

EPISCOPACY COMMITTEE

The Episcopacy Committee of the Wisconsin Annual Conference serves as a source of support and a sounding board for the bishop. It incorporates a two-way communication process that listens to and shares the voice of the conference with the bishop. Committee members listen to the bishop and endeavor to be supportive interpreters as the bishop conducts the business of the Episcopal office. The committee participates in evaluating the needs of the Wisconsin Annual Conference. It shares those findings with the Jurisdictional Committee as it approaches the time of Episcopal change.

The committee's work this past year centered on the creation and presentation of the Wisconsin Annual Conference quadrennial profile. The profile will be used by the Jurisdictional committee in the process of assigning bishops for the next four years. The project involved the gathering of listening groups, a random sampling by mail and telephone of close to seventy conference laity and clergy, the gathering of demographic materials, and the drafting of the final document.

During 2004 committee members will help to plan the celebration of Bishop Rader's ministry during the gathering of our annual conference session. We are also making plans to welcome our next bishop during Jurisdictional conference and assist in a smooth transition to Wisconsin.

Roger W. Clapp, Chairperson

CONFERENCE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Conference Personnel Committee met 4 times plus conference calls and E-Mails to address staffing changes, personnel and personnel needs and concerns related to the Wisconsin Annual Conference staff. It is a joy to report that the staff is doing an exceptional job of fulfilling their ministry tasks. They are sensitive to the vision of the conference, efficient in their work and effective in their ministry.

During the past year, conference benefits officer Mark Smith resigned. We are privileged to have Rev. Jane Daniels appointed November 15 to this position.

The committee voted to place conference personnel in line with general conference clergy policies with the conference paying 74% of health insurance in 2004 and 72% in 2005.

Mary Schroeder, conference archivist, has reduced her time to 5 hours per week, with Lynn Lubkeman picking up the additional hours.

The conference youth ministry continues to grow under the capable leadership of Amy Valedz-Barker. Reducing her hours to meet family needs, a part time administrative assistant has added the necessary hours, continuing to make youth ministry an exciting program of our conference.

Conference Computer support and communications has been enhanced with the increasing role of the Support Specialist, Linda Firestone. This is not a new position, but an upgrade in responsibilities and title for a continuing position.

With the elimination of the position of Leadership Development last year, \$20,000 remains in the budget for training and leadership development. The decision not to hire a full time staff person in the area of leadership development reflects the principle that all staff have the responsibility for leadership development. We are excited about the possibilities this available funding offers the Annual Conference.

Continuing plans include an update of personnel policies, evaluating the continuing effectiveness of staff, providing support for the circuit ministry and to support the local church as the primary place for the mission and ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Dick Jones, Personnel Committee Chairperson

PROGRAM AND ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Introductory Comments

The 2003 session of the Wisconsin Annual Conference was held at the Marriott Madison West Hotel and Conference Center in Middleton, WI. Again this year, we received many positive evaluations from both lay and clergy members. After holding site visits during the summer in Appleton, Green Bay and Wisconsin Dells, we have decided that the present venue for the Annual Conference Session best meets our space needs; therefore, we have now signed contracts with the Marriott Madison West through 2006.

Highlights And Accomplishments Of The Past Year

One of the highlights of the 2003 Annual Conference session was the celebration of the 300th anniversary of John Wesley's birthday. We are grateful to the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, Inc. for their financial support which enabled us to provide enough birthday cakes to feed everyone in attendance (app. 1100 people!). Opportunities to study and better understand three of John Wesley's sermons (Thoughts Upon Slavery, On Zeal, and The Use of Money) were provided by Rev. Daniel Flores, a pastor in the Rio Grande Conference and a former professor at Drew University Theological School.

Delegates for the 2004 General and Jurisdictional Conferences were elected and petitions to the General Conference were presented and balloted upon.

The global nature of our church was witnessed and celebrated by the presence of Bishop Oh-Suh Kwon from the Dong-Bu (East) Conference of the Korean Methodist Church (South Korea) and the Kat Trio from Russia which entertained us following our evening banquet and awards presentation.

The youth were again active and fully involved in the 2003 Annual Conference Session. They served as pages, led us in worship, operated camera equipment, and kept our energy high with their spirited presence.

One last highlight was the approval of the proposed "A New Way of Superintending." This decision opens the door for God's Spirit to breathe new life into the congregations of the Wisconsin Annual Conference. We look forward to living into the Circuit Plan which has developed out of the original "Superintending proposal" and which continues to be envisioned and massaged by the leadership of the Transformation Team and Bishop Rader.

Plans For The Coming Conference Year

Again this year, we will be using Asbury United Methodist Church as the site of our Ordination / Commissioning Service. Prior to this 6:30pm service on Sunday, June 13, both clergy and laity will meet in session, beginning at 2:30pm. On each of the days of our Annual Conference Session (June 13-16), we will offer morning worship services plus a Memorial Service and a Retirement Service on Tuesday, and a Healing Service and closing Communion Service on Wednesday.

Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader has served as the Episcopal Leader of the Wisconsin Area for the past twelve years. On Tuesday evening, we will have the opportunity to show our gratitude and celebrate her ministry. Following our banquet and time of celebration, the Montana Logging and Ballet Company will entertain us.

Our theme for 2004 is "Who is my Neighbor? Seeking to Live in Love with One Another." We have invited four guests to provide leadership and to help us live into our theme: Deborah Bass (General Board of Global Ministries) will help us focus on community-based ministry, Bishop

Joel Martinez (Rio Grande Conference) will help us connect with the changing demographics in this country, particularly Hispanics, and Dan Dick (General Board of Discipleship) will guide our thinking on living in community. Mark Miller, one of the 'hearts' behind [The Faith We Sing](#), will delight and inspire us as we welcome him as our music leader. Mark will also offer the members of the Conference a concert on Monday evening.

Carolyn M. Saunders, Chairperson

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Members: Bruce Fenner, Jane Follmer Zekoff, Kathryn Jones, Judy Lybeck, Thomas Moe, Julie Reinke, David Werner, Amy Jameson Yackovich

The major focus of this task force to date is to raise up the Restorative Justice model of working toward healing after crime has taken place. United Methodists throughout the Conference are presently involved in Restorative Justice initiatives for victims, offenders, and/or our communities. The challenge is to share what is presently being done with each other.

Rising Sun Camp, a camping experience of the Wisconsin UMC for children who have a parent who that is incarcerated, completed it's third summer. Under the expert direction of Judy Lybeck, thirty-six children between the ages of eight and fourteen were served.

"Today's Prisoners, Tomorrow's Neighbors" was the presentation given at Annual Conference 2003. Mary Kay Baum of Madison Area Urban Ministry shared about the difficulties of an offender's re-entry into our communities. For those desiring more information on this topic, a prisoner release simulation was offered at Sun Prairie United Methodist Church in July.

Awareness about National Crime Victim Right's Week (April) and Restorative Justice Week (November) has been shared with clergy. Contact information has been provided for all of the county Victim Witness Coordinators and state Department of Corrections Chaplains. In addition, a beginning Resource Bank of organizations doing Restorative Justice initiatives for victims, offenders, or communities was sent out.

The Task Force vision for our conference is to get pastors and lay leaders supported and educated enough about Restorative Justice to do radical reaching out to those affected by crime.

Julie Reinke

CIRCUIT MINISTRY TRANSFORMATION TEAM

The Transformation Team (TT) is the group of clergy and laity that Bishop Rader appointed and charged with a weighty, exciting, sometimes daunting, and essential task: to move from the recommendations in the superintending document approved by the 2003 Annual Conference session to a circuit ministry plan; to envision, plan for, and implement the training necessary in order for Wisconsin United Methodism to initiate circuit ministry by July 2004.

The TT—including the members and Bishop Rader—has met at least monthly since September 2003. One of the first tasks, which proved a complicated one, was to determine what were the “non-negotiables” approved by the Annual Conference session, those pieces from the superintending report that we must assume as our starting points. We gleaned the following: there will be 8 districts and 4 district superintendents; all clergy appointed to local churches will be included in circuits; an assistant to the bishop will be hired; geographically proximate congregations share a mission field that might be better served through a circuit arrangement than through congregational ministry alone. Also, and very importantly, circuit ministry should be evaluated primarily and ultimately by whether Wisconsin United Methodist congregations are making new disciples of Jesus Christ, whether there is evidence of congregational re-vitalization, and whether new, vital faith communities have been started. These evaluation points are the “juice,” the spirit, of the plan.

The superintending plan only pointed a direction; and the direction re-orientes the system resources of the annual conference. Even if one takes only a baby step in the direction of circuits, questions pour.

What is the role of the laity? Will there be two circuit ministry components: clergy teams and ministry teams? How will superintending get done? Who will be circuit leaders? Which congregations will the cabinet form into circuits, and why? How will circuits affect appointments, each clergy person's allocation of time, the congregation's allocation of energy, money, and attention? With fewer DSs, how will charge conferences be conducted? Who or what is the recourse for congregations in conflict? What prevents the circuit plan from becoming functionally another layer of organization rather than impetus toward congregational vitality?

The TT's charge is not sufficient for us to venture answers for all of these questions. Some cannot be addressed sufficiently until circuits are active. And, the TT has hardly been laboring at the transformation process alone. Obviously, the bishop and her cabinet have been central. The cabinet solicited input from congregations and determined circuit membership. Bishop Sharon and her cabinet also invited nominations of elders for circuit leaders and then began inviting elders to be trained as circuit leaders (at this writing, invitations and responses are in process; and more elders will be trained than will be utilized immediately as circuit leaders). The Bishop and cabinet have worked through position descriptions for the superintendents and for the new position of the bishop's assistant, which will be Rev. Steve Polster (the assistant will function as “point person” with circuits, especially to steer and provide circuit development resources).

Central to the TT's work has been formulating definitions of circuit terms and planning training events. Creating a glossary of terms required the better part of 30 hours of face-to-face conversation, along with dozens of e-mails and consultation with the cabinet and other conference leaders. This process was energy intensive and time consuming for at least two reasons. First, we wanted to avoid rigid definitions that would constrict leaders and congregations. Second, the Annual Conference voted to change a living system, in process. That means one change—even a small one—in one area ripples far beyond itself. For example, defining what the circuit clergy team is and how it relates to the circuit ministry teams is likely to affect a great deal how ministry is practiced in this Annual Conference. The team could not publicize one decision in isolation from others; and thinking through the others has taken time—in truth, more time than we thought it would.

Envisioning and developing training events has been a second major use of our time and energy. After much deliberation and consultation, and consistent with the direction indicated in the superintending report, the TT decided that clergy teams should be formed first, should be allowed some time and the resources to develop and gel, and that these teams will instigate ministry teams within the circuits. This decision also sets priorities for training. In order to form circuit clergy teams, education for circuit leadership is necessary for appointed clergy in general, and potential circuit clergy team leaders in particular. The first leader training is set for May 16-19. Obviously, this training session is only a beginning. Ministry team training, next generation of leader training, and training specific to particular circuits will all be planned.

The other TT task, which has increased as concepts and connections develop, is communication. When an issue has been in process, we often did not have anything we could say other than that we were working. However, the Teams print communication began to increase with the regional information sessions in February and March, the clergy gathering on March 30, and in preparation for clergy leader training in May.

In Christ,

Gary E. Peluso-Verdend, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, for the Transformation Team

Jerry Cho, Sam Royappa, Diane Schobert, Sue D'Alessio, Tina Lang, Don Mendenhall, Steve Polster, Sharon Rader