

What do you say?

Recently, I was traveling and the person seated next to me asked me what I do for a living. What should I say at such times? If I say that I am a bishop that usually leads to odd questions about the Roman Catholic Church until I explain that we, United Methodists, also have bishops. If I say I am a minister that often leads to an awkward silence. Either way there is no short answer to explain what I do for a living.

What do you say when asked about your faith, or your church or your Christian beliefs? Do you know what to say?

The media does not help us, because the various media seem often to portray Christians as either religious zealots or as irrelevant fools who are out of touch with the real world.

Really, when was the last time you saw a Christian portrayed on any TV show or movie in a positive light? No wonder people ask us awkward questions about our faith, our church and our beliefs.

What do you say?

I am convinced that most of us United Methodists say far too little. We seem embarrassed to talk about our faith. We seem unsure of what The United Methodist Church believes, and we seem afraid of getting into discussions about the Bible.

Fortunately, we can learn how to share our faith in ways that are helpful and not condemning. We can practice expressing our own faith journey in a way that is genuine and not offensive. The laity of our conferences



Life together retreat invitation from Bishop Coyner

I am glad to invite all United Methodist clergy in the Indiana Area to come together for a special two-day "Our Life Together" retreat on April 14-15 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 100 W. 86th Street in Indianapolis. This will be our first experience of being together as North and South Conference to get to know one another as clergy. There will be lots of worship, fellowship time, learning, and fun.



Jones

Our theme is "Living the Wesleyan Way in a New Day" and we will have Dr. Greg Jones, Dean of Duke Divinity School, as our keynote speaker. We will all be focusing upon how to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the Wesleyan tradition.

Please plan on attending this retreat and join together with your sisters and brothers from across Indiana. More information will be coming soon. — Bishop Mike Coyner

UMCOR begins fourth year of tsunami assistance

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is working to help tsunami survivors find a "new normal" more than three years after one of the world's worst natural disasters killed an estimated 230,000 people and displaced millions in 11 countries.

In Indonesia and Sri Lanka — the countries most affected by the tsunami — UMCOR offices continue to work daily to help survivors recover whatever possible. UMCOR also provided relief and recovery assistance in Somalia, India and Thailand.

United Methodists and others have contributed approximately \$42 million to UMCOR's tsunami relief response since the Dec. 26, 2004, disaster.

UMCOR emphasizes a shared approach that encourages participants to take ownership of their recovery and to act as project partners in an effort to empower survivors to restore their lives.

UMCOR officials offer this update on their ongoing work in the two hardest hit countries:

Indonesia

In Aceh Province, UMCOR has helped 40,000 people directly through housing and infrastructure reconstruction, community development, income generation and livelihoods programs, and education. The agency also worked with the Methodist Church of Indonesia in Banda Aceh to help the church be a place of service to their community. (See story on page 8.)

In addition to the work in Aceh Province

on the island of Sumatra, UMCOR is expanding its relief to Nias Island, which was also heavily damaged by the 2004 earthquake and tsunami. In March 2005, the island was nearly leveled by a second earthquake.

In Nias, an area where many families are without access to safe water, UMCOR is conducting a large-scale water research project, which will result in a master water supply plan for South Nias and at least one water supply infrastructure project on the island.

Sri Lanka

UMCOR's recovery efforts in Sri Lanka have involved collaboration with the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, including helping Sri Lankan Methodists expand their own capacity to respond to disaster. The work is interrupted from time to time by ongoing political and military conflict in the tsunami zone.

The challenge spurred UMCOR to seek ways to overcome the causes of the violence, a determination enhanced by a partnership with Muslim Aid, an aid agency based in the United Kingdom.

UMCOR's programs support survivors of both the tragedies of tsunami and civil strife, providing homes and food, improving agriculture production, rebuilding infrastructures, and generating jobs and business development. Rural reconstruction and development ranks high on the list of priorities. More than 100,000 people have been helped through these projects.

— UMCOR

are planning a special retreat during LEAP Day weekend, February 29 to March 1, that will include helpful input about sharing our own stories. (See page 3.)

Likewise, the clergy of our two Indiana conferences are invited to join in the "Our Life Together" retreat on April 14-15 where we will focus upon strengthening our understanding of "Living the Wesleyan Way in a New Day." (See announcement on this page.)

All of us need to remember the Palm Sunday story, when the disciples of Jesus were shouting for joy and the religious people of that day told Jesus to keep them qui-

et. Jesus replied (in Eugene Peterson's *The Message* paraphrase of Luke 19:40), with these words: "If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise."

These are not days to keep quiet about our faith. These are days to share our story, to invite our friends and neighbors to church and to let the world know that we are followers of Christ. We have answers to offer, and we have a faith to share.

Bishop Michael J. Coyner
Indiana Area of

The United Methodist Church
"Making a Difference in Indiana and
around the world"

HOOSIER UNITED METHODISTS

together

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Editorial Offices:

Hoosier United Methodists Together
Indiana Area United Methodist Church
1100 W. 42nd St., Suite 210
Indianapolis, Indiana 46208
Phone: 317-924-1321
Fax: 317-924-4859
e-mail: editor@inareaumc.org

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Erma Metzler, *Together*, Indiana Area UMC, 1100 W. 42nd St., Suite 210, Indianapolis, Indiana 46208 or e-mail emetzler@inareaumc.org

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CORRECTIONS

The correct address of Jim Ottjes, North Indiana Conference General Conference Delegate is 418 N. Mishawaka St., Akron, IN 46910-9108.

Correction on Death Notice

WILBURN E. CROPPER, retired pastor (SIC), died Dec. 20, 2007. A memorial service was held Dec. 27 at Laws-Carr-Moore Funeral Home in Milan, Ind. Survivors include: his wife Irene Cropper, 7007 S Bearwallow Rd, Maysville, KY 41056; one daughter, Jeannine Applegate; two sons, James Cropper and Dennis Cropper; 6 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren.