



IOWA CONFERENCE

Edition of

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER



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Four Sections
Section A
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March 7, 2008

Annual Conference Registration Begins

Registration for the 2008 session of the Iowa Annual Conference begins this week. With the mailing of a notice to all members of the Annual Conference the on-line registration becomes active. Registration, by return mail, is also possible for those who don't have on-line capability.

Two forms are included in the mailing: one for registration and a second to indicate special needs for physically-challenged persons. Electronic registration will include the information on both paper forms. The registration deadline is March 25, 2008 for both versions. According to the registrar, "we need to strictly adhere to this deadline in order to provide for timely arrangements."

A brightly-colored label will be attached to the registration information sheet. This is the **password** you need to enter to register on-line. Then, go to www.iaumc.org/ac2008 and register on-line. Once a registration is submitted an e-mail message will be sent indicating that the registration was received. Please use this on-line registration if at all possible.



Registration deadline is March 25

As in the past, most members of the session will be seated on the main floor in rows. Persons are seated according to district and local church. Lay member(s) and their Pastor(s) who have registered by the deadline of March 25 will be seated together. Persons who do not pre-register by the March 25 deadline will be seated where there are available seats.

Because inclusiveness is always important, materials in Braille will be offered for persons who make such requests. Worship services will be signed for the hearing impaired and the plenary sessions will be captioned. Language translation is being offered for those who request it. Handicap accessibility is available at ground level at the west entrance. Buses and golf carts will again be provided for those with walking difficulties.

The 2008 session of the Iowa Annual Conference will be held in the Hilton Coliseum and adjacent buildings on the Iowa State University campus in Ames.

Fruitful Practices Workshops Announced

A series of workshops based on Bishop Robert Schnase's book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, will be offered in April, September and November. The gatherings are designed to lift up each of the "Practices": Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development (& Life-Long Evangelism), Risk-Taking Mission & Serve, and Extravagant Generosity. The focus will be on helping any church raise the bar of its life and ministry around these very adjectives, which define the life of a church and the impact of its faith upon the community (world) to which Christ has called it to ministry in His name.

These workshops are for every church, of any size or makeup. To help make the workshops more accessible, we will be offering all three workshops in nine different locations—April 12, September 20 & November 8. Pre-registration is required, at a cost of \$50/charge. The one-time fee enables you to send as many people (and different

leadership teams) from your church to all of the events; also you get a copy of Bishop Schnase's book and Bishop Job's book, *Three Simple Rules*, from John Wesley's "General Rules"; as well as six copies of all the materials used in the workshops and a CD of all the workshops.

Emphasis is on learning and practice

One of the things that will set these workshops apart is its emphasis on learning & practice. A month before each workshop, registered churches will receive a homework assignment for them to do in preparation for the workshop they will be attending. (We therefore need churches to register for meals & the event they will be attending beforehand, so we can get this information to you.) Then at the workshop churches will focus on their own



situation and develop a "ministry action plan" (MAP) that they will take home to continue working on. Leaders from the workshop will then follow up with each church, to assist them in carrying out the MAP that they have developed for themselves.

Also, we want everyone to know about the special "finisher" to our workshops. Bishop Schnase will be with us for a Conference-wide celebration, January 10, 2009, focusing on the final chapter of his book, "Excellence and Fruitfulness." More details will be shared as they develop, but right now put the date on your calendars!

Further questions, or to register, please feel free to contact one of our Leadership Development Ministers: Scott Hibben, scott.hibben@iaumc.org (Phone: 515 974-8926), Eric Guy, eric.guy@iaumc.org or Kevin Gowdy, kevin.gowdy@iaumc.org.

Please register promptly for the April 12 event.

Iowa United Methodist Men Annual Meeting Set for March 15

The annual meeting of the United Methodist Men will take place on Saturday, March 15, 2008, from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. All men of the United Methodist Church are welcome and invited to attend, whether or not a member of a local unit.

General Secretary of United Methodist Men Reverend David Adams will keynote the event. There will also be presentations on Youth Ministries, Self Help International, Hunger Relief, Upper Room Prayer Ministry, Legacy Program, EMS Program, Heifer International and P.E.T.

The meeting will take place at the Altoona United Methodist Church, 602 5th Avenue SW, Altoona, IA 50009.

The Iowa Conference Edition
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Bishop

Gregory V. Palmer
dkbrockmeyer@iaumc.org

Editor

Arthur McClanahan,
Director of Communications
amclanahan@iaumc.org

Communications Ministry Team

Darci Hartman
Communications Assistant
darci.hartman@iaumc.org

Communications Advisory Team

David Wendel, Chairperson

Circulation

Jill Stanton
Pastoral Record/Clergy
Rolls/Information Reports
jill.stanton@iaumc.org

Production/Publisher

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The mission of the Communications Ministry Team is to provide and facilitate an engaging, effective and empowering communications ministry by informing, equipping and connecting.

Iowa Conference Center
2301 Rittenhouse Street
Des Moines, IA 50321-3101
515.283.1991
www.iaumc.org
e-mail for news submissions:
reporter@iaumc.org

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The Iowa Conference Edition is published every other week.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness!

This is a story about the Walker United Methodist Church. This is a story about faithfulness.

Walker is a rural Iowa community about 20 miles north of Cedar Rapids, population of about 725. There are four communities of faith in town: two mainline churches—Walker United Methodist and Sacred Heart Roman Catholic; the Walker Bible Church; and Cono Christian School and Church.

This is a story about God's blessings on a congregation which remained faithful in spite of some of the difficulties which present themselves from time to time as we travel the Journey of faith.

I was appointed to serve the Walker UMC as the Intentional Interim Pastor in July, 2006. When I arrived, I learned very quickly that Walker UMC is a church with a tradition of always paying their apportionments in full—and on time—a church with a “heart for mission,” a Third Mile Giving church for many years. Even with that faithful heritage, I also quickly learned that this church, not unlike many of our rural Iowa churches, was struggling with finances—not enough funds in the bank to pay the current bills, let alone to pay the apportionments which were 4 months in arrears for the first time ever in their proud history.

Struggling to meet their obligations, the congregation was well aware that their last remaining resource was a modest CD. If they cashed it in—there would no longer be a “safety



Walker UMC exterior

net.” However, there were responsibilities and bills to pay. Out of options, the Church Council voted to cash the CD in.

A God-filled thing

And then, the most remarkable, God-filled thing happened: With not enough cash flow coming in to keep them going, no more money anywhere that they could use, completely out of reserve resources, they took a leap of faith: double the monthly apportionment payments in order to pay them in full by the end of the year.

In July of 2006, Walker UMC used their CD to pay all bills which were due—and then did a lot of praying.

We know that our God hears prayers, and we know that our God responds to faithfulness, and we know that our God is an abundant God. But, if we ever needed proof, we have it: By the end of July, 2006, that month's bills were paid, the double-apportionment payment was made AND... by the end of

September, there was more money in the bank than the amount of the CD which they had cashed!

From that time on, finances of the Walker UMC never dipped below the amount of the CD (with the exception of August, 2007, when they dipped by a little less than \$200). Apportionments were fully paid by the end of the year. AND, once again, the Walker UMC was a Third Mile Giving Church in 2006! Praise God!

Keeping current every month

But the story continues... In 2007, the Walker Church voted to pay their apportionments every month, no matter what. It was done! AND all the bills are current.

That's amazing in itself, but there's even more. In December, 2007, the church had twice as much money in the bank as the CD they had cashed in to keep them afloat. AND they were a Third Mile Giving Church once again. AND... well, if you



Children's choir

want/need “proof” of God's response to a people's faithfulness, here it is: **When all the numbers were added up, the Walker United Methodist Church had given over \$10,000 to Missions(!) in 2007.**

We celebrate the Victory—even as we recognize that struggles, whether monetary or otherwise, don't end. More importantly, we know more than ever that God's faithfulness never ends.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13)

To say that I am proud of this congregation would be a huge understatement. I have been so blessed by the privilege of walking this part of the Journey with the Walker United Methodist Church.

Rev. Diane K. Mitchell



Children's time



Nigerian missionary visit to Walker UMC

Perspectives on General Conference

I am privileged to serve as the chair of the Iowa delegation to the 2008 General Conference as the first-elected lay delegate along with my partner in ministry, Barrie Tritle, who was the first-elected clergy delegate.

The United Methodist Church is at an important crossroads. We have been complacent about our institutional life for far too long, and we have failed to live up to our potential in reaching out to the world as an extension of God's love made known in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit has been at work in us, however, and a fresh energy is emerging. We are recognizing our need to reach new people in new places, rather than assuming that people will come to us. We are focusing our ministries in ways that

respond to the world's needs, especially by addressing diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria in partnership with others. We are acting on the mandate of scripture to bring good news to the poor as we strengthen our ministry with persons in poverty. And we are making the development of young, new leaders a priority for the future.

Our challenge

Our challenge at General Conference is to affirm our unity as children of God through our common mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. To do so, we must overcome our strong differences of theological and political opinions as well as recognize the global



nature of The United Methodist Church more than we ever have before.

I pray that we all will be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our deliberations that we might evermore be instruments of God's peace in our broken world.

Phil Carver
Head of the 2008 General Conference Delegation

Dreams for Dynamic Communications Ministry

It is with joy that I take this opportunity as the chairperson of the Communications Advisory Team to welcome you to our new publication, the *Iowa Conference Edition of the United Methodist Reporter*. Our Communications Director, Dr. Arthur McClanahan, has asked if I might share an opening column with you.

Permit me to share some of the dreams of the Communications Ministry Team and Communications Advisory Team. Our common goal is to provide even more effective and regular communication with the people of The United Methodist Church in Iowa—both laity and clergy. Some of the ways we intend to accomplish this include:

- Distributing a bi-weekly, print, communications piece filled with timely and helpful news. (The *Iowa Conference Edition of the United Methodist Reporter* will provide that outlet.)
- Providing audio “Podcasts” and video content of Conference-related events and resources. (See the story in this edition of the *Reporter* about the new video portal on which folks from across the Conference can post their self-produced segments.)
- Sending out regular e-mail communication materials such as the **mid-week update**, “Ponderings” and letters from the Bishop, the “Stirrings” think-pieces from the

Leadership Development Ministers and more to come.

- Continuing to provide a Conference website that is current, feature-rich, informative and user-friendly.
- Helping the Districts to set up their own websites that will be interconnected with the very powerful capabilities of the Conference website
- Coaching local churches on how to use the “local church dashboard” component of the Conference website
- Conducting training on new technologies which will help our annual conference and local churches to be on track with new methods of communication
- Offering the possibility of on-line registration available for events such as the Annual Conference Session, Orders and Fellowship events and Youth Strike for Christ
- Developing
 - “message boards” and blogs
 - ways that we might institute a computerized way to do “long distance learning”
- Establishing a convenient way to hold “net meetings,” thereby saving committees valuable time and the Annual Conference a substantial amount in mileage and traveling costs.
- Make necessary cost-effective hard choices, including discontinuing the quarterly



Rev. David Wendel, Chair, Communications Advisory Team

magazine “Grace Upon Grace” which was very costly and often underused.

- And finally, something I find very exciting, a process to set up a system of “district stringers,” persons who would be equipped to report from each of the eight districts news and information which is of importance to the whole annual conference.

This is only a beginning of what the Communications Ministry Team has in store for our Annual Conference in the upcoming months. I am very excited about the new directions and know that each of the members, churches, and Districts will richly benefit from our bold new vision.

In Christ,
Rev. David Wendel, Chairperson
Communications Advisory Team

Welcome to the Reporter

Welcome to the first of the *Iowa Conference editions of the United Methodist Reporter*. Watch for it every two weeks, as it carries local, Conference and denominational news, success stories and interesting profiles.

Why a paper? What will it do for us as an Annual Conference? Every two weeks the *Iowa Conference Edition* will provide timely news that will be: *informative*—reporting what’s going on in the churches of Iowa and beyond; *inspiring*—sharing the success stories of our congregations; *engaging*—telling how United Methodists are making a difference; *dependable*—providing in-depth information from trusted sources; *thought-provoking*—offering commentary from significant church leaders; and *connectional*—building the community of the people of the church.

The *Reporter* will be a tangible **connection** for the people of the United Methodist Church in Iowa. Through it we’ll receive ministry stories, circumstances where discipleship is strengthened, where lives are transformed. We’ll learn about each other. . . and from each other. And through our common ministry, regardless of zip code, community size, language, racial-ethnic origin or general theological perspective, we’ll be encouraged to become, even more, the bold ambassadors for Christ that Paul encouraged the Ephesus community to be.

There will be eight pages in the first section of each bi-weekly edition. Pages one, four, five and eight will be devoted exclusively to Iowa Conference news coverage. The other pages will carry denominational and other news. Often there will be a second section with a thematic emphasis such as a focus on the upcoming General Conference.

People who will receive copies

Who will receive a copy? It will be sent to every: clergy person—



Dr. Arthur McClanahan, Director of Communications

active, retired or on leave; surviving spouses of clergy; lay member of the Annual Conference; lay leader; church council chairperson; Staff-Parish Relations committee chairperson; Christian education coordinator; youth coordinator; missions chairperson; evangelism chairperson; worship chairperson; finance chairperson; and trustees chairperson. And in addition, an electronic version will be posted on the Conference website.

Send me your news, your stories about, where connections are being made, where ministry is making a difference. Share your success stories, your invitations to be in ministry with others. Send me your stories (electronically at:

reporter@iaumc.org or by mail to the Conference Center). Send photographs (using the highest resolution setting for your digital camera.) Send leads about the interesting and engaging ministry that you see others doing.

We promise to help to strengthen our connection. We promise to be as inclusive as we can be. . . and for that, we’ll need your help. And, most of all, we promise to care!

May we be blessed in this new faith venture of **connection!**

In Christ,
Dr. Arthur McClanahan
Director of Communications

CONNECTIONS: IT’S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

CONNECTIONS—“They’ve got connections” . . .
CONNECTED—“joined together” . . .
CONNECTIONAL—“We are a connectional church.”

A joy and source of pride for United Methodists is what we do as a connectional church.

To many, that means the Conference supplies a pastor and the local church pays apportionments. But more than that, we make a difference in the lives of people.

We connect as we work together in meetings and share our lives with one another. We connect to the people in another UM church by giving to the Builders’ Call, helping enhance their ministries with a new building or addition. We connect when we give through monthly electronic funds transfers to our camps for our children and youth. . . when we buy nets

to save lives and eradicate malaria. . . through our efforts for Thanksgiving Ingathering, Iowa-Nigeria Partnership, Heifer International. . . the list goes on and on.

But connections are not only about DOing, they are also about BEing. No matter how you say it, it’s about people, and when it’s about people, it’s about relationships. In our fast-paced, busy world, people are craving true, authentic relationships.

Jesus summed it up best with the Great Commandments: to love God and love people. We need personal, authentic relationships with God and with people. To love God and our neighbors, we must connect with them.

And that will be our legacy, our witness, our connections. . . “See those United Methodists. How they love one another and the world.”

—Norma Morrison, Conference Lay Leader

SPRING FORWARD!

Sunday,
March 9, 2008





From the Bishop. . .

Gregory Vaughn Palmer

Dear friends in Jesus Christ:

I greet you in the strong name of Jesus Christ our savior and friend.

Welcome to this first issue of the Iowa Conference edition of the United Methodist Reporter. This new piece represents a singular opportunity to enhance our common life in faith and ministry. Our conference has not had a time sensitive print piece for over seven years. We have produced other excellent print pieces in the meantime and made increasing use of electronic media to good avail. Nevertheless this new bi-weekly piece will fill a much needed gap. I am grateful to the Communications Staff and the Advisory Committee for Communications Services and Resources for their strong efforts in engaging a *Communications Mini Audit* conducted with expert external leadership. That audit was helpful in identifying strengths and yearnings. The strengths are being built upon and the yearnings are being addressed.

Among the yearnings that was identified was for a greater sense of *connection*. This has been a theme in the life of the conference across the last several years. I point you to the rationale for a number of legislative proposals adopted by the Annual Conference not the least of which is still in the process of implementation. This articulated yearning for a deeper sense of *connection* plays to our distinctiveness and one of our greatest strengths

“a singular opportunity to enhance our common life in faith and ministry”

as United Methodists. We are indeed a *connectional* people. I invite you to read again paragraphs 130 and 701 of *The Book of Discipline* (2004). It is short but crucial stuff. Effective communication is absolutely critical for any healthy, effective organization, movement etc. In fact a key reason that good ideas, clear visions and attempts at organizational change and transformation often under achieve is because they are under communicated (John P. Kotter, Harvard Business School). So this new conference paper is an effort to go to the next level, from “good to great” in effective and healthy communication in order that we can be a healthier, more vibrant, maximally effective *connection* all to the glory of God.

I am,
Your servant for the sake of the Gospel,
†Gregory V. Palmer



Gregory V. Palmer
Bishop

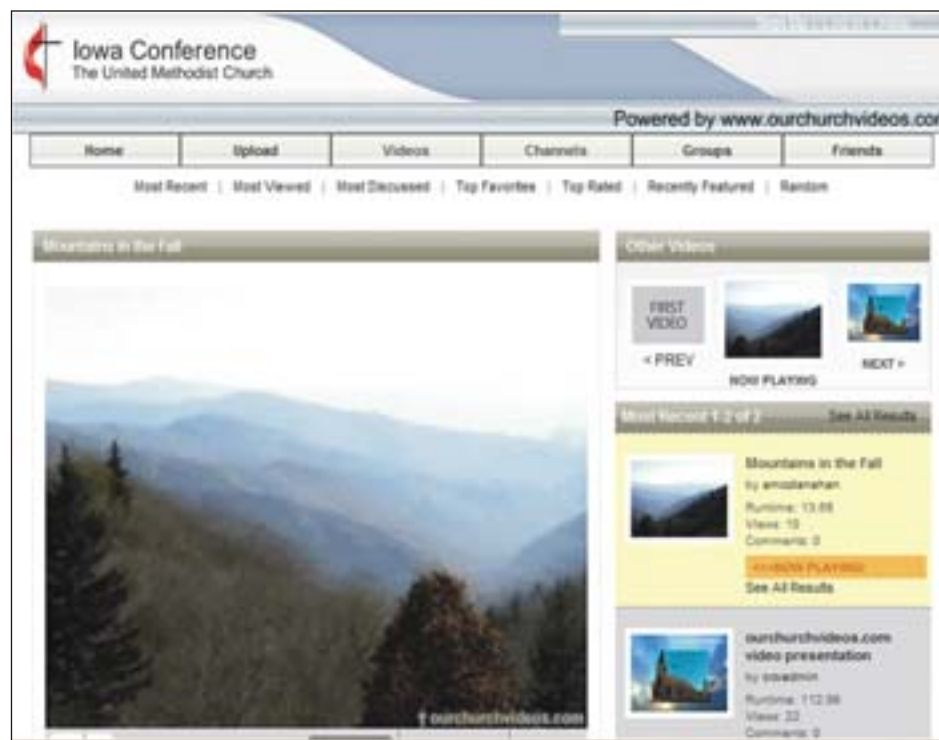
Conference Announces New Online Video Portal

There's a new online video portal for the Iowa Annual Conference. The hope is that this will become an online library of ministry-related videos. Local churches and groups throughout the Conference can now begin sharing their self-produced videos. . . connecting the people and ministries, strengthening our Spirit “for the transformation of the world” in our own back yard and across the globe!

Members of the Iowa Conference are now encouraged to upload and share their ministry-related videos on the site, which is addressed directly from the home page of the Conference website. With a user interface similar to other video sharing systems, conference members can easily add content to the Conference video portal. Channels include worship resources, missions, youth ministry, children's ministry, sermons and sermon series, and soon General Conference 2008 and Annual Conference 2008. Additional categories will be developed as needs grow. Once posted, you'll be able to embed your uploaded videos through your own church web site, free of charge.

A positive experience

Many of our congregations are currently using other video services for sharing their videos. Unfortunately, most of these other services make it difficult for people to find your videos, some do not control the content, and



there is often no customization or organization at all. Ourchurchvideos.com, however, allows the Iowa Conference to control the videos that are being displayed. We want to give everyone the ability to add content. Submitted videos will be reviewed, ensuring a positive experience for all!

We hope you will find this new ministry tool, created in partnership with *Our Church Videos* of Auburn, Alabama (ourchurchvideos.com), will be helpful in spreading the word of what God is doing in congregations, Ministry Action Team, and related groups and organizations. This is a place for making connections across the Conference!

The Iowa Conference Communications Ministry Team is always striving to use emerging technology to help us to be able to tell *the story* in ever more effective ways. If you have any questions please contact the Communications Ministry Team at: communications@iaumc.org



Harlem Globetrotters Game on March 30 to Support Nothing But Nets

The Harlem Globetrotters are coming to Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines on Sunday, March 30, 2008. Ten dollars of the purchase price of \$24.50 will be given to the Nothing But Nets cause, which means that each ticket provides one more net to the Nothing But Nets campaign of the Iowa Conference.

All tickets must be purchased by Thursday March 27th, 2008 at 5:00 pm. To make sure the \$10.00 is donated to Nothing But Nets—please order tickets through Meghan Comer (mcomer@iowaeventscenter.com) in the Group Sales Department (515-564-8059). Be sure to mention that you are with the Iowa Annual Conference group when ordering. A \$6 dollar fee will be added per order.



School for Ministry to Consider “Practices of Ministry”

In their book, *Practicing Our Faith*, Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass note that Christian practices are things Christians do together over time in response to God's presence and call. Like riding a bicycle, one becomes a Christian by doing those practices; by rehearsing them in real life. Christian ministry is also the doing of practices, and the 2008 School for Ministry, which meets March 25–27, will explore three of those—leading the community of faith (Lovett Weems), seeking God's justice and peace for the world (Tex Sample), and deepening one's personal relationship with God through prayer (Roberta Bondi).

Lovett Weems is renowned as one of the best students of leadership in the church, bringing fresh, new information about the practices of church leadership.

Roberta Bondi has written extensively on ancient Christian teachings and practices of prayer. Tex Sample is a noted sociologist of religion who has

helped church leaders better understand the world in which we proclaim the Gospel.

Goals of the School

The chartered task of the School for Ministry Commission is to provide an annual continuing education opportunity for Iowa United Methodist professionals in ministry. Seeking to meet this challenge the members of the Commission set for themselves several goals: determining what issues are important to professionals and their ministries; enlisting dynamic, knowledgeable speakers; providing a comfortable, serviceable setting; offering meaningful worship and rewarding fellowship opportunities—all at a reasonable cost to the participants.

The 2008 School for Ministry will be held at the Des Moines Marriot Downtown. Complete information can be found at the School website www.schoolforministry.org