David Bell, of Brighton, Mich., serves as vice-president of stewardship with The United Methodist Foundation of Michigan. Bell consults independently through Design for Ministry. He began a Friday morning Bible study by highlighting the widow's mite story found in Mark 12:41-44.



Bell

Recalling this passage – which was his first stewardship sermon in his first church years ago – Bell shared that stewardship is more than just money, it is also about time and involvement.

"My understanding of Christian stewardship is that it's not only money, but everything we have is a gift of God," said Bell.

There are more passages

about money that Jesus taught his disciples and people than other topics. "There is this tension that exists in our culture," said Bell. "The result is that the average American lives well beyond their economic means."

Today, people are living in a hyper-consumer culture and an age of instant gratification. Bell

called on conference members to address the economy.

There are several culture values – such as rich lifestyles, consumer debt, saving and giving – that are in place over biblical values of giving, saving, simple lifestyle and consumer debt. "If you want to release the bondage that money has on your congregation, start giving."

Bell shared information that most people are among the ordinary wealthy and our wants have been replaced with needs. "This idea of scarcity is pervasive across all economic lives," said Bell. "People of less means give more."

Bell continued, "Faith and money are linked together. You can't separate those two.

Contentment comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The longer the church is silent, how can the world hear? Contentment brings joy and peace into our lives."

Bell provided six concepts for conference members:

- ◆ Provide a Biblical/theological context,
- ◆ Ask with a sense of anticipation,
- ◆ Practice ethical/financial management,
- ◆ Personally thank the giver,
- ◆ Remind them of the mission to change lives, and
- ◆ Create a joyful atmosphere of extravagant generosity.

In addition Bell will be presenting programs throughout Indiana during the fall and winter. – *MO*

*IC 2009 Friday morning plenary***Conference approves the creation of ten-district structure**

On behalf of the conference Transition Team, Chair Cindy Reynolds, brought seven recommendations to the conference to implement a new district structure. They included Recommendation 4 which was a major shift from last year's five bi-district resource centers with two districts and superintendents proposal to a ten district configuration including a superintendent, associate superintendent, district assistant plus partnering with conference-supported connec-tional ministries and church development. The reason for the change was a fear of adding another layer of structure

and increasing the complexity of a bi-district structure.

Other recommendations included:

- ◆ District lines including cluster configurations which have been drawn by the bishop and cabinet,
- ◆ Support of the directors of connec-tional ministries and church development,
- ◆ Support of the rules and structure report already adopted,
- ◆ Asking the bishop to name an ongoing Transition Team,
- ◆ Enabling the ten district structures to be formed, and



Reynolds

- ◆ Discontinuing the current Transition Team.

After discussion and concerns about district funding, the conference approved the recommendation to form a ten-district resource center structure. – *DRG*

Connectional Ministries to serve with leaner budget, fewer personnel

Connectional Ministries Director Jim Bushfield said the conference is moving to support more congregational ministries concerns and moving away from funding ministry projects. He said new conference ministries to congregations needs to be reasonable, responsible and achievable.

Priorities on connection ministries will be a collective reduction in both salary and personnel. Part of the new way of ministry is financial. Connectional Ministries sees its goal as to provide resources and opportunities for congregations to be connected to their communities. In the current conferences' budgets, more than \$1 million is pass through funds from

congregations to conference supported ministries. Bushfield said conference directors envision a leaner budget with less "pass through" funding of ministries related to the conference such as campus ministry which is a \$250,000 reduction from the two previous conference connectional ministries program budgets from \$1.3 million to \$300,000.

Bushfield said ministries supported by congregations are being funded at ten times more than conference funded ministries. "Local churches are already doing ministry and mission funding ten to one times more than the conference," he said.

Significant cuts in the connectional

ministries budget are in campus ministry and mission advocacy. The proposed connectional ministries 2010 budget will include \$200,000 for emergency funding.

Bushfield said even though campus ministries are large and significant programs, we need to fund them in new ways closer to the schools. "Today, all of our communities have some form of campus ministry. Education has changed and we must change to meet the needs," he said.

The funding for the new Indiana Conference is based on the conference title (10 percent of each month's congregations' income) and one percent used for district finances.

Church Development

Director Mark Gough said together we need to find new ways of reaching more people for Jesus Christ, younger people and more diverse people. He noted that worship attendance continues to decline. He said, "We need to pull together in a process, a way of bringing people to the church."

He outlined four strategic Church Development areas which include locations, people groups, existing churches and new churches. Pending budget approval, conference grants will be provided in 2010 for new churches, multi-sites, worship and relocation.

Gough introduced the first conference church development staff person, Ed Fenstermacher, who presented a tool box for church growth.

Fenstermacher reminded the conference of Bishop Coyner's vision of sending of the 70 in Luke's Gospel. North Conference picked up the idea in a program called Sending of the Saints.

Fenstermacher said ways of starting new faith communities include Sunday school, home Bible study and new worship services. He said, "We're inviting you to make this commitment in the next two years by establishing new faith

The Indiana Conference Daily HUM News is a special service provided by Indiana United Methodist Communications. The newsroom for the Annual Conference is located on the basement level of the auditorium under the stage.

Your Daily News staff: Rev. Dr. Daniel R. Gangler, Erma Metzler, Matthew Oates and Linda Hoopes.



PHOTO BY LINDA HOOPES.

Faithpoint UMC was chartered as a new church by the conference on Friday. Pictured in the presentation are (from left) are the Rev. Mark Gough, the Rev. George Watson, Donna Wilfong, Jessi Wilfong and the Rev. Charles Wilfong, superintendent of the New Albany District.

communities.

A tool box of resources is available online at www.inumc.org and select "Church Development." Web seminars also are available online. Coaches will help churches develop their own ministries.

At the close of this report, the Faithpoint United Methodist Church of New Albany was chartered as a new congregation in the Indiana Conference. Pastor George Watson explained the development of this congregation from a home Bible study to Easter of this year. Watson thanked the conference for its support in this new ministry.

Pension, retiree healthcare plans discussed Friday afternoon

Following more than an hour of debate and several unsuccessful amendments, the annual conference approved a revised plan to care in part for the health benefits of clergy retirees.

Before considering the retirees health benefits issue, Brent Williams, new director of Administrative Services now North Indiana treasurer, explained that the Pre-1982 Service Rate for 2010 is \$608. Surviving Spouse amount is \$456 – 75 percent of the service rate. These rates were approved.

The Healthflex program for active clergy was approved for 2010.

In response to the feedback received from the ten Pre-Conference Briefings across Indiana and various correspondences from our retired clergy and others, the two current conference treasurers, Brent Williams of North Indiana and Jennifer Gallagher of South Indiana, worked this past week, with a benefits consultant seeking other options to bring

to the conference session.

Williams recommended on behalf of the Benefits Committee that the 2010 Indiana Conference Retirees Health Insurance, which was approved on Friday afternoon.

The conference approved this action regarding retiree health care insurance supplement.

1. That the conference proceed with changing from a Healthflex supplemental insurance plan for retired clergy, spouses and surviving spouses due to increasing costs (estimated to cost \$525 per person in 2010), and in place of it, move to a health insurance subsidy based upon years of service, set at \$5-per-service-year per-month, with a maximum of 30 years or \$150 for each retiree and spouse, and with a \$250 per month for each surviving spouse.

AND

2. That the conference has our retired

clergy, spouses and surviving spouses enroll in one of two plans our benefits consultant recommends. These are:

Plan A – a plan similar to HealthFlex but without some of the extras that HealthFlex brings, such as mental and nervous, Optum Nurse Line, Wellness, WebMD. The estimated cost for this plan is \$434 per month, because this plan includes a richer pharmacy benefit with Medco.

Plan B – a lesser plan with less pharmacy benefits, but one that still exceeds what conference retirees could purchase on their own. The estimated cost of this plan is \$313 per month.

This choice will be supported by further information and consultation throughout the fall of this year. It will help avoid having our retirees and spouses make their own purchases on the open market. Both Plan A and Plan B are in addition to the basic Medicare coverage that all people age 65 years and over receive.

New spaces, familiar faces



Operation Classroom truck

With the creation of a new conference came a change in the location of the annual conference session at Ball State University.

While the location has changed, familiar traditions such as United Methodists dropping off supplies for Operation Classroom, as well as Bibles for various outreach projects, and several conference meals.

One of the new features of Thursday night's clergy session included a clergy spouse get-together and social event. While



Clergy Spouse Reception

the clergy were gathered in their session, spouses spent time meeting each other, socializing and playing games.

Another new feature is Saturday's Day of Outreach and Mission to the Greater Muncie area. Members of the annual conference will be clad in their red "Rethink Church" T-shirts and sent with their new districts to work in a variety of settings across Muncie. Watch for photos and updates on the new Indiana Conference Web site at www.inumc.org and e-HUM next week.

Cobb says we are living stones proclaiming God's mighty acts

"We are spiritual houses who are to proclaim the mighty acts of God," said the Rev. Michelle Cobb, superintendent of the Calumet District, to more than 2,000 worshipers Friday night during a Service of Remembrance and Celebration of Resurrection. The conference celebrated and remembered the lives of 23 clergy and 37 clergy spouses, who died since both conferences met this past year.



"Living memories, living reminders of faith through Jesus Christ. Our witness lives beyond the grave as we remember those spouses of clergy and clergy," she said.

"Through our praise and God's mighty deeds, we are touchstones of faith through Jesus Christ. May we continue to be the house that proclaims the mighty deeds of God, who loves extravagantly."

Following the sermon, Bishop Mike Coyner led the conference in Holy Communion.

Using the words of Jesus in John 7: 37-39, Cobb proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to Jesus and drink. You and I have received the living water."

Likewise, standing on this chief foundation stone (of Jesus), we have been translated into living stones.

She said, in faithful obedience to God through Christ, we are to witness and proclaim the mighty deeds of God. Remember the words of Jesus in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." What does God's world look like?

"The Holy Spirit is shaping us and molding us to offering spiritual sacrifices to God ...

We are spiritual houses made to proclaim the message of an awesome, living God who desires to love everybody.

"We cannot be content to be just for each other believers. We are called to participate in God's redemptive mission to all," she said.

Looking forward to Saturday's Mission and Outreach to Muncie, she said, "Tomorrow the living water will give us an opportunity to proclaim God's love to all people."

We, spiritual houses, will become touchstones of faith for generations before and behind us. We do that by creating living memories and living reminders. Living testimonies for Christians and non-Christians alike.

Cobb then asked the audience to

stand by age groups, laity, clergy and guests until all were standing. With each group she proclaimed, "You are touchstones of faith... we are living memories, living reminders of God's awesome deeds to a world that constantly needs to be reminded that there is a living God.

Holy Communion.

Friday night's music was provided by a combined Muncie choir including members of Gethsemane, Riverside, College Avenue and High Street UMCs. Jennifer Arbogast, a doctoral student of BSU, was the director. Mary Dicken was the harpist.

Those remembered

Clergy remembered in Friday night's worship service included these 23 clergy: Thomas Abbott, Daniel Bengston, Ray Bradley, Bill Butler, Richard Dolby, Vern Doles, Kenneth Foulke, George Greathouse, Michaelene Haysler, Frederick Hill, Ellis Hukill, Jerome Hyde, Woodrow Kennell, Richard Kistler, Jane Lincoln, Carol Lott, Robert Lougheed, Carlyle Mason, Robert Miller, Larry Schwartz, Darrel Taggart, Lawrence Tedrow and John Thrasher.

These 37 clergy spouses remembered included: Barbara Maxwell, Bernice Miller, Betty Rhoda, Mary

Wigner, Jane E Bill, Martha Louise Carlton, Evalena Clements, Sue Copeland, Esther Mary Crocker, Phyllis Dicken, Terry French, Marjorie M Fritz, Elma Heady, Eleanor Heath, Jeanette Hulbert, Minnie Lee Jones, Pamela Keith, Hazel Killion, Roberta Lundy, Martha L McGee, Opal Lathrop Mills, Monna Dee Nevil, Stella Nordby, Janet Soldner Nussbaum, Kathryn Osbon, Marian Parks, Lillian Perkins, Mary Beth Ping, Jewell Ritzenhouse, Lydia Sands, Irene Saunders, Jessie Skinner, Alice Sprague, Sarah Thayer, Josephine L Thomas, Charlene Ward and Gary Werner.

Congratulations to graduates of the course of study to become Local Pastors

- ◆ James W. Abbott
- ◆ Dale E. Erwin
- ◆ Duane A. Ginder
- ◆ Randall Webb
- ◆ Robert D. Kirts
- ◆ Philip E. Mitchell
- ◆ Glenda K. Riggs
- ◆ James E. Roach