

*Our Life Together Theme: Living the Wesleyan way***Duke Dean to speak to Indiana pastors at April retreat**

Living the Wesleyan way will be the theme of the Indiana Area's "Our Life Together" retreat for Indiana's United Methodist pastors April 14-15 in Indianapolis.

Dr. Greg Jones and Bishop Mike Coyner are scheduled to be the keynote speaker for this event to be held at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 100 West 86th Street in Indianapolis.

Three worship services during the event



Jones

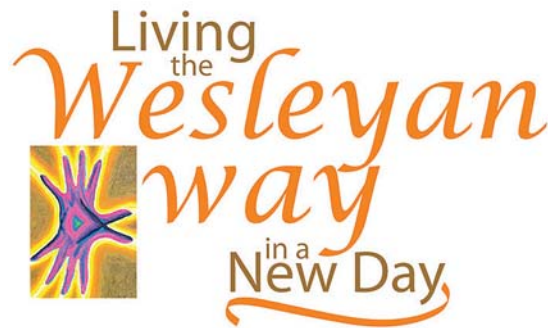
will be based on Hebrews 10: 24-25 – challenging our life together to continue to meet, encourage one another with love and good deeds.

Jones, dean of Duke Divinity School, is widely recognized as a scholar and church leader on such issues as forgiveness and reconciliation, Christian vocation, and strengthening the church and its ministry. He is known for teaching that fosters students' imaginations in

connecting Christian faith to everyday life, for research that promotes interdisciplinary conversation and for a commitment to ecumenical dialogue.

His leadership as dean has been marked by significant growth in the Divinity School.

The event will feature 12 workshops on a variety of topics relat-



ed to congregational life, as well as small group opportunities, fun and fellowship, good food, great hospitality and many opportuni-

ties to make new friends and support other pastors in ministry.

For more information for "Our Life Together," log on to any of these Web sites: [inareaumc.org](http://inareaumc.org), [nicumc.org](http://nicumc.org), [sicumc.org](http://sicumc.org). Workshop options, keynote speaker information, housing availability and leisure events are included in a downloadable PDF document. To register, please log on to [www.sicumc.org](http://www.sicumc.org), and under "Our Life Together," click on "SIGN UP ON-LINE TODAY." Please register soon. The cost is \$60 per person.

*Design team completes Imagine Indiana report for annual conferences***Imagine Indiana places focus of new conference on congregations****A summary**

By Daniel R. Gangler

INDIANAPOLIS – The Imagine Indiana Design Team recently completed its report to the North Indiana and South Indiana Annual Conferences for their approval in creating a new Indiana Conference uniting the existing conferences. Both sessions will consider the 50-page report later this spring.

Each of the state's 1,200 United Methodist congregations is equally represented by clergy and lay members during the two conference sessions.

According to the design team plan, the goal of the new conference is to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The Imagine Indiana Design Team believes that 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 this new plan for a new Indiana Conference.

The plan calls for the focus of the new Indiana Conference to be on congregations, their pastors and members. The 12-member design team believes the new conference will be more conducive to responding to the needs of congregations than the two existing conferences.

The new conference plans to bring ministry resources closer to congregations, the place where people are welcomed into Christian faith and nurtured spiritually, to strengthen congregations.

**Support for congregations**

The new conference 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. In clusters, congregations will sup-

**The new conference plans to bring ministry resources closer to congregations.**

port each other and work together to minister to the needs of their communities.

For example, the newly formed New Albany cluster will sponsor a community-wide Vacation Bible School this summer. Other cluster activities will include combined worship services during holy seasons. Clusters also will work together to support community centers and youth programs.

Another way to strengthen congregations, according to the plan, is through clergy covenant groups. All pastors will be a part of self-selected **covenant groups**. Through these groups, pastors will support each other in their ministries.

Several pastors already depend upon a covenant group for their emotional, intellectual and spiritual support. This support has been reflected in more vital congregations.

**Resource centers**

Currently, congregations are divided into 18 districts, each led by a superintendent. In this plan, ten district superintendents will assist the bishop in overseeing and resourcing congregations and their pastors in ten districts.

In the design team's plan, five resource centers for congregations will be placed across the state. Each center will house two district superintendents, at least one administrative assistant and a coordinator in congregational ministry. Each center also will be a center for communication.

**Conference center**

Most congregational resourc-



es are now provided through two conference centers – the North Indiana Conference Service Center in Marion and the South Indiana Conference Center in Bloomington.

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

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.

In this plan communication will be coordinated through 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 to resource congregations.

The proposed budget for the new conference is in progress under the lead of Brent Williams, treasurer (NIC) and Jennifer Gal-

agher, treasurer (SIC). The proposed budget will be reviewed and added to the report before the report is printed.

The Design Team provides proposals for both annual conferences 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 this year's two annual conferences, Bishop Coyner 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.

Design Team members who wrote this proposed plan include (in alphabetical order): Frank Beard, Kokomo District Superintendent of the (NIC); James Bushfield, director of connectional ministries (SIC); Jennifer Gallagher, treasurer (SIC); Mark Gough, director of connectional ministries (NIC); Adolf Hansen, consultant; Kayc Mykrantz, lay leader (NIC); Judi Purvis, Vin-

cennes District Superintendent (SIC), Cindy Reynolds, Warsaw District Superintendent (NIC); Brent Williams, treasurer (NIC); and Ike Williams, lay leader (SIC).

Indiana Area staff members on the team included, Bishop Mike Coyner, convener; David V. W. Owen, executive assistant to the bishop; and Daniel R. Gangler, director of communication.

Also on the team were Beth Ann Cook, prayer co-chair (SIC) and Paula Gast, prayer co-chair (NIC).

The complete downloadable Imagine Indiana Design Team Report can be found by logging on to [www.inareaumc.org](http://www.inareaumc.org). A printed report will be distributed before the annual conference sessions. Questions about the report can be directed to the Rev. David V.W. Owen at [ImagineIndiana@inareaumc.org](mailto:ImagineIndiana@inareaumc.org) or Indiana Area of The United Methodist Church, 1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 210, Indianapolis, IN 46208.

An hour-long presentation about the report will be video streamed on Sunday, March 30, at 7 p.m. ET on [www.inareaumc.org](http://www.inareaumc.org). The presentation will be viewed and discussed at district sites and also can be viewed by any computer connected to the Internet. The presentation will be archived.

**Vincennes Area Congregations form ministry cluster**

Vincennes Cluster leaders are meeting to plan for ministries clusters and cooperative ministries. The cluster includes Bicknell, Emison, Wheatland/Buceville, Morris Chapel and Carlisle UMCs. Carlisle is in south Sullivan, but geographically works with these churches. They have named themselves the Faith Builders United or FBU.

According to Vincennes District Superintendent Judy Purvis, the North Knox "sub-clus-

ter" is already planning a 6-week divorce recovery workshop which could not have been supported by any one church in that "sub-cluster."

Purvis said, "New ministry cluster formations seem to be happening all around the conference. After all the hard work done by Imagine Indiana Design Team, it is good to hear about what is happening around the conferences. Maybe, we can solicit the good news and then celebrate."