

**REPORT TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
DR. CHARLES W. SMITH
CONFERENCE TREASURER AND STATISTICIAN
2009 IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Bishop Trimble, lay and clergy members of the Iowa Annual Conference, anyone who has heard newscast or has looked at headlines in newspapers and magazines know that this country has been going through an economic down turn. I believe a question on many people's minds is simply, "how has the current economic situation affected the church?"

Yet, I think a more important question than statistics is, "how are we as Iowa United Methodist's living out in our daily lives; the theme of this Annual Conference which is *"Radical Hospitality, Receiving God's Grace."* Grace is explained in Our Doctrinal Heritage in the 2008 Book of Discipline (page 45) in this way. "Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life. By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit."

Thus, even in a time of economic chaos, how has God's undeserved, unmerited loving action affected your local congregation's finances? In 2008, the congregations of Iowa spent a grand total on all causes of \$96,113,830 an 8% decrease. The income as reported on our Table Three for all categories was \$98,025,461 or only a 0.32% decrease. The value of the church owned property and land for 2008 was \$898,778,662 for a 2.23% increase. The value of other assets such as cash, securities and bonds reflected as one would expect a decrease of nearly 28%; however, the total value of this type of asset is still \$96,466,862.

How has the money spent that was so generously given as an expression of our thanksgiving for God's grace? One way to answer the question is to say that out of every dollar given in the local congregations; 84.1 cents was used to support that local congregation's ministry, 10.9 cents was used to support Annual Conference Ministries and Mission and 5 cents was used for either General Conference apportionments or other causes which includes the advance specials and special offerings.

Another way to express how we have responded to God's grace by our giving is to note that in 2008, the average per member giving for United Methodists of Iowa was \$525.35. Also, using the total amount given in 2008 and divided by the average worship attendance, the average amount given is \$1,580.16.

The percentage of apportionments paid in 2008 was 83.29%. This is less than the percentage in 2007 which was one of the best years in a decade. However, the percentage paid was still better than the years 2004 and 2005. In 2008, 583 congregations paid 100% of their apportionments and 113 congregations gave a higher percentage than in 2007. This leaves only 124 congregations who gave the same percentage or less to apportionments than 2007. Although we know that as Iowa United

Methodist, we could do better in our giving, considering the state of the economy and the devastating storms of 2008 our response to God's grace is worthy.

Once we have experienced the undeserved, unmerited and loving action of God, known as grace, let me report on how we have shared this grace with others. Membership in the Iowa United Methodist church as of December 31, 2008 was 186,590 a 2% decrease.

In 2008, 225 congregations grew in membership. The largest membership church was 2,556 and the smallest was two. The average membership size for congregations in Iowa was 225 and the medium, meaning as many churches larger and smaller was 130. In 2008, our congregations received 3,027 members by profession of faith a 7% increase from 2007. 3,155 members left our relationship to a greater existence through death. This is a 5% increase. However, it should be noted that 240 congregations had more baptisms than deaths in 2008; with 2,557 baptized reported for a 6% increase.

In 2008, the average worship attendance of principle worship services was 62,035 a 4% decrease. The largest average attendance reported by a church was 981 and the smallest was 4. The average of all United Methodist Churches in Iowa was 77 and the medium is 45. In 2008, 255 congregations reported an increase in worship attendance.

Traditional Church School in 2008 reported an enrollment of 39,598 a 5% decrease and attendance of 20,092 and 8% decrease. Even with these down numbers, 290 congregations reported an increase in church school enrollment and participation. The other important factor to remember is that many congregations not only have a church school but they have week day Christian formation groups or short-term learning groups and the number of these groups total 2,942 a 1% increase. The total number of people served by the weekday programs was 22,068 a 45% increase. 139 congregations reported an increase in participation in week day formation groups.

I know that what I have just shared with you are a lot of numbers. What we must never forget is that each number is a person with a name, a person who has a relationship to the church and to Christ, a person who has known what it means to live under the grace of God.

Now, in the remaining few minutes I want to share with you the status of the Conference's financial position as of May 31, 2009. First, let me tell you on January 7 Bishop Trimble called together a number of the leaders of our conference to begin to put in place a contingency plan regarding your Conference's financial status. Next on January 13, a conference call was held with the membership of CFA to discuss possible Contingency Plans. The general feeling of the group and the Conference Treasurer, was that it is better to be prepared with plans that hopefully will never have to be implemented than to wait and not be prepared if the financial crisis would affect our Conference.

The triggering event for any contingency plan would be that if at the end of a quarter, the apportionments receipts are 3% less than the previous year, CFA will then take actions that might be necessary to meet the change in the financial position. The changes that

could occur would have each agency change a spending plan and prioritizing the programs or funds as to what would get top priority. Also, each agency would be asked to explore creative ways to reduce any other costs.

Also, for the entire year of 2009, each agency has been asked to curtail spending unless it is necessary for the continued operation of their program.

Fortunately, as of June 1, 2009, the financial position of the Conference remains strong. Apportionment receipts for May was 1.72% less than in 2008 but only 0.73% less than the four-year average. When we factor in prior year apportionments paid, our receipts are down only 0.74% from the previous year. These percentages translate into \$4,959 less in 2009 than in 2008.

We also know that in any year by the end of May, the Conference needs a minimum of 1.5 million dollars in a reserve fund for the purpose of carrying us through the summer. The summer is an expensive time for us because of the operations of the camping program, moving of clergy and the cost of the Annual Conference Session and at the same time congregation's receipts are down. This year on June 1, we have 2.4 million dollars in reserve. So, if our summer receipts are close to the four-year average and with our reserve we should enter the fall financially healthy. Although, you and I know that what may look just fine at this moment may change in just a few seconds if a disaster hits?

Radical Hospitality, Receiving God's Grace is our theme for this year's Annual Conference. By Grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit. "In this spirit we take up our theological task. We endeavor through the power of the Holy Spirit to understand the love of God given in Jesus Christ. We seek to spread this love abroad. As we see more clearly who we have been, as we understand more fully the needs of the world, as we draw more effectively upon our theological heritage, we will become better equipped to fulfill our calling as the people of God." (*Book of Discipline, page 85, 86*) Or as St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen."