

20. REPORTS

COMMON TABLE

by David Lux

Convener of the Common Table

The “Common Table” was established by vote of the 2008 Annual Conference to:

- Provide visionary leadership to energize and transform the Nebraska United Methodist Conference
- Coordinate and prioritize the ministries and resources of the Conference
- Be the catalyst for the creative and cooperative functioning of the boards and agencies of the Annual Conference
- Interpret, engage, and advance the mission and vision of the Nebraska Conference, as well as the mandates of The Book of Discipline, to benefit both the ministry of the local churches and the connectional ministry of the Conference
- Base its work on the foundation principles of holy conferencing and the components of the L3 Leadership model—loving, learning, leading.

Beginning in July, the Common Table and the three Teams (Leadership Development, Congregational Transformation, and Risk-taking Mission and Justice) have been meeting monthly and included the loving, learning, and leading elements in each meeting. We are seeking to work and live together as a covenant community, and to grow individually as well as a community in our discipleship and in the practice of spiritual disciplines. We have worshipped together, studied together, prayed together, and listened together to discern the will of God for this Nebraska Annual Conference at this time in our history.

So we have developed our own covenant, which involves personal spiritual disciplines as well as how we will relate to one another and do our work together. We have established consensus guidelines as to how we do our work together. We have spent time clarifying our mission and how we will work with other groups within the Conference. We have developed guidelines and templates for the Teams to evaluate current ministries in our Conference. And we have received, evaluated, and approved ministry and funding plans from the three teams for 2009 and 2010.

We are still working our way through a transition period from the previous model to this new way of doing things. We have had a large amount of work to do in what has seemed a very short period of time in which to do it. But the process we are using seems very healthy and spiritually good, and will help to grow the fruit of leadership development, congregational transformation, and risk-taking mission and justice for years to come. In everything we do we are seeking to lead the Conference in the making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

COMMON TABLE REPORT TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION

June 10, 2009

INTRODUCTION

I think I first heard the story I’m about to tell you in a Tony Campolo sermon, and though there are various versions of this story, the one I’m telling you now is undoubtedly the most accurate. The Great Blondin was a famous tight-rope walker in the 1800’s, and the first to cross Niagra Falls on a tight rope. He crossed several times in his career, and did some outrageous stunts. Large crowds would gather to watch him cross.

But before he was able to cross the first time, he had many skeptics who thought he was very foolish to even try. So when he crossed over the first time from the Canada side to New York, a crowd of 10,000 cheered his accomplishment and chanted his name. He played to the crowd and shouted, “do you believe?” They shouted back, “We believe, we believe.”

I'm going to cross back over, are you sure you believe?"

"We believe, we believe."

"This time," he said, "I'm going to carry someone on my back. Can I have a volunteer?"

No one volunteered, so his manager stepped up so the show wouldn't go down the tubes, and the show went on. But an important point was made. There's a difference, isn't there, between saying you believe and actually putting your life on the line.

I'm not suggesting that serving on the Common Table is exactly like walking a tight-rope over Niagara Falls, but it has its similarities. After 4 years of Disciple-making and Transition team proposals, we, the Annual Conference decided to go this direction, with a new structure and a new style. We were given this task with a sense of urgency, that unless we started doing things differently, we were going to continue to lose ground in our attempts to be faithful and fruitful in living out God's dream for us.

We, the Annual Conference, did put our corporate body on the line to be the Nebraska Conference in a new way, to be more faithful in our spirituality, and to be more fruitful in our ministries. We are just beginning in this new way, and there have been many bumps in the road this first year, but we are moving in the right direction.

First of all, we are seeking to do everything we do grounded in a spiritual base. We do our work as a covenant community. One of the first things we did was to form a covenant in which we would clearly understand our commitment to each other and to Christ in this work. We hold each other accountable to the covenant in the meetings, and we seek to nurture and grow our own spirits as we participate in this covenant community we call the Common Table.

We are following the L3 model that is being used in every district in the Conference, and if you haven't heard about it yet, you will as it expands to local churches. The 3 "L's" stand for loving, leading, and learning. So all our meetings include a "Loving" segment where we take time for worship, communion, prayer, and discernment.

We also include a learning segment in our meetings, where we have discussion and presentations around an assigned reading. And the "Leading" segment of our meetings consist of doing our work, which included a lot of time devoted this year to developing ministry and funding plans for 2009 and 2010. Our focus was continually on our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Collaborating with the Common Table are three teams comprised of 8-12 persons each that focus on the top three Annual Conference strategic priorities of Leadership Development, Congregational Transformation, and Risk Taking Mission and Justice work.. In a few minutes you will hear from members of each of these three teams as they bring executive summaries of their ministry plans. They also are covenant communities, using the L3 spiritually based process in their work.

In addition to developing our covenant, receiving ministry plans from the 3 teams, and developing funding plans for 2009 and 2010, the Common Table put together a list of goals and outcomes related to our work. The Common Table also developed a staffing plan that reflects the strategic priorities of the Nebraska Annual Conference. This staffing plan was developed in consultation with the Nebraska Annual Conference Personnel Committee.

First, let me address some of the outcomes that the Common Table proposes for 2010 and beyond.

Building on the thoughts of Martha Grace Reese in her book *Unbinding the Gospel*, all of our work begins with individual transformation. Strong leaders have a deep, personal experience of the love of God through Christ. And they believe that the church has transformed their lives and has the potential to transform the lives of others. Unless we are being formed, we cannot transform others.

2009 JOURNAL Reports

PART I OUTCOMES

Outcome & Measure for Common Table

1. Common Table and Team Members grow in spiritual depth-loving God and neighbor. Every member of the Common Table & Teams would in the next four years, develop spiritually in their love of God and their love of neighbor. We would devote time periodically to assess and report on faithfulness to the outcomes and how we are carrying out our spiritual disciplines.

2. Common Table and Team Members practice the spiritual disciplines in covenant community. People leading this process need to have a passion for growing in relationship to Jesus Christ and a passion for serving our neighbors in covenant community that provides for accountability and mutual nurture of one another and of those in the world who do not yet know Christ. We are called to be disciples of Christ, not just members of a church. We commit ourselves to private acts of devotion and then being a part of a group that will hold us accountable.

3. Common Table and Team Members reach out to others with the good news of Christ and in acts of justice and mercy. We have a story to tell as disciples. Our hope is that every member of the Common Table & Teams can talk about their faith in God, and share that story with their neighbor. We want all members to be able to talk about how being a part of their churches has changed their lives, and how their work in the church has helped transform the world.

Outcome & Measure for the Annual Conference

1. Clergy and lay leaders grow in spiritual depth, practice of disciplines, live in accountable covenant community, tell the story and practice acts of mercy and justice. Includes 75% of clergy being included as a part of small group where we are held accountable for practicing the means of grace and includes 50% of worshipping lay people in each congregation in a small group.

2. Ten new faith communities, four of which are Latino. (Faith communities includes the traditional new church start, new groups of people meeting to worship together in homes, new groups of people meeting to gather a non-majority population.)

6 new of new traditional church startups

4 Hispanic/Latino

24 of second site locations to reach others who aren't worshipping

3. The six-signs of discipleship are evident in 75% of our churches.

Discipleship Plans in each church show how we're working on the six signs.

4. Capacity for mission and ministry increases by 50%. We show an increase in worship attendance and professions of faith. We grow numerically as well as spiritually.

5. We have an increase in the number of small groups.

6. We see an increase in the number of people who are participating in hands-on mission and justice work.

PART II THE STAFFING PLAN

PART III LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY TEAM REPORT

PART IV CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION MINISTRY TEAM REPORT

PART V RISK TAKING MISSION MINISTRY TEAM REPORT

CONCLUSION

In closing I want to say a few words about next year's work of the Common Table. This last year, we met every month, and we would meet for 4 hours on Friday night, and 7 hours on Saturdays. We laid a solid foundation for the future in terms of our process, and developed ministry and funding plans for 2 years. We worked hard and got a lot done, but there was a lot left undone. In the coming year we hope to devote more time to big picture thinking and praying, looking at more long term issues and steps to be taken. We hope to continue to work collaboratively with the Finance Committee, and develop the same kind of collaboration with the Trustees, the Board of Ordained Ministry, and the Cabinet. And we have governance policies to develop as well. It will be a good and interesting year.

In terms of where we have been, I thank all the people who have served on councils, commissions and committees that are no longer a part of the Conference structure. You have served faithfully and well, and have led us to this place in our history. With the work we will be doing in the years ahead, may we honor those who have gone before us, and bless those who will come after us.

CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION REPORT

by Russ Tompkins

I bring you a word of hope for the future of our local churches. This hope I speak of manifests itself in four areas. I would like to tell you about them now.

Our primary focus for 2010 will be the creation and continued support of new faith communities across the conference. We will continue to support the five new church starts that have launched since 2006. We find hope in "The Water's Edge" – a multi-site ministry that averages more than 400 in worship every week. We find hope in "St. Mark's Northwest" who has become financially self-sustaining in three years. We find hope in Trinity Lincoln who has added 27 new members in 2008. We find hope in St. James West who started with a handful of families in 2006 and now has over 65 families participating in ministry. We find hope verbalized by Sheila Garland, a member of Tri-Community Church who said the following about her church, "We are the only church in the area actively reaching out to the young people and their parents in the area." Our plans for 2009 and 2010 include the launching of two new church starts as well as continuing dialogue to start a new Native American faith community in 2010. Friends – in our new church starts we find hope.

But our hope does not stop there. Transformation involves the re-generation of existing congregations as well and this is another of our primary strategies. The Congregational Transformation Team is here to assist local churches and faith communities in developing and implementing Discipleship Plans. We are here to assist congregations in using Mission Insite and other demographic tools. We are here to help you find hope in bringing new life to existing congregations.

New church starts and re-generation of existing churches is not all we are about. Paul says in 1st Corinthians that God is faithful and that we are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord. Our team believes that we see this faith manifested by strengthening Hispanic-Latino ministries through the promotion of the National Hispanic/Latino plan. We can give hope to our Hispanic and Latino sisters and brothers through support of our lay missionaries and the creation of new Hispanic/Latino faith communities. We can give hope to our Hispanic and Latino sisters and brothers through our new Community Center in Omaha. We can give hope to our Hispanic and Latino sisters and brothers through a renewed partnership between existing congregations and new Hispanic/Latino faith communities.

Paul says in **Romans 8.25**: “But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” It is our hope that we will strengthen our Native American ministries with the promotion of a new Native American faith community in 2010.

When my two children were young and we would take them on a road trip one question would inevitably come up in the conversation. One of the boys would ask, “Are we there yet?” My standard reply – whether we were just around the corner or two hours away – was always, “Ten more minutes”. Many people have asked me about the transition to the teams and the Common Table. More than once I have been asked, “Are we there yet?” and my reply to them is “Ten more minutes”.

Friends – I firmly believe that the greatest enemy we all face is not disease but despair. Some see us plodding through the transitional desert and wonder if what we envision is real or is it only a mirage? When I look at how far we have come and look ahead to see where we are headed -- I see change – deep change – and in this I find hope.

LAY LEADER ADDRESS

2009 Annual Conference

by Tom Watson

Good morning, Bishop Sherer, members of the Annual Conference and guests. I fluctuate between being intimidated and excited about an opportunity to speak to all of you about my thoughts and observations concerning our church at this place in time. First let me say that this first year as your Conference Lay Leader has been a real learning experience for me, and an honor. In addition, let me express my great thanks to Lavina Schwaninger, our immediate past Conference Lay Leader, for her service to the church during the previous 8 years and in particular for her great help to me during this past year. Also, thanks to Melody Adams, Associate Conference Lay Leader, for her help during this year. Melody is not able to be with us here this year because she is at home recovering from cervical spine surgery. She said she thought I was a pain in the neck, but discovered that it was caused by something else, I'm just kidding. Last year at Annual Conference you received a report and adopted the recommendations of the “Transition Team”. As I have realized during the time since last Annual Conference, this has been the actual transition year. Putting into place and action the plan adopted a year ago. You have heard the first reports from the Common Table and from the three teams, I am not going to repeat that report. I will share with you some of my personal observations concerning the Common Table and Teams, if you promise to understand that these are purely my sense of things.

First, I would say that it is probably obvious to any observer that we are still in process in working out all of the details of operating under this structure both in terms of Disciplinary requirements and just practical function. On a very positive side, I believe I have observed a far higher degree of engagement on the part of all of the members of the Common Table and each of the Teams than I had perceived in previous years when we operated with the Council on Ministries. I believe there may now be more people with a far better understanding of who is doing what in and on behalf of the Conference and to what degree of effectiveness. I believe we are well on our way to a greater degree of accountability in all areas of Conference work, and that is already apparent in listening to the Teams as they have worked with the various areas of ministry.

Our mission comes directly from Jesus, and as articulated by the last General Conference, is to “Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World”. I will say to you that I think that the work and ministry plan of each of the three Teams is, in a real sense, aimed at a particular aspect of making disciples. In a very simplistic view which I would caution, is not to be considered in any way limiting, I would suggest the following: The Congregational Transformation Team - has as one of its primary areas of focus the task of helping us in our local churches reach new believers. That might be by a renewed vigor and focus within our churches

Reports

or by the formation of new faith communities.

The Leadership Development Team- has as part of its areas of focus the task of helping us in our local churches to foster and facilitate the spiritual development and growth of persons as disciples. And further to help persons identify their gifts and develop skills in leadership which may be exercised within the local church, at the district, conference and general church level. The Risk Taking Mission and Justice Team- has as part of its area of focus the task of helping us in our local churches and as a conference to put discipleship into action to transform the world.

Now, let me turn to my more philosophical view of where we are as the church and where we might need to make adjustments. Our mission, once again, is to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World". Now, what I have to say next might sound strange since this is an Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, but the stated mission is not to make members of the United Methodist Church, but to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We would hope, in that process, that people find the United Methodist Church a welcome and appropriate place in which to become and grow as disciples. There is, however, a difference between making disciples and making members.

My thoughts as to what we need to be working toward in our churches coincides in large part with our emphasis at this Annual Conference, Radical Hospitality. I would urge you to pay particular attention to what Bishop Schnase has had to say on that subject. In general I believe we need to work on an attitude adjustment, especially we in the laity. I believe we need to work toward being more "outward" thinking and not so much inward. There is a need for us to be reaching out to and ministering with and to those who are not already within our churches. There is a great temptation and tendency to work primarily, if not entirely, with those who are already within our walls, or those who stray through our doors of their own accord. I say this to us as laity because for many of us, we must realize that the task of making disciples is not just the pastors' mission. In Ephesians 4 we are told that some were given to be "pastors and teachers", to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. So, part of the work of ministry is building up the body of Christ, and I would argue that reaching others is at least as much our responsibility as the pastors', maybe more. If, at this point, you are mentally arguing with me, that is ok, it is probably good, but I invite you to think about it. Think also about how we, as laity, begin to assume responsibility for making disciples and for the condition of our Church. Evangelism, the "E Word", is really out of vogue in the church today. I know that for many people that word is very negative, it calls up images that you do not want to be associated with. However, I don't care what term you want to use, letting people know the good news of Jesus Christ is a primary task of those of us who already consider ourselves to be disciples, developing disciples.

Perhaps we need to engage in some self-examination. In her book, *Unbinding the Gospel*, which, by the way, I highly recommend to each of you, Martha Grace Reese describes many in the Mainline Protestant denominations as "Evangelism Cautious", I believe that would describe many, if not most, in our churches today. Further, Ms. Reese says that there are two all-important questions we each need to ask ourselves.

The first is:

"What difference does being a Christian make in your own life?"

It strikes me that we each must have answered this question for ourselves as a pre-requisite to any sharing of our faith. If I don't know what difference Christ makes in my life, what do I have to share about that? I would venture a guess that many of us have not given serious thought to the answer to that question. So, I would urge you to do that and would invite you to encourage others you know to do so as well. As I said a moment ago, before we can share our faith, we need to be able to identify what we have faith in and why. The second question is just as important as the first as far as sharing your faith, it is:

"Why does it matter to me that other people become Christians?"

As Ms. Reese indicates in her book, the answer to that question may vary greatly from person to person. However, it is almost certain that if it doesn't matter to you that other people become Christian you have very little motivation to talk to anyone about

Jesus Christ. Remember, we are to be about making disciples of Jesus Christ, not church members. These are questions we each need to answer for ourselves and then we can deal with the next crucial question: What would motivate you to help another person become a Christian and begin a life of relationship with God made known to us in Jesus Christ?

In my view, we have avoided this issue and this vital mission for far too long in our churches. We have relied on persons seeking us out and coming to us, and not only is that not happening very much, but some of us have been going elsewhere as well.

Let me encourage you, when you return to your local church, to engage your Lay Leadership/Nominations Committee and those persons who have primary responsibility for your Disciple Making Plan. Encourage those folks to read Bishop Schnase's book and to pay particular attention to the chapter on Radical Hospitality. Encourage them to read Unbinding the Gospel and to begin to seriously consider how we encourage and teach and motivate ourselves and those around us to take seriously the call to "make disciples of Jesus Christ". I think we have got to get over any thoughts we have that sharing our faith in Jesus Christ, in speaking with others about God's role in our life, is just something that "fundamentalists" do. I realize that in this room we come close to running the gamut with regard to theological understandings and bent, from "orthodox" to "progressive", but each of us should and must deal with the questions posed by Ms. Reese.

We can no longer operate the way we've always done things, an old and familiar term we hear a lot is to "think outside the box", well, in thinking about "Radical Hospitality", I am encouraging you to begin to "think outside the building" as well, and make intentional efforts to talk to, engage, reach out to those persons in your community who do not have a church home and who may not know Christ .

So, in keeping with something I have learned from Bishop Sherer, you have two reading assignments, Martha Grace Reese's Unbinding the Gospel, and Bishop Schnase's Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations.

Let me conclude with a summary in verse.

The church has used a slogan
Open hearts and minds and doors
It doesn't translate very well
If that attitude's not yours
If you don't see new faces
Walking up and down the halls
We're likely not inviting
Those who live beyond these walls
Our church must feel welcome
To the strangers at the door
And if it's not I guarantee
They won't be back for more
Next time in church just look around
Anyone there you don't know
If not, I'll say this plainly
Then you've got some seeds to sow
It's all about faith sharing
That job is yours and mine
Living out discipleship
In word and deed and sign
When strangers come to your church
I hope you have believed
It's not the sermon they'll recall
But how they were received
We tend to do the church thing

Aimed at those already in
Not seeking those outside our walls
May be our greatest sin
We need to go where people are
But that makes such a fuss
We've got a grand church building here
So let them come to us
Unbinding of the Gospel
Is evangelism bent
WE think that's the preacher's job
But each of us is sent
Two questions we must answer
Each one of us must know
'Cause if we don't it's pretty sure
Our church ain't gonna grow
What difference does it make to you
That Christian is your name?
If it really doesn't matter
Playing church is just a game
The second question's similar
Can be hard as a rock
When talking 'bout the "E" word
It's the key that turns the lock
What difference does it make to you
That others Christian be
If it really doesn't matter
Then you'll never get to "E"
The church's role is thwarted
No matter how it's sliced
If you don't see th'importance
Of knowing Jesus Christ

NEBRASKA UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL CENTER REPORT

by Terri Raburn, Director/Curator

In 2008 at the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center the emphasis has been on extending services offered to churches across the state. Terri Raburn, Director, traveled to 10 churches around the state throughout the year, including a week-long trip to visit churches in the Great West District. Terri visited these churches to offer assistance in the areas of historical records storage, records retention, and church anniversary planning. Focus has continued on establishing retention and disposition schedules for Conference, District, and local church records.

Processing of Conference records was also a priority in 2008. We receive records periodically from all District offices as well as discontinued churches and other offices. Thanks to volunteer Barb Schmidt for working so diligently on organizing many boxes of records and drastically reducing backlog.

The Historical Center continues to offer research support for all persons interested in the history of the Nebraska United Methodist Church. We offer resource services to clergy and lay people, and offer a place to remember where we have been and to focus on where we are going. In the past year we have responded to a total of 78 research requests by e-mail and letter. We have also responded to hundreds of questions on the telephone. The Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center strives to connect with local churches to provide assistance, encourage research, and to enable groups to understand the rich heritage of the Nebraska United Methodist Conference.

As always, I wish to recognize the efforts and dedicated commitment of our volunteers, Bernice Boilesen, Lona Dearthmont, and Barb Schmidt and members of the Commission on Archives and History. -

**2009 JOURNAL
Reports****EQUITABLE COMPENSATION REPORT**

by Rev. Bev Lanzendorf

My name is Bev Lanzendorf and I am chairperson of the Equitable Compensation Committee. I have served as the pastor at Grand Island First United Methodist Church since 2006. Our group met once in person and then had several teleconference phone meetings as well. We awarded funds totaling \$77,627 in 2008 and \$59,663 so far in 2009. This equates to 13 congregations in 2008 and 12 congregations in 2009 that have received financial assistance to support their pastoral leaders' salary and benefit package in situations where the church was unable to fund it fully. We truly believe in sending strong leaders to all of our United Methodist congregations.

Another accomplishment for the group this past year was the revision of the equitable compensation form that is used to request funds. Additionally, we made a few minor changes in the proposed guidelines for 2010 and these can be found on pages 75 and 76 of the resource book. These guidelines require action on the part of the membership so I would encourage you to carefully review this information prior to your vote. I wish to thank all of the United Methodist churches in Nebraska for supporting Conference mission shares and ask you to continue supporting this ministry with your financial stewardship. I also wish to thank the committee members for their diligent and conscientious work this past year.

CONFERENCE TREASURER REPORT

by Robin Kilgore

The 2008 year brought us many challenges which included increased gasoline and consumer prices, the failure of several major companies, layoffs of long-time employees, the depletion of our personal investments and pensions, and the list goes on. Despite these unprecedented times, our churches provided the firm foundation and our members responded generously to fulfill the vision of Making Disciples, Making a Difference.

Mission share receipts for 2008 totaled \$6,374,057 which represented 89.79% of the approved funding plan. In 2007 the percentage was 94% and in 2006 it was 92%. While our church's support of mission shares was slightly less than in prior years, it was a significant amount considering the economic times. In addition to mission share support, Nebraska United Methodist Churches contributed \$618,418 toward other mission outreach opportunities through General Advances, Conference Advances, Special Sunday Offerings, and other askings. I wish to thank you for your faithful commitment and hard work which represented total receipts of nearly \$7 million from local congregations across the state.

The economic troubles have continued into early 2009, but church giving at the conference level has not been significantly impacted. In fact 10 local congregations have already met the 2009 mission share goal in full. Please join me in recognizing these churches. If there is a clergy and lay member from these congregations, please stand and remain standing until all names are read (Roca UMC, Crawford Valley UMC, Hazard UMC, Clinton UMC, Falls City Bethel UMC, Fremont Calvary UMC, Inland UMC, Ohiowa, and Trumbull UMC). Let's give them a round of applause.

Though we do not know what the future holds, the United Methodist Church in Nebraska remains the strong foundation. The leadership of our pastors and laypersons in local churches provides the strength to encourage new disciples, lead the church in making responsible business decisions, care for our church buildings and property, and meet other financial responsibilities.

I greatly appreciate the leadership gifts of those who have served on many boards, committees, and task forces this past year. Several people have given many hours to make our Conference vibrant and strong. I deeply appreciate those individuals and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your many contributions!

I also wish to express my deep gratitude to our churches for your generosity, your commitment, your faithful financial support, and your connectional stewardship. I wish to thank the administrative staff who have worked diligently in assisting me care for your financial contributions to ensure that ministries are funded according to your wishes. Please take some time this week to thank them. I look forward to continuing my role as your Conference Treasurer and the ministry work that we do together in making a difference in God's Kingdom. May our gifts continue to multiply and serve people locally and around the globe.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

by Dixie Allbery

What a wonderful year! The South Central Jurisdiction Quadrennial meeting was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Thank you so much for the opportunity to represent the Nebraska Conference as a delegate and a nominee for Women's Division Director. We are so pleased that Marilyn Zehring was re-elected as a Women's Division Director. It was a very inspiring meeting and I carried the Conference Banner in the Banner Parade representing Nebraska.

I served on the Planning Team for the Nebraska Annual Conference. We held a luncheon during Annual Conference for United Methodist Women. Rita Conner made a wonderful display for the U.M.W. I gave a video presentation, which was prepared for the Jurisdiction meeting by Esther Hay, Pam Moses and Aydee Farias.

The Week-End School of Christian Mission was held in Grand Island on July 25-27 at the Mid-town Holiday Inn and the Week-Day School, July 27-30. What a learning experience.

The Conference United Methodist Women's Annual Meeting was held in Lincoln at First UMC on October 10 and 11, 2008. The theme was "Turn the World Upside Down." The leadership update for District Officers was held on Friday morning and went quite well.

Other events during the year were the Midwinter School of Christian Mission in Scottsbluff, Jan. 25-28. District Spring Events and Fall District Annual Meetings are always a time of fellowship and inspiration.

It was a good year serving on the boards for Epworth Village and Wesley House. So much is happening at both institutions and making a difference in so many children's lives.

It has been a privilege and an honor serving as your conference president. May God bless each of you everyday.

**2008 ANNUAL DISCIPLESHIP REPORT
ON MEN'S MINISTRY**

by Doug Kallesen, communicator and Dave Mendyk, President

1. **Two District UMMen organizations (Missouri River and Prairie Rivers) are chartered.** Missouri River District holds regular board meetings and has an excellent website www.ummenmoriver.com. Prairie Rivers held an annual meeting March 31 and a fall officers meeting. Current district presidents are: Blue River-vacant, Elkhorn Valley-Rev Earl Reed, Gateway-Eldon Adams, Great West-Stacy Swinney, Missouri River-Charlie Walcutt (interim), and Prairie Rivers-Larry Ulmer.
2. **A seventh annual fund-raising bike ride / walk sponsored by the Nebraska UMMen**

2009 JOURNAL Reports

was held at Norfolk going west 22 miles on the Cowboy Trail and back (or whatever distance the biker/walker desired). Twenty riders, walkers, and helpers raised \$7,302 for support of mission work on Saturday, May 24, the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. Rocky Plettner of Norfolk was the event organizer. Two rode in Omaha where we are hoping for a 2nd ride.

3. **The Bike/Walk proceeds together with other donations amounting to a total of \$18,100.00 were disbursed** by the Nebraska UMMen throughout 2008 to Nigeria-Nebraska Partnership, Society of St Andrew, Nebraska disaster response, Heifer International, camping, 100 Club and Barnabas-funded scholarships to seminarians and youth, Hispanic ministry, emergency relief including to reservations, Wesley House youth community center, rural response, prison ministry, Hope of Hearing-Haiti, Strength for Service military devotionals, Epworth Village for kids, Upper Room prayer line, Little Sioux Boy Scout Camp Rebuild (from tornado), and miscellaneous Nebraska UMMen ministries. This mission and ministry support was composed of \$8,400.00 for missions, \$4,500.00 for 100 Club and Fleming scholarships to seminarians, \$4,050.00 for Barnabas encouragement scholarships to camp counselors/college students, and \$1,150.00 as free books for men's group leaders.
4. **Nebraska UMMen have an important project called 100/1000 Club** that is described at its website of www.umcneb.org/ministries/men_100, basically to raise donations to endow scholarships for men and women to enter full-time Christian ministry. This project is over nineteen years in the making and awarded \$4,500 in scholarships in 2008, as noted above. Approximately \$9,000 was raised at the Auction during Annual Conference and additional donations were received throughout the year. Randy Fleming of Springfield and Merv Schliefert of Kearney are the key organizers of this effort. The Andrews and Fleming families have pledged \$10,000 and \$20,000 donations, respectively, and there are 60 other donors.
5. **Nebraska UMMen hosted conference-wide rallies** in February at Camp Fontanelle in the east and in August at Camp COMECA in the west. Both rallies were very inspirational with attendance being 57 and 37, respectively. Many thanks to the Omaha men and the central Nebraska men for doing the bulk of the organization of the rallies.
6. **Jack Sorensen of Grand Island continues to be active in the archives and history.**
7. **Ken Walker of Omaha has kept the important information up to date on the Nebraska UMMen website** www.umcneb.org/ministries/mens, including stories, pictures, and our current ministry plan structured around the six signs of discipleship.
8. **About 85 copies of "No Man Left Behind" have been provided to men across the state**, free of charge, with the encouragement to read the book and implement its suggestions for men's ministry in Nebraska.
9. **Current conference officers are:** President Dave Mendyk of West Point, Vice President Craig Nordaker of Bellevue, Secretary Tim Brown of Bellevue, and Treasurer Curt Copple of Scottsbluff. As appointments, Gary Spivey of Bellevue is Prayer Advocate, Duane Daae of Utica is Scouting/Youth Coordinator, Ken Walker of Omaha is Website Coordinator, and Doug Kallesen of Columbus is Communicator. Many thanks to Bill Stambaugh who served superbly as President for two years.

PEACE WITH JUSTICE MINISTRIES REPORT

Seek peace and pursue it. Proverbs 34:14

by Carol Windrum

June, 2008 marked the 25th anniversary of Peace with Justice Ministries within the Nebraska Annual Conference!

PJM shared leadership in planning for the food and faith focus at the '08 Annual Conference session. The *Come to the Banquet* theme was woven throughout the conference, from Bible studies to taking tours of community gardens, from enjoying delicious local foods to being challenged with information about the concentration of power within the global food system, to singing about food and faith with John Pitney.

PJM continues to invest in young adults as leaders. The '08 summer internship program helped Kasey Farwell from Grace UMC in Lincoln and Wendy Zook, from Cozad First UMC, in their faith formation, risk-taking mission and justice work. They learned different prayer practices, studied and acted for peace with justice. Their leadership in local churches included: Springfield, Tri-Community in North Omaha, Broken Bow, Elkhorn Hills, Cozad FUMC, Grace in Lincoln, Olive Crest in Omaha and Norfolk First. They learned about our connectional family at the General Board of Church & Society in Washington, D.C. and interned at UMCOR endorsed Bread for the World for a week.

PJM thanks Rev. Eldon Davis for co-supervising summer interns for the last three years.

PJM also recruited a young adult to be the Assistant Peace with Justice Coordinator for the conference. Zach Anderson is helping PJM connect with the youth of the conference in the arena of risk-taking mission and justice work and promoted a clergy petition that was sent to encourage President Obama to order the end of U.S. sponsored torture.

Young adults were also incorporated into leadership at the *Come to the Hill* event at Camp Comeca in October, '08. *Come to the Hill* was a three day gathering celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first Methodist Social Creed. Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church & Society, was the key-note speaker about the history of social justice witness within the Methodist church and how war affects children.

Nearly 70 participants also chose different classes led by experts from *Voices for Children in Nebraska* and the *Center for Rural Affairs* and learned more about the Millennium Development Goals to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015. Some received credit for the Advanced Lay Speaker course offered focusing on the UM Social Principles.

Exploring different prayer practices and experiencing the Holy Conferencing model of talking about controversial issues were also part of the event. Each participant went home pledging to do an activity related to risk-taking mission and justice.

Over 400 Nebraska United Methodists committed to contact national leaders ten times each year on matters of peace and alleviating hunger. This year, *Voices to the Capitol* participants contacted leaders around issues such as: support of the Global Poverty Act, support of financial investment in United Nations Peacekeeping mission in Sudan, Haiti, and Kosovo, restrictions on funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, support for a ban on cluster bombs, stronger commitment to the Millennium Development Goals to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015, support greater resources in U.S. civilian foreign policy agencies, and support to strengthen and expand nutrition assistance programs in the U.S.

Over 500 Nebraska Peace Advocates make the PA network in our conference the strongest across the denomination. A UM Peace Advocate commits to pray, study and act for God's shalom in their communities and around the world. Laura in Valparaiso, Matt in Omaha, Ruth in Adams, Sheri in DuBois, Harvey in Pawnee City, Wes in Bassett, Anne in Hastings, Mabell in Mullen, Lois in Cozad, and Monna in Imperial represent some of the hundreds of faithful advocates across the

state. Each Peace Advocate receives *The Mustard Seed* ten times a year with concrete ideas for prayer, study and action which can take as little as 5-10 minutes to complete.

The Director of PJM is responsible for content on the Risk-taking Mission and Justice page of each issue of the *Nebraska Messenger*. Beginning in January '09, a new column is in each issue, entitled *A Fresh Look: Perspectives from those under 30*.

The Director provided leadership to the broader UM connection at the Quadrennial Training in Jacksonville in January, '09.

The Director has participated in the work of the conference transition through the Risk-taking Mission and Justice Ministries team.

PJM continues to work with the following groups within our conference: United Methodist Women promoting economic justice through fair trade; Children and Poverty Committee promoting the MDGs and the work of Voices for Children in Nebraska; Hunger Committee promoting the work of UMCOR endorsed Bread for the World; Rural Response Committee promoting the Theology of the Land Farm Tour in September, rural economic empowerment and the efforts of the Center for Rural Affairs; Nigeria/Nebraska Partnership, PJM Elder Witness group and the Board of Christian Social Witness.