

“... Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. ...”
– Romans 12:1-2, from *The Message*

Visiting bishop challenges Hoosier United Methodists to repent, walk in new direction

Bishop Mike Coyner introduced Bishop Gregory Palmer, Resident Bishop of the West Ohio Area of The United Methodist Church based in Worthington, Ohio, who preached during a service of “Confession, Repentance and Renewal” The service was created to help conference members make a fresh start discerning God’s vision for the transformation of the world.

Palmer was elected bishop in 2000 as a delegate of the East Ohio Conference. Prior to being assigned to West Ohio in 2012, he served as Resident Bishop of the Iowa Area (2000-2008) and Resident Bishop of the Illinois Area – Illinois Great Rivers Conference (2008-2012). His father, Herbert Palmer, also is a United Methodist pastor now retired. He is married to Cynthia Palmer. They have

two children.

Palmer’s sermon, “Confess, Repent, Believe,” opened with the passage of Mark 1: 1-15, where John the Baptist prepared the way of the Good News, sharing the importance of repentance and forgiveness of sins. In order for us to fully receive the Good News, we must prepare a route for ourselves. Like John the Baptist laid out in the aforementioned passage that preparation comes from confessing, repenting and believing.

Palmer reminded conference members that we must never forget to believe the Gospel. The Gospel is a message of forgiveness, but sometimes the institution of the church isn’t very forgiving. Repenting has an emphasis in turning and walking in a new direction – in a new way. The pull is to turn us back.



Bishop Gregory Palmer

He challenged the church’s action by encouraging members of the Indiana Conference to trust in the Good News and exercise showing forgiveness to one another and to those who we do not know.
– Jennifer Meadows



Africa University Campaign begins public phase during this sixth session

We launched the public phase of raising our goal of \$1.6 million for Africa University in Zimbabwe, and received a special “offering” where each congregation was invited to dance their way forward to give money, a pledge or a commitment card to be a part of this campaign to educate Christian leaders on the continent of Africa. Some individuals and some churches have already made “advance” gifts and pledges. The campaign will continue to announce progress towards the goal. Be part of the effort to let the light of our witness shine through Africa University by stopping by the United Methodist Foundation of Indiana booth to pledge or get more information.

Conference members approve a Christian Conferencing process

Next year, during our 2015 annual conference session, conference members will be electing delegates to the May 2016 General Conference of The United Methodist Church in Portland, Oregon. They also will be electing delegates to the July 2016 North Central Jurisdictional Conference in Peoria, Illinois. Related to those two 2016 UMC quadrennial conferences is the whole topic of Christian Conferencing.

During the Thursday afternoon plenary session, the Indiana Conference approved the “Guidelines for Christian Conferencing.” The guidelines include ten behaviors expected of those participating in Christian Conferencing in general and the 2016 delegate election process in particular. See the whole report online at www.inumc.org/ac14.

A task force, appointed by Bishop Coyner since the 2013 annual conference session, worked

to strengthen and clarify the expectations of a delegate. It is important a delegate is able to commit preparing for General and Jurisdictional Conference. Delegates must be willing to study the legislation and they must be willing to accept the Indiana process of Christian Conferencing for the delegation. Delegates must be willing to give the time and financial resources necessary to attend General Conference, which includes monthly meetings in the year prior to attending General Conference. Further details for the time commitment are included in General and Jurisdictional Conference Procedures document.

The conference approved the Christian Conferencing Guidelines Plenary Action Item #3 of the AC Guide page 8. On Friday, the full report of the Christian Conferencing Task Force will be before the annual conference session for approval.

Southwest district superintendent reports on behalf of the cabinet

George Purnell, Superintendent of the Southwest District who lives in Evansville, gave the report on behalf of the Bishop's Cabinet – the 10 superintendents of the Conference. He highlighted the superintendents' new ways of doing business through plans from Spiritual Leadership, Inc., a leader resource organization. The Cabinet was formed into an SLI operational team. The first focus of an operational team is Loving, Learning and Leading together. The Cabinet now has a covenant to trust, respect and express hospitality, modeling a healthy clergy relationship. Purnell expressed the importance of making the vision, mission and core values a practice of the conference, not just words on a website. He said the superintendents needs to be focused on mission rather than just administration. We need to live out our faith in a world and society that is divided and need our missionizing. Our mission is the expansion of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must live out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Thursday afternoon plenary session action

Bishop Mike Coyner called the 2014 Indiana Annual Conference into session. He introduced Carolyn Johnson, Secretary of the Annual Conference; Cindy Reynolds, Executive Assistant to the Bishop and Beck Huff Cook, assistant to the secretary.

Consent calendar in Annual Conference Guide is Plenary Action Item #1 on page 6 of the AC Guide

- Archives and History, Landmark motion was approved to recognize the "Helenor M. Alter Davisson Cluster" to the General Commission on Archives and History
- Advocacy and Social Justice

Team petitions were approved by the conference

- Mission Resource Team list of Indiana approved advance special projects.
- The Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) policies were updated and approved. Plenary Action Item #2 Summary of Changes listed on page 7 of the AC Guide.
- A \$13.4 million budget for 2014 was shared by CFA. We are now \$190,000 short so far this year. CFA outlined the programs of the conference for vitality and growth.
- 2015 proposed income

budget of \$13.6 million was included in the conference packet. It will be voted on in Friday's plenary session.

- A report of the Christian Conference Task Force was given by Adolf Hansen, chair of the task force – see separate story. The Christian Conferencing Guidelines were approved.
- The Board of Pensions reports were approved in the following actions:
 - The 2015 cost of the Clergy Retirement Security Program – Defined Benefit of 8.5 percent of Plan Compensation is

limited to 150 percent of Denomination Average Compensation for billing CRSP-DB).

- APPROVED
- That the Pre-1982 Past Service Rate for 2015 be set at \$673 per service year. APPROVED
- That the report Sections A through F, H and I, be approved as presented. APPROVED
- The Board of Pension's Retiree Health Subsidy report is covered in a separate adjacent story. See pages 10 and 11 of the AC Guide booklet. It was approved. – Dan Gangler

Retiree health insurance plan funding subsidy approved

In response to the discussion of the Retiree Medicare premium subsidy at the 2013 Annual Conference Session, Bishop Mike Coyner asked the members of the Retiree Health Insurance Funding Task Force to continue meeting to review the concerns of the conference and make a proposal to the Board for consideration and submission to the 2014 Annual Conference.

The task force met and asked the Rev. George Hunsaker and Conference Director of Administrative Services Brent Williams to seek information on the level of pension being received by retirees. Based on

information gleaned from Hunsaker, the task force, following recommendations for subsidy support for both retired clergy and spouse (if both are on the Conference Medicare Supplement program) recommended:

- For surviving Spouses over the age of 65, an amount of \$250 will be credited towards the premium charged by the Conference-sponsored Medicare Supplement Plans.
- All participants who retired prior to 1990 will continue to receive \$5/month/service year subsidy for up to 30 years of service.
- All participants who retired in 1990 thru

2004 will receive \$4/month/service year subsidy for up to 30 years of service.

- All participants who retired in 2005 thru 2015 will receive \$3/month/service year subsidy for up to 30 years of service.
- All participants who retire in 2016 and beyond will receive \$2/month/service year subsidy for up to 30 years of service. This recommendation was approved. – Dan Gangler

Giving kiosks not available

There will be no giving kiosks available this year during the annual conference session. There are ATM machines in the convention center. An offering will be received during the Ordination Commissioning Service Saturday morning. These funds will be used by the district superintendents to provide for clergy in need of emergency financial relief during trying times.

Address reminds us of the role of the laity

Although there's no reference to a "lay leader" in the Bible, Kay Mykrantz and Ike Williams assured the Indiana Conference that laity are vital to United Methodist congregations.

Williams stated, "The world out there needs some good friends like us." The role of laity is to be a friend to Jesus, one another, and to the world.

According to Mykrantz and Williams, there are 7 billion people in the world out of which 2 billion identify as Christians. Twelve million of those are members of The United Methodist Church with more than 50,000 being United Methodist clergy. If it were only up to United Methodist clergy to tell the world about Jesus, they all would have to work around the clock. Mykrantz and Williams stressed that this is where the laity come in. They spend most of their time out in the



Williams and Mykrantz

world where they are able to be agents of transformation in those settings.

They also addressed opportunities laity could take advantage of for further training, assistance and guidance to be effective leaders in the Indiana Conference. – Jennifer Meadows

Lord, I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will. Let be employed by You or laid aside for You, exalted for You or brought low by You. Let me have all things, let me have nothing, I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. Amen.
(Prayer by John Wesley)