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## *From the Bishop* **Staying focused**

Our two conferences here in Indiana have approved the Imagine Indiana plan for us to become one new conference. We will have a Special Called Session of the two separate Conferences on Saturday, Oct. 4 from 1-4 p.m. at the State Fairgrounds to finalize the few amendments to the plan, to elect trustees and the Council on Finance and Administration for the new conference, and to worship and celebrate our creating a new conference in Indiana.

All clergy and lay members of the North and South Indiana conferences should plan to attend this Special Session. We expect many guests will be with us for this historic occasion. The new Indiana Conference will hold its first Annual Conference Session in June 2009, and the combining of budgets, pensions, insurance plans and the rest will happen Jan. 1, 2010.

Many decisions will need to be made in the next 18 months of transition. I will be naming the Transition Team to coordinate this movement from two conferences to a new conference, and that group will nominate and select many other groups to form the new conference. Some of our decisions together will be difficult, so I ask for your prayers for wisdom, direction and guidance as we create a new conference together.



From my perspective, it is important that we remain focused upon these issues:

1. We are forming a new conference, not just merging two existing conferences. I will work hard to remind all of us that we are not going to do “business as usual.” We are going to keep focused upon creating the new and not just continuing the old.
2. We are working toward our mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Each decision we make as a new conference should reflect that mission and help us United Methodists move toward it.
3. We are rebuilding our connection from the local church perspective. For this reason, the two current Indiana Cabinets have agreed that the first task is to design, create and launch our Ministry Clusters. We will work with all of our congregations to select their clusters, and we will use those clusters later to finalize district lines, resource center sites and other decisions. Our focus is upon helping local churches first, and then building the district and conference structures to support our congregations and clusters.
4. We must be flexible and nimble as we design this new conference. It is likely we will use many terms like “interim” and “temporary” and “transitional” - all in hopes of keeping our options open for continued revision and change. None of us is wise enough to find all of the right answers the first time, so we must learn from our mistakes and be flexible enough to correct them.
5. We will be tough on problems but also care for people. We want the right people in the right positions in the new conference, therefore we must not fall into the trap of trying to protect anyone’s turf. However, we will work to provide supportive and caring transitional plans for each one whose current position or place is not continued.

Keeping focused will not be easy. The Bible reminds us that the “Back to Egypt” tendency is strong. We can easily become distracted from our main purpose. I promise to do my best to stay focused, and ask you to do the same. We are forming a new Indiana Conference, all to the glory of God. Let’s stay focused on this great movement.

*Bishop Michael J. Coyner  
Indiana Area of  
The United Methodist Church  
“Making a Difference in Indiana .  
and around the world”*