



## Questions & Answers

*From your Imagine Indiana Design Team – September 2007*

**Here are answers to questions we have heard asks in recent months.**

**Q – What did members of each annual conference agree to this past June?**

**A** – Each annual conference voted to unite the North Indiana and South Indiana Annual Conferences into one Indiana Annual Conference. Here are the particulars:

1. A new conference be created in the state of Indiana to meet for the first time in 2009 as the legal successor to each of the existing conferences;
2. A formal request be made to the 2008 North Central Jurisdictional Conference for permission to create one conference in Indiana;
3. An authorization be given to the bishop to name a team to develop a detailed plan of implementation to be brought to the 2008 sessions of the North Indiana Conference and South Indiana Conference for approval;
4. The new conference be formed in accordance with these guiding principles:
  - A recognition of the local congregation as the most significant arena in which disciple making occurs;
  - A shared ministry in which individual believers are connected to local congregations, local congregations are gathered into geographical clusters, geographical clusters are partnered with one another in regions, and regions are linked together as the conference;
  - An expectation of collaboration that encourages the natural formation of partnerships based on shared affinities;
  - An expectation of excellence in the formation of leaders, both lay and clergy;
  - A willingness to be held accountable, both personally and corporately, to our covenant relationships to God and one another for the redemption of the world;
  - A spirit of openness to explore new ways, models and methods of being the church, with the expectation of learning from both successes and failures;

- An administrative professional staff that serves to centralize common tasks (e.g., finance, communication, technology) and programmatic professional staff that serves to resource local congregations, clusters and regions;
- A central location for the bishop's office and a centralized system for the administrative needs of the conference;
- An annual conference session designed around prayer and worship, inspiration, training and witness through activities and engagement with host communities as a transforming presence;
- A continuation of clergy and staff benefits based on fairness and equality of eligibility with current levels of benefits serving as the base line;
- A relationship with our affiliated institutions, both current and emerging, that is mutually beneficial; and
- A continuous process of evaluation and realignment of structures, programs, institutions and personnel in order to increase the effectiveness of the church in its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**Q – Is this decision set in stone?**

**A** – No decision of one annual conference session can dictate the decision of another annual conference session. So the 2008 Sessions of North Indiana and South Indiana will vote on the detailed Implementation Plan, and then if necessary there will be a called Special Session of the two conferences on October 4, 2008 to resolve any differences or amendments passed by the two conferences. If those votes are all positive, then the new Indiana Conference will have its first Session in 2009 and implementation will likely take several years. Instead of rushing the process, we are prayerfully and carefully taking the process of uniting our two conferences step-by-step.

**Q – Who is on the Imagine Indiana Design Team to write a plan for a new Indiana Conference? How were they chosen?**

**A** – Team members include:

- Cindy Reynolds, Warsaw District Superintendent;
- Judi Purvis, Vincennes District Superintendent;
- Jennifer Gallagher, South Indiana Conference treasurer;
- Brent Williams, North Indiana Conference treasurer;
- Jim Bushfield, South Indiana Conference connectional ministries director;
- Mark Gough, North Indiana Conference connectional ministries director;
- Adolf Hansen, retired South Indiana Conference clergy and consultant;
- Frank Beard, Kokomo District Superintendent;
- Kayc Mykranz, North Indiana Conference Lay Leader; and
- Ike Williams, South Indiana Conference Lay Leader

Area staff members include David V.W. Owen, executive assistant to the bishop; and Dan Gangler, Indiana Area director of communication.

The team was voted into existence by both Indiana North and Indiana South Conferences during their respective sessions in June and named by Bishop Coyner in July.

**Q – Will there be five regions as pictured in the presentation at annual conference?**

**A** – We don't know how many regions there will be in the new conference. The map showing five regions in the annual conference presentation was only for illustrative purposes. The team is

considering several possibilities and will be reviewing data from several sources before proposing the number of regions in the new conference. Currently, we are using our United Methodist-related connections and working with the College of Business at the University of Indianapolis to combine our data with marketing, transportation, communication and geographic information to plot out how and where future regions will better serve our congregations.

**Q – How can fewer district offices be helpful when the emphasis of a new conference will be on the local church? It seems that fewer district superintendents would be more distance between local churches and the conference.**

**A** – The design team is working with a different approach to providing resources to congregations. Currently, most of a church’s resources come from conference centers. Regional centers staffed by district superintendents and others would place resources closer to congregations.

**Q – Will the new conference center be in Indianapolis?**

**A** – What was agreed to during the annual conference sessions was that there would be a central location for the bishop’s office and a centralized system for the administrative needs of the conference. Currently, the bishop’s office is in Indianapolis at the Indiana Interchurch Center located on West 42nd Street at Michigan Road. The two current conference centers are in Marion (North Conference) and Bloomington (South Conference).

**Q – Will annual conference sessions be held in Indianapolis?**

**A** – The team is looking at several locations in Central Indiana for the possible location of annual conference sessions. We have heard from many who do not want an annual conference in downtown Indianapolis because of the cost to those who attend. We are currently considering university campuses and hotel convention centers to keep cost affordable to those who attend.

**Q – How will one annual conference be more effective and efficient than two existing conferences?**

**A** – One new conference should mean a sizeable reduction in meetings and administration and the cost of holding two conference sessions. Currently, the Indiana Area staff participates in many meetings of both annual conferences as well as Indiana Area meetings, too. This will allow for more time to be dedicated to congregational needs. One conference will mean less duplication of those same services across the state. As Indiana United Methodists, we will be working together with one pension plan and one health care insurance plan plus pooling our efforts to better service congregations. One conference will give a more unified approach across to state to United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women and United Methodists Youth. Instead of two separate Schools of Christian Mission, we will be able to combine our efforts statewide into a single school. One conference will eliminate what we now know as the North Indiana Conference Center, the South Indiana Conference Center and the Indiana Area office – combining all three into an Indiana Conference Center. We will be able to better coordinate our statewide efforts as United Methodists in such things as disaster response and recovery working together with the State of Indiana’s VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters). One conference will mean one conference session in Indiana instead of two, saving thousands of dollars and planning time.

**Q – Will it save money for us to be one annual conference?**

**A** – We don't know yet. It is likely that efficiency will come first around issues of time and talent. There might be some initial cost increases as we convert old data and technology systems into a new, more updated system. As was indicated at both annual conference sessions in June, our prime motivation for forming a new conference is not financial but missional.

**Q – What will be the affect of one conference on youth?**

**A** – Most youth in our congregations will not be affected whether we are one conference or two conferences, however those involved in youth ministries at the conference level will be meeting with youth from across Indiana, not just youth from the North or South areas of the state. The most noticeable affect will be the combining of outdoor ministries to children and youth adding many more camping opportunities at more sites across the state. Youth in Indiana will have a more united voice on social issues affecting youth in our state.

**Q – How much will combining the two conferences cost in legal and other fees?**

**A** – At this point, we don't know until we consult with our conference chancellors (attorneys) from each of our two conferences to see what documents need to be reviewed for change and how much those changes will cost.

**Q – Will there be a new pension plan for the new conference?**

**A** – Currently, both conference pension plans are being reviewed to create equity as we bring those two plans together. Since United Methodist conferences use the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, both funds are now being managed by the same church agency that will manage our revised plan for the new conference.

**Q – Will there be one health care insurance plan or will we continue to have two different plans like we have now?**

**A** – The North Indiana Conference uses the HealthFlex plan of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. The South Indiana Conference now uses the Principal Financial Group to manage its health care benefits. In January both conferences will be using HealthFlex with comparable plans. What is still being discussed is who pays for the plan, the church or the pastor/employees or do each share a percentage of the cost. Again, equity will be a major concern as well as equity for retired pastors and their spouses.

**Q – Will the plan going to both annual conferences in 2008 be detailed with facts and figures or will it only be ideas about the new conference?**

**A** – The plan going to both annual conferences in 2008 will be a detailed plan of proposed structures, policies and procedures. It will be as detailed as it can be for the beginning year of a new conference, however anything new, including a new annual conference, will have unforeseen problems to work out and perfect. If a particular part of the plan does not work as anticipated, that part will be redesigned until it is workable. We are on a journey to change for a better way of operating the Indiana Conference in a 21st century world. In the Wesleyan sense, we will be working toward perfection. That's what conferencing on an annual basis is about. No plan is a

perfect plan. Perfection is only achieved as we work toward it, letting God's Holy Spirit, reasonable decisions and practical sense be our guide.

**Q – Where do I send my responses and suggestions for the design team to consider?**

**A** – Responses to the work of the design team and suggestions for the new conference design can be e-mailed to [ImagineIndiana@inareaumc.org](mailto:ImagineIndiana@inareaumc.org) or sent to Imagine Indiana Design Team, 1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 210, Indianapolis, IN 46208. All responses and suggestions will be reviewed by the design team.

**Q – When will Bishop Coyner meet with district leaders about the new conference design?**

**A** – Bishop Coyner has placed on his calendar 18 district meetings to listen and discuss the new Indiana Conference with clergy and interested laity. The process has begun. Here is a listing of meeting dates. Time and place are announced in each district. For the latest in the Imagine Indiana Design Team, log on to [www.inareaumc.org](http://www.inareaumc.org).

Bishop Coyner's District Days

Aug. 29	The Terre Haute Conference already met.
Sept. 12	Fort Wayne, Bethel UMC, 1:30 p.m. clergy, 7 p.m. laity
Sept. 13	Warsaw, Warsaw First Connection UMC, 5 p.m. clergy & spouses, 7 p.m. laity
Oct. 2	Indy West, Avon UMC, dinner meeting with clergy, evening meeting laity
Oct. 4	Michiana, Elkhart Trinity UMC, time to be announced
Oct. 18	Marion, First UMC, Anderson, 2 p.m. clergy and spouses, 7 p.m. laity
Oct.22	Columbus
Oct. 23	Vincennes
Oct. 24	Evansville
Oct. 29	Huntington – new date
Oct.30	Indy East, St. Mark's UMC, dinner meeting with clergy, evening meeting laity
Nov. 1	Bloomington
Nov.19	New Albany
Nov. 20	Muncie
Nov. 26	Calumet
Nov. 27	Kokomo
Nov. 28	Rushville
Dec. 11	Lafayette

Send you questions to [ImagineIndiana@inareaumc.org](mailto:ImagineIndiana@inareaumc.org).