

Imagine Indiana continues with focus on service to local churches

The Imagine Indiana Design Team continued its work in January. If the goal of The United Methodist Church is to "Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," the center of that activity is at the local church or congregational level. The Imagine Indiana Design Team continues to focus on that goal and how to assist congregations in achieving it as the 12-member team writes its report to come before both annual conferences later this spring.

According to the Design Team's draft report introduction, "Creating a new Indiana Conference is all about these five practices of a fruitful annual conference (adapted from the book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase)":

1. Focus on Mission

The team plans to recommend each local church become a part of a Ministry Cluster of four to nine congregations to cooperate, collaborate and hold one another accountable.

2. Resource Local Churches

The team plans to recommend a focus on providing resources to start new faith communities, to strengthen existing churches and to provide effective leadership for all local churches, and that conference staff and resources will be deployed to respond to local churches and clusters.

3. Streamline Conference Structure

The team plans to recommend a streamlined structure of one Conference Center for the bishop and other leaders and with

five Resource Centers across the state to support the work of 10 districts as they resource our more than 1,200 local churches. This is a change from a former plan of 9 districts with three Resource Centers. The new 10-district plan was recommended by both cabinets meeting in a retreat last month and adapted by the Imagine Indiana Design Team.

4. Care for Clergy

The team plans to recommend a combined benefits structure which protects current eligibility, raises clergy benefits to the



higher levels of either preceding conference, and provides support systems to enhance effective clergy leadership. In addition, the team will further recommend that all clergy participate in Covenant Groups and plans for a "Well-Lived

Pastoral Life" program that are being developed with a grant from the Lilly Endowment to help our clergy.

5. Make a Difference

The team believes that the new Indiana Conference can provide a vehicle for all of us to make a difference here in Indi-

ana and literally around the world.

Using these principles of organization, the Imagine Indiana Design Team hopes to complete its draft report in February for review before releasing it in March.

The Imagine Indiana Design Team plans to introduce its plan throughout the state during a Palm Sunday afternoon, March 16, hour-long presentation video streamed over the Indiana Area Web site. The team also plans to provide video locations in each of the Indiana Area's 18 districts for those who do not have good Internet access. Churches interested in hosting the video-streamed presentation can contact the Rev. David V.W. Owen at the Indiana Area office at 317-924-1321 or by e-mail at imagineindiana@inareaumc.org.

Indianapolis pastor preaches barefoot with a passion

INDIANAPOLIS – The Rev. Andrea Leininger, pastor of Old Bethel UMC in Indianapolis, preached barefoot on Sunday, Jan. 27 to promote a challenge and cause to provide shoes for children in African countries. She also encouraged her congregations and other area congregations as well to come to worship without shoes and socks.

She was joined on Jan. 24 by IUPUI Men's Head Basketball Coach Ron Hunter who coached in his bare feet at home against Oakland.

All the bare feet were done to raise awareness for children around the world who don't have shoes. Samaritan's Feet (www.samaritansfeet.org), found-

ed by Emmanuel Ohonme, is a humanitarian relief organization created to provide hope and shoes to impoverished children throughout the world. Ohonme, a native of Nigeria, grew up very poor. He received his first pair of shoes at the age of 9 from a missionary, who also taught him how to play basketball. These shoes helped him get better at sports, specifically basketball. Eventually he earned a scholarship to play basketball at the University of North Dakota.

Pastor Leininger and Coach Hunter's goals are to raise awareness for Samaritan's Feet and 40,000 pairs of shoes in honor of the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death.

In addition to the IUPUI and Bethel UMC events, Leininger and Hunter held a pizza, concert and shoe donation at the New Augusta Middle School in Indianapolis with a pair of new athletic shoes as the price of admission.

Ohonme spoke at a tip-off luncheon on Thursday at noon at the University Place Conference Center on the campus of IUPUI. He also attended the IUPUI vs. Oakland game. Those attending the game were encouraged to bring a new pair of shoes.

Photo by Linda Hoopes
Samaritan's Feet founder
Emmanuel Ohonme speaks at IUPUI about the shoe-less kids of the world.



Anderson pastor named community's 'Person of the Year'

ANDERSON, Ind. – At the close of 2007, *The Herald Bulletin* named the Rev. Reginald Lee as Anderson's Person of the Year.

Lee is senior pastor of the New Hope United Methodist Church in Anderson and directs the West Side Hope Community Development Corporation.

The Person of the Year honor is given to someone the editorial board feels has made a positive effect on the Madison County area in the past year, according to the newspaper's story.

The Herald Bulletin reported that "Lee was in the forefront on several progressive programs including starting an ex-offender reentry program, helping at-risk youths gain trade skills and initiating a pre-school and day care for low-income families."

The newspaper gave The

Woodall House, at 14th Street and Madison Avenue, as an example of Lee's collaborative work in the community. The house is home a faith-based skills training program for ex-offenders. Lee was given credit for leading the way for forward-thinking projects.

The community development corporation also made progressive steps with its new Bishop Woodie W. White Family Life Center located at 13th and Hendricks streets. Beginning this coming August the center also will serve as a day care, preschool for low-income families and offer some adult learning classes such as technology and a culinary school.

Planning for the future, the development corporation hopes to purchase land across the street from the center to build low-cost senior housing.

Pull tab bill has a chance to pass Indiana General Assembly

INDIANAPOLIS – Under legislation passed by the Indiana House last week, more than 7,000 bars, taverns and restaurants across the state would be allowed to offer the pull tabs and other forms of low-stakes gambling (*Indianapolis Star*). The bill now moves to the Senate, where it already has received support from some key lawmakers. This marks the second consecutive year that state legislators have considered proposals that would expand gambling in Indiana.

Last year, they voted to allow slot machines at the state's two horse tracks. Some legislators argue that expansion was offset by another bill under which 16 law enforcement officers were hired to crack down on illegal electronic gambling machines commonly found in bars across the state. As a result, many of those machines, known as Cherry Masters, have been removed from Hoosier taverns. But to help appease those upset by the crack-down on Cherry Masters, lawmakers decided in 2007 that they would allow American Legions

and other nonprofit organizations to offer pull tabs and other paper games. And now, Indiana's bars want the same treatment.

"We're behind this because we think it's a fairness issue," said Brad Klopfenstein, executive director of the Indiana Licensed Beverage Association. "They created a disparity between the not-for-profits and the for-profits. We want to even that out."

Rep. Brian Bosma, for one, doesn't. The Indianapolis Republican, who serves as the House minority leader, said Indiana has become too addicted to gambling and the revenue it generates. "I feel gaming in this state is the crack cocaine of public policy. We simply can't get enough gaming," said Bosma, who voted against HB 1153. "I'm saying, 'No.' I want off the cocaine. I'm done with it." — *Howey Politics Indiana*

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