

## WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

by **Scott D. Anderson, Executive Director**  
[www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org)

*We pray and work for the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and reconciliation of the world*

Tracing its roots back to the early 1940's with an inter-denomination recreational ministry for young people, the Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC) now encompasses 12 denominations with approximately 3,000 congregations and almost one million church members.

### ***Opening Doors to Affordable Housing***

The Council's *Opening Doors to Affordable Housing: A Study-Action Guide for Wisconsin Congregations* was mailed to every church in the state in 2004. Designed for adult education groups, the study-action guide begins with Bible study, helps local churches focus on the affordable housing needs in their communities and provides concrete ways they can respond.

### ***Courage for Non-Violence***

As a result of the WCC's ongoing commitment to peacemaking, the Council sponsors an annual conference on Nonviolence, *Courage for Nonviolence*. The 2004 conference *Courage for Nonviolence*, held in Milwaukee, drew over 125 pastors and lay leaders from throughout Wisconsin, including 40 senior high and college students. The Conference equips church leaders to understand the scriptural imperatives of peace and justice and utilize the tools of non-violence in local communities.

### ***Washington Island Forum***

This annual week-long conference provides an ecumenical opportunity for community building, sharing, learning and spiritual renewal on beautiful Washington Island at the tip of Door County.

Over 200 pastors, lay leaders and their families attended the Forum in 2004 to hear United Methodist pastor ( and now Bishop) Dr. Will Willimon. This was the largest Forum attendance in over a decade.

In 2005, nationally recognized speaker and author Dr. Eugene Peterson will be the Forum presenter, July 11-15.

### ***Mandatory Reporting by Clergy***

Because of a new Wisconsin law, every clergyperson in the state is required to be a mandatory reporter for suspected cases of child sexual abuse. The WCC is now the lead agency in Wisconsin which provides resources and training to pastors about the provision of the new law and how it should be implemented in congregations.

In 2004, the Council held four regional workshops which trained over 300 clergy. Five additional workshops are scheduled around the state in 2005.

Our clergy Advisory Booklet: *Mandatory Reporting by Clergy: What the New Wisconsin Law Means for You and Your Congregation* has been widely distributed by denominational offices throughout the state and is available on the Council's website.

### ***Evangelism and Church Renewal***

A new priority for the Council is to assist its member denominations by providing resources of evangelism and congregational renewal. In 2004, the WCC hosted a series of regional workshops,

*The Postmodern Parish: Ministry in a Shifting Cultural Context*, with Alban Institute author Rev. Jim Kitchens

### ***Public Witness Ministry***

Representing the collective voice of its member denominations, the WCC takes seriously its role in bringing its Christian witness to the public square. In 2004, the Council:

- held a statewide Legislative Briefing Day for pastors and lay leaders;
- Supported state legislation to provide treatment instead of prison for first time, non-violent drug offenders;
- helped pass federal legislation to reauthorize various child nutrition programs;
- provided nonpartisan resources to congregations to encourage participation in the 2004 Fall elections, including voter registration, candidate forums, and issue-oriented educational materials;
- hosted Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* magazine during his “Rolling to Overcome Poverty Bus Tour” through Madison and Milwaukee.