



More than we can imagine:

A summary of the Imagine Indiana 2008 report to the annual conferences

The Imagine Indiana Design Team proposes a plan that brings the North and South Indiana Conferences into one conference focused on congregations led by clergy and laity. Such a conference will be more conducive in responding to the needs of congregations.

Hundreds of people have given thousands of hours into the shaping of this new plan, an important first step in the process of fostering more vital congregations in Indiana — all to the glory of God.

FOCUS ON MISSION

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world will be the mission of the new conference. It will be designed for growth and vitality in more than 1,200 congregations. The new conference structure and mission is directed to congregations and, through congregations, to the world. It is designed to bring conference resources closer to the congregation.

SUPPORT FOR CONGREGATIONS

District and conference resources will support congregations in a variety of ways. These include ministry clusters and clergy covenant groups. Each congregation will be part of a **ministry cluster** composed of four to nine congregations. Cluster congregations will strengthen, cooperate, collaborate and hold one another accountable for outreach to our communities.

Clergy will become a part of self-selected **covenant groups** in which they will support each other in ministry. This will be done through emotional, intellectual and spiritual support resulting in more effective leadership for congregations.

DISTRICT RESOURCES

The current structure of nine districts in each of the two conferences will be replaced by a more efficient structure of ten districts supported through five district resource centers.

Each of the district resource centers will be a hub to resource congregations through leadership by two district superintendents, an assistant to the superintendents and a coordinator of congregational ministry. A District Leadership Team will provide ongoing leadership and oversight. These centers will develop their program ministry in response to the needs and requests of ministry clusters. They will connect with the greater resources of the conference.

CONFERENCE RESOURCES

A Conference Leadership Team of 26 members will provide oversight and ongoing leadership for the new Conference. Unique to this team is the inclusion of both program and finance.

The Indiana Conference Center will be located in Indianapolis. It will include the bishop and his staff along with conference staff. The center brings together administration, finance, human resources, ministry programming, communication and new congregation development. The primary focus of the Conference Center will be resourcing congregations.

The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits will be used for unified pension and health benefits program incorporating the best of both existing programs. (Continued on next page.)

VITAL OUTDOOR MINISTRIES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Outdoor, camping and retreat ministries will be an important aspect of making disciples of Jesus Christ as they have been for many decades in Indiana. Together we will continue to build statewide outdoor ministries for children, youth and adults in quality facilities.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication will be coordinated from a single conference source. There will be strong communication ties with news and information among the five resource centers. Communication will provide a unified Web site and e-mail lists, plus teleconferencing centers across the state to resource congregations. The communication team will provide information and advise congregations on their communication needs.

TAKING ACTION TO STRENGTHEN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN INDIANA

What is before us is a plan to take another step in creating a new Indiana Annual Conference by June 2009. There will be a variety of time lines for implementing decisions related to insurance and pensions, asset management and other functions of the new conference that will be phased in over a period of time. Upon approval in our 2008 Annual Conferences, the bishop will appoint a transition team to begin bringing these plans to reality.

Open communication will keep each congregation and each leader apprised of the progress. Hundreds of decisions still need to be made as Hoosier United Methodists continue to shape their future.

Stronger congregations, better stewardship of God's resources, and a united voice for Christ working in and through the United Methodist Church across Indiana are the expected results of our decision. With God's guidance, the new Indiana Conference will be more than we can imagine!

The complete downloadable Imagine Indiana Design Team report and recommendations to the North Indiana and South Indiana Annual Conferences sessions can be found by logging on to www.inareaumc.org.

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