

Hopefully, what happens in Fort Worth won't stay in Fort Worth

The United Methodist Church joins together in a global denominational assembly once every four years and has been doing so since 1784, when the church was founded in America. That assembly, called General Conference, convenes again this year at the Fort Worth (Texas) Convention Center from April 23 through May 2.

United Methodists will be represented by an equal number of lay and clergy delegates elected last year during annual conferences. The North Indiana Conference will be sending 10 delegates. The South Indiana Conference will be sending 12 delegates. (See January issue.) They will be part of a legislative body numbering 992 delegates from around the world. These delegates represent the 11.5-million member church worldwide.

For those who want all the particulars of General Conference, log on to the 2008 General Conference Web site at www.gc2008.umc.org.

This legislative body represents

who we are as United Methodists and sets the pace for what the church does during the next four years.

In this issue on pages 6 and 7, there is a story which outlines the highlights of the upcoming conference presented to heads of delegations and conference communicators. More than 200 delegates and communicators attended the pre-GC briefing in Fort Worth last month. I was there with the Rev. Frank Beard and Kayc Mykrantz, heads of the North Indiana Conference delegation, and the Rev. Ann Glass and Ike Williams, heads of the South Indiana Conference delegation.

The questions of many communicators including myself were:

- ◆ Will this General Conference be business as usual?
- ◆ Will this General Conference make a difference in the lives of United Methodists around the world?

Conference officials said, "no," to the first question. They have planned an opening day of wor-

ship and celebration. New this General Conference is an address by the youth of our denomination. In fact there will be six youth and plenty of media to inform and challenge. Planners have placed all major addresses to be given on day one of the 10-day conference. All of the plenary sessions will be streamed live in both audio and video at www.gc2008.umc.org.

Denominational leaders will not be bringing a customary four-year emphasis to rally United Methodists around a particular set of causes. Four areas of focus being proposed to lead us during an unspecified time are:

1. Engaging in ministry to the poor,
2. Stamping out killer diseases by improving global health,
3. Creating new places for new people by starting new congregations and renewing existing ones, and
4. Developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.

Leaders expressed reality by

saying, "We will only succeed if we operate in an uncommon spirit of collaboration...and transcend our disagreements. We as a people must open ourselves to a new way of thinking about how we embody our faith."

That leads to my second question: Will this General Conference make a difference in the lives of United Methodists here in Indiana and around the world?

I believe what happens in Fort Worth this spring will only make a difference if United Methodist delegates take the decisions they make and the programs for which they hope and live them out in their conferences and encourage conference and congregational leaders to do the same.

We can only grow and remain vital as The United Methodist Church and faithful to our goal of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world if pastors, lay leaders and the rest of

us truly open our hearts, minds and doors by inviting, welcoming and accepting all people into the life, mission and ministry of the church. We will grow if each congregation welcomes more new members than



the number of members who die, become inactive or transfer their membership elsewhere.

We have so much to offer by telling our faith stories and by doing good works for the common good of all

by volunteering in mission, advocating for social justice, teaching Sunday school, sponsoring youth groups and giving our financial resources in abundance, to mention a few. We must be passionate daily about our faith in response to God's love through Jesus Christ.

Hopefully, what happens in Fort Worth won't stay in Fort Worth. Otherwise in four years, we will be singing the same chorus we sing this year.

Welcome, Daniel R. Gangler

A two-day event in sharing faith through personal stories

Fox, Reisman to lead LEAP convocation Feb 29-March 1

To assist both United Methodist laity and clergy in sharing their faith stories with others, the lay leaders of both the Indiana North and Indiana South conferences are sponsoring an Indiana Area convocation to be held in Indianapolis.

Kayc Mykrantz, lay leader of the North Indiana Conference, and Ike Williams, lay leader of the South Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church, invite both laity and clergy to a unique **LEAP Year Event – Let's Establish A Priority to Tell Our Story** – the weekend of **Feb. 29–March 1** at United Methodist-related University of Indianapolis.

They will be joined by Dr. Eddie Fox of The World Methodist Council and the Rev. Kimberly Reisman, nationally known North Indiana Conference Evangelist, in

a two-day event leading participants to become confident in sharing their faith through personal stories.

LEAP will run from opening workshop at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 29, through closing worship at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 1, at Ransburg Auditorium in Esch Hall. Registration will open at 5 p.m.

Indiana Bishop Mike Coyner will lead opening worship followed by a presentation by Fox.

The Christ United Methodist Church Choir of Franklin will provide special music for the evening.

Cost is \$50 per person including materials and Saturday lunch. A brochure including a registration form is available online at www.inareaumc.org. Printed brochures were mailed to lay leadership across the state in January. A

registration form also is provided with this story.

LEAP event leaders Kimberly Reisman

The Rev. Kimberly D. Reisman serves as the North Indiana Conference Evangelist of The United Methodist Church and executive director of Next Step Evangelism Ministries, where her focus is empowering others to take the next step of faith on their spiritual journey. Reisman



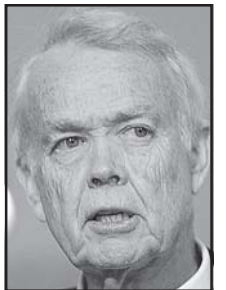
Reisman

provides faith shaping ministries through her writing and in the context of retreats, seminars, workshops and revivals both nationally and internationally. She is a native of Gulfport, Miss., and lived in California, Tennessee, Georgia and Connecticut before moving to Indiana in 1993 with her husband, John and three children.

Eddie Fox

The Rev. Dr. H. Eddie Fox is the World Director of Evangelism of The World Methodist Council. He is responsible for leading 16 Regional Secretaries of World Evangelism in developing indigenous evangelism on every continent. The World Methodist Council, an association of churches belonging to the Methodist-Wesley-

an tradition and representing more than 76 million constituents in 138 countries, through its Division of World Evangelism is challenging member congregations to Offer Christ Today. As the World Director, Fox preaches World Evangelism missions, develops holistic models of evangelism ministry of word, deed and sign, teaches, and encourages lay and clergy to be about the ministry of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.



Fox

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Heart month

As many of you know, I was diagnosed with a heart condition. Feb. 1 was GO RED DAY sponsored by the Heart Association. Heart Disease is now the # 1 killer of women. A number of you have had heart-related diseases, have had by-pass surgery, and one of you has actually had a heart transplant. To those of you touched by this, whether having gone through heart disease or lost someone to it or suffers through it with someone, think of this month. How many Valentines will be sent out for Valentine's Day? Ponder

about the "heart-relations" you have with the special people in your life. Let us pray for our best health, the strength from one another that we can give and the love of God that transcends all "heart-related" maladies, while healing us in love and joy for love and joy are heart-related too.

You are part of a red-letter day and month. I'm wearing red to honor my sisters that share similar issues, as well as for the men who do too.

May God be with us this February.

Char Harris Allen
Walkerton, Ind.

LEAP Registration Form

To register for the LEAP to Tell Our Story event, please complete this registration form and send it with a check for \$50 per person to the Indiana Area of The United Methodist Church, attn. Lisa Timmerman, 1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 210, Indianapolis, IN 46208. Thank you.

Name/s _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone number (AC _____) _____

Cell phone (AC _____) _____

e-mail address _____

Local church _____ of _____ District _____