

**REPORT TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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Bishop Trimble, lay and clergy members of the Iowa Annual Conference, the numbers that I am going to share with you over the next few minutes need to be set in the context of the words from the author of the Colossians who wrote...

“As God’s chosen ones, holy, 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 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 Creator through Him. (*Colossians 3:12-17*)

Whether it is attending worship, celebrating baptism, professing our faith or giving to support the mission of the church, all of it is done in the “name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Creator through Him.”

Let me share some numbers that binds everything together and reflect how we “let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.” Our average worship attendance in 2010 was 58,212, a decrease of 1,003 persons from last year. The church with the highest average attendance had 1,060 in worship each week, and the smallest average that was reported was five. The average attendance in our 808 congregations is 72, but a better measure for us is the median (the same number of congregations smaller and larger). That worship attendance number is 40.

Our one body in Christ has a membership of 179,765, a decrease of 3,492 members. Out of the 808 congregations we had a 206 increase in membership, and 469 decreased in membership with 133 reflecting no change.

The largest congregation has 2,586 members, the smallest and 2 members (*they averaged three more in worship than they have members*). The average membership for our congregations is 222; however, the median size is 130.

Since 2010 was a year for our national census, I compared our membership with 1970. In the year 1970, there were 303,220 United Methodists in Iowa, and accounted for 10.73% of the population of Iowa. Today we account for 5.9% of the population of Iowa. Also, according to the census report that I read, 8.7% of the Iowa’s population is identified as ethnic. Our church statistics for Iowa report that 1.47% of the United Methodists in Iowa are indentified as ethnic.

This past year we received by profession of faith 2,450 new Christians or at least newly professing Christians. 396 congregations received at least one person by profession of faith with the most received by any one church was 87 members. Unfortunately, 410 congregations did not receive a member by profession of faith.

In 2010, our congregations celebrated 2,276 baptisms. 483 congregations had the privilege of celebrating the sacrament of baptism at least once this past year with one church holding that celebration 96 times. Sadly, 323 congregations did not have that privilege which is one of the vital parts of our worship.

Last year after I made this report a few people came to me and said, “Chuck, these numbers are interesting but they are not the whole story. You really cannot measure our growth in our spiritual dependence on God, our prayer life or growth in our knowledge of the scripture.” I would agree, we cannot put a statistical number on people’s spiritual lives. However, I like to think of the ingredients of spiritual life: such things as prayer, Bible study, worship, and fellowship as part of recipe for making a better disciple. You use the best ingredients you have available.

In some ways it is like baking a cake. In baking a cake you use your best ingredients and usually a proven family recipe and then you mix them together and bake always hoping that this be the best cake ever made. But you know what happens to a cake if it is made only for us; often before it is eaten it becomes stale and moldy. The good we get from the cake is wasted and gets thrown away. Thus, a really good cake only stays fresh when it is shared. So, as we grow in our spiritual lives we share, because if we do not the freshness of our church disappears and we become stale and moldy. Thus, the good we get from our spiritual disciplines is wasted and will eventually disappear unless it is shared.

As the author of Colossians’ notes, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Creator through Him.” One of the ways we express our thanks to God is through our tithes and offerings. This is our giving in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me share how we are giving thanks to God, the Creator, through our monetary gifts. In 2010, our congregations in Iowa reported an income for all causes of \$112,405,785 which is a 5.13% increase. Our income average, per member for 2010 was \$625.29 and \$1,930.97 per average worship attendee.

Income is only one side of the coin of thanksgiving. Our expenditures represent the other. In 2010, the grand total spent by all the congregations for all the causes was \$103,473,399. This is a 0.97% increase from the previous year. To make this number seem more realistic, our congregations spent an average of \$575.60 per member. The average spending per worship attendee was \$1,777.53.

The value of our congregation's assets other than land, building and equipment in 2011 was \$108,451,979. These other assets are investments, cash and cash equivalents which increased by \$3,837,820 or 3.67%.

In 2010, the congregations paid \$13,255,289 for our apportionments. This is an 81.57%. The percentage decrease from 2009 is 0.34%. The churches of Iowa paid 100% of the General Church apportionments. When we closed the remittance system in early January, 537 congregations had paid 100% of their apportionments. This is an increase of 12 congregations from the previous year. Since that date, another 35 congregations have paid 100% of the 2010 apportionments and another 21 congregations have paid more than 80%.

Where does the money go that so many give so generously in thanksgiving to God? I know that we talk in millions of dollars but it helps me understand if we put into dollars and cents. For every one dollar that was put in the offering plate...

- 2.2 cents went to fund General Church apportionments;
- 10.6 cents went to fund the apportionments that support the ministry and mission of the Iowa Conference;
- 10.8 cents went to fund the benefits (pension and health insurance) for clergy and lay employees of the church;
- 3.7 cents went into church savings, investments or cash equivalent accounts
- 72.7 were left to use by local congregations at its discretion for ministry.

There are two items stand out for me in this breakdown. *First*, that our congregations put more money into cash, cash equivalents and our own investment than was given to support our General Church apportionments. *Second*, the benefits for clergy and lay were a slightly larger portion of this dollar than the amount used to support our Conference shared ministries.

Declining membership, growth in the cost of benefits, increased pressures on family budgets and growing sense in our culture that the church is irrelevant means we face many challenges in the next decade. For these reasons a group of us attended a Financial Forum in March at Fort Worth where all the Annual Conferences came together to explore options and the reality. The Iowa Conference is forming a Strategic Planning Team who will combine the actions of the 2012 General Conference with some decade planning for our Conference's future.

As we move into the rest of this year and then forward toward the 2012 General Conference may we "let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts..... And be thankful and remember that "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Creator through Him.

Thank you!

