

## Summary of the 2014 Indiana Annual Conference Session

“The Outwardly Focused Church” was the theme of the 2014 Indiana Annual Conference Session held Thursday through Saturday, May 29-31 at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis. The Scripture reference for the conference was Romans 12:1-2. **Indiana Bishop Michael J. Coyner** called the conference into session at 1 p.m. Thursday, May 29.

West Ohio **Bishop Gregory Palmer**, featured preacher at the Sixth Indiana Annual Conference opening session, challenged Hoosiers to confess, repent and walk in a new direction. The service helped conference members make a fresh start discerning God’s vision for the transformation of the world.

**The Rev. Bob Farr**, Missouri Conference Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence, lead a Friday morning teaching session. Farr said he believes we need to be on fire for Jesus. “If we are going to go forward friends, we need to recapture our fire,” he said. He also believes United Methodists are good at charity, but not at mission. “We are good at collecting materials to hand off to other agencies to distribute.” He hopes United Methodists go back to their roots of being a “missional” church that goes out into communities to build relationships and serve neighbors.

The conference session spilled on to nearby Georgia Street at lunchtime Friday for a revival-like service titled “God of This City” and featuring soloist Amy Cox, praise band Sixteen Cities and a dozen food trucks selling a variety of meals. Volunteers also circulated up and down the street praying with both conference goers and others passing by.

Roman Catholic **Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin** of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, asked Saturday morning prayer breakfast participants to consider Catholics as their brothers and sisters in Christ and hoped the two churches could work more closely together. He also told personal stories about his pleasant encounters with Pope Francis.

More than 160 members and guest spent early Saturday afternoon packing food for Kids Against Hunger. The volunteers assembled 43,200 packets each weighing 13.8 ounces and designed to feed six people. The packets are being distributed to several food pantries across Indiana and 25,000 of them to Indiana United Methodist-related Mission Guatemala.

During two business sessions, conference members:

- Launched “100 New Points of Light” – 100 new faith communities, whether a worship service, Bible study or other organized effort, to reach new people with the light of Christ. More than 200 congregations responded in answer to the bishop’s call. Each congregation will receive seed money from the conference as well as a person to coach them;
- Raised more than \$80,000 in cash and pledges from 140 local churches during the annual conference session toward the conference’s Africa University Campaign goal to raise \$1.6 million by the end of 2016. To date, more than \$800,000 has been pledged or raised toward the goal;
- Approved guidelines and process of Christian Conferencing for annual conference members to endorse and elect 2015 delegates (eight clergy, eight laity) to the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Ore., and twice that number of delegates to the 2016 North Central Jurisdictional Conference in Peoria, Ill. The endorsement process will begin in congregations this fall and move through the 10 districts to the conference’s Leadership Table and on to the annual conference session for election;
- Approved a graduated scale of retirement health insurance subsidies for retired clergy;
- Heard about the Church Development “exceed” campaign to raise \$1.5 million to help establish 30 new faith communities by 2020;
- Heard about the successes of more than 200 congregations participating in the conference’s Fruitful Congregation Journey vitality process.

- Approved a 2015 income budget of \$13.6 million and a 2015 expense budget of \$14.1 million.

The conference commissioned one provisional deacon, 12 provisional elders and recognized the orders of three other provisional elders; commissioned one missionary; licensed 30 local pastors; retired 63 elders, deacons and local pastors; and remembered 41 clergy and 34 clergy spouses who had died this past conference year.

The 2015 Indiana Annual Conference Session will meet Thursday through Sunday, May 28-31 and will be held at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis.

Membership stands at 194,967 down 1,597 from the previous year; average worship attendance, 107,231, down 4,121; church school (children and youth ministries), 38,099, down 1,762; professions of faith, 3,702 down 535; baptisms, 3,286, down 226. – *Daniel R. Gangler, director of communication, Indiana Conference*