



UMconnect

NEWS & INFORMATION



Important Annual Conference deadlines!

The cutoff day to reserve hotel rooms from the block of reserved Annual Conference rooms at the rate of \$99 per night is this Friday, May 23. At that time, any left-over rooms will go back into the hotel's inventory of available rooms. You may register online by visiting <http://cwp.marriott.com/lnkfs/umcneb/>.

All Annual Conference registrations, including registrations for Youth Annual Conference, Children's Annual Conference and Annual Conference Child Care, **must be received** by Tuesday, May 27. You may register online at <http://www.umcneb.org> or by sending registration forms and a check payable to the Conference Treasurer to:

2008 AC Registration
P.O. Box 4553
Lincoln, NE 68504

Annual Conference volunteers

We need volunteers to help with some tasks in preparation for the Annual Conference Session, June 11-14, in Lincoln. Please put the word out to your congregation so that everyone may have the opportunity to help with the Annual Conference Session.

- 1) **"Stuffers"** for conference packets. We need 15 people to help with this project on Friday, June 6, at 9 a.m., at the Conference Office. The number of people stuffing will determine the length of the project?..the more, the merrier. Contact the Blue River District Office if you are willing to help with this project.
- 2) **Childcare.** People are needed to help with caring for the little ones during the Annual Conference Session. If you are interested in helping in this area, please contact Cathy Link at Lincoln Saint Paul UMC, 402-477-6951 or clink@saintpaulumc.org. Volunteers can volunteer for more than one shift. Following is the breakdown of shifts:

Wednesday, June 11

8-10 a.m.
10a.m.-12 p.m.
1:30-3:30 p.m.
3:30-6 p.m.
7-9 p.m.

Thursday, June 12

8-10 a.m.
10a.m.-12 p.m.
1:30-3:30 p.m.
3:30-5:30 p.m.
7-9 p.m.

Friday, June 13

8-10 a.m.
10a.m.-12:15p.m.
2-5 p.m.
7-9 p.m.

Saturday, June 14

8-10:30 a.m.
10:30-1 p.m.

Support VIM work on Nebraska cabin at Mt. Sequoyah during Annual Conference

The Conference Volunteers In Mission team has individual hand sanitizer bottles for your mission team, small group or member to Annual Conference. An attached carabiner lets you attach your hand sanitizer to your purse, belt loop or backpack.

The cost of each container is \$2 and will fund the VIM work being done on the Nebraska cabin at Mt. Sequoyah. Contact Nan Kaye-Skinner at nanagram@trinityralston.org for your supply.



Graduates include (left to right): Joan Frenzel, Mary A. Fuller and Robert Perry.

Three Nebraska Seminarians Graduate from Saint Paul School of Theology

On Friday, May 16, 2008, three members of the Nebraska United Methodist Conference received their Master of Divinity degrees from Saint Paul School of Theology during the seminary's forty-seventh commencement convocation.



Annual Conference materials available online

Important Annual Conference materials including the 2008 Annual Conference Resource Book, registration forms and more are now available by clicking [here](#) or by accessing the 2008 Nebraska Annual Conference Web page by clicking on the Annual Conference icon underneath the Quick Links at <http://www.umcneb.org>.

New Research Describes Use of Technology in Churches

Our most recent tracking research among churches examines some of the technology relied upon by Protestant congregations. Comparing current technology applications to data from similar studies conducted in 2000 and 2005 reveals both the breadth and pace of technology adoption by churches. You can read this information in the new Barna Update, at no cost, by following the link below.

- [Barna Update](#)

Conference office closed Monday, May 26 for Memorial Day

This is a reminder that the conference office will be closed on Monday for Memorial Day. The office will reopen at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. Enjoy the holiday weekend!

Register Now for the Foundation's Annual Conference Pre-Session Seminar!

Pastors and laity who are, or will, be involved in a campaign to raise funds for a new building, major repairs or to reduce debt are strongly encouraged to attend the United Methodist Foundation's pre-session seminar, "Developing and Leading a Successful Capital Campaign," on Tuesday, June 10, 2008, from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Sanford D. Coon, Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference Methodist Foundation, will be presenting on:

- Key factors that contribute to the success (or failure) of a Capital Campaign. (**Hint:** It's not having a list of the most affluent members of the congregation!)
- What is the Pastor's role? What do the Lay Leaders do?
- What decisions must be made? And by which committees or boards?
- How do we communicate with the congregation?
- Who is the District Board of Church Location and Building? Why do they have to be involved?
- Is it necessary to have a feasibility study?
- What is the value of having outside counsel? How do we know whom to select?
- Is the Campaign congruent with the stewardship program?
- What happens after the Campaign? What are the responsibilities and who takes care of them? What are the next steps and the timetable?

Plan to take advantage of this learning opportunity by registering yourself and other interested church members. The cost is \$5 per registrant (dinner not included). If you have questions or desire additional information, please contact the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation at 402-323-8844, 877-495-5545, or info@numf.org.

- [Registration form](#)
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New study to start at First United Methodist Church in North Platte

First United Methodist Church, 1600 West "E" St., North Platte, will be offering a four-week study and sermon series called "Tex Mix," starting Sunday, June 8 at 5:00 p.m. This is a great series to compliment the community NebraskaLand Days Celebration.

The study will begin at 5:00 p.m. with a light "tex-mex" supper and DVD study featuring storyteller Tex Sample. This study will be facilitated by Phil Barkley. The sermon series will be a part of the contemporary worship service at 7:00 p.m., with the Rev. Dr. Charles Spence be offering the messages.

Please call to register for the study so enough food and materials will be made available. Child care will be made available upon request. Individuals can come to either or both opportunities. No registration is required to attend the contemporary service. For more information, please e-mail Cheri Kneifel at npfumccheri@inebraska.com.

Evaluating Worship and Music

How should we evaluate our church's worship services and music? We can always look at worship attendance and trends, membership statistics, and offerings, but beyond those numeric measurements, are there other ways to think about the effectiveness of congregational worship and music? This article offers some other ways to think about it and a list of 25 statements that will help you evaluate your church's worship.

- [Evaluating Worship and Music article](#)
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Gallup Survey

ATTENTION NEW CHURCHES:

Don't hide the fact that you are a United Methodist Church! Methodists have the highest positive ratings of religious and spiritual groups in the United States, new research by the Gallop Panel shows, ranking higher than Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Evangelicals or Fundamentalists.

Other new church starts may want to hide their denominational or para-church affiliations, and perhaps rightly so. You may have new church starts in your community who are only known as "The Living Church," "The Family Church" or "First Church Memphis."

However, as United Methodists, if we want to be the most effective in inviting new people to become "Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World," we should proudly display the cross and flame as well as the word "Methodist" on all of our signs, printing and marketing. With such a positive and winsome public image across the nation, why would any new United Methodist Church desire to hide its true identity?

In a telephone interview today, Jim Griffith said, "United Methodist is one of the rare church bodies with a positive image. It's just a bad idea to keep your Methodist affiliation a secret," <http://www.griffithcoaching.com>.

Only four percent of the United States population give Methodists a negative rating.

Ninety-six percent of the 1,005 persons (adults 18 and older) interviewed during the March, 2008 poll, had either a positive or neutral view of Methodists. The survey used the broader category of Methodist rather than United Methodist.

- [Gallop Report](#)
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Methodists are one of the four U.S. religious groups with strongly positive ratings.

by Bob Crossman, director, New Church Leadership Institute, Conway, Ark.

The others are Jews, Baptists and Catholics. Broader groups of "evangelical Christians" with 16 percent net positive and "fundamentalist Christians" with a 10 percent net positive did not fare as well, according to an analysis of the survey.

Methodists received the highest marks in the total positive and net positive categories of the survey of "Americans' Views of U.S. Religious and Spiritual Groups," with a 45 percent net positive rating. Forty seven percent of the respondents gave Methodists a "neutral" rating.

As a matter of comparison, Jews had a 42 percent net positive rating, Baptists 35 percent and Catholics 32 percent.

The random, demographically weighted poll was conducted March 24-27, 2008, asking a representative sample of Americans whether they had a positive, negative or neutral view of each of 10 spiritual or religious groups in the United States. The Gallop Panel is weighted so that it is demographically representative of the U.S. adult population. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is plus or minus four percentage points.

- [UM Communications Press Release](#)
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United Methodist Men Summer Retreat

This year's Nebraska United Methodist Men Summer Retreat, at Camp Comeca, August 15 starting at 5:00 p.m. and ending August 17 at 10 a.m., will be extra special. In addition to our fellowship, prayer and service events; an opportunity will be presented to learn how to grow disciples and maybe even learn more about the spiritual needs of men like us. This will likely be a retreat that you'll long remember! For more information, please contact Craig Nordaker at cnordaker@cox.net.

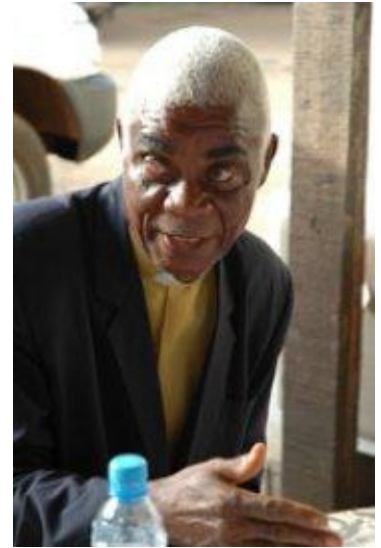
The Rev. Joseph Sunday: No nest egg after 33 years

MONROVIA, Liberia (UMNS)-The types of churches led by the Rev. Joseph Sunday for 33 years did not pay enough for him to accumulate a retirement nest egg.

Sunday, 77, who retired from active ministry in 2002, led rural churches and worked on circuits where he would be sent to United Methodist congregations "that sometimes paid me \$25," he says.

Upon retirement, he expected to receive something from the denomination's Liberia Annual Conference. Although he planned as best as he could, "it did not enable me to accumulate any money because of the kinds of churches I was pastoring."

In addition to a US\$60 quarterly pension, Sunday receives a stipend as the chaplain/counselor for the Monrovia Central Prison. The United Methodist Church is one of several churches sponsoring the Prison Fellowship of Liberia. Sunday says that in spite of his "inadequate" pension, he is grateful. He would like to see his quarterly pension increase to not only enable the purchase of a bag of rice, plus fish, but to leave enough money afterward for other needs.



The Rev. Joseph Sunday.

The CCPI is an effort by United Methodists to provide a minimal pension to pastors and their spouses who serve in Central Conferences (those outside the United States). These persons have faithfully served our church for years across the world and are now retired with little or no income. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, along with the United States conferences and the General Board of Global Ministries are partnering in the Central Conference Pension Initiative to accomplish this purpose.

At this year's Annual Conference session, the offering at the Memorial Service has been designated for the CCPI. We invite you to bring offerings received in each local church between now and June to add to this offering as an ingathering. Please bring your offering designated for Conference Fund Number 764 and place it in the offering plate on Wednesday evening, June 11, during the Memorial Service.



Gretchen Peters is a grammy nominated songwriter and 2007 Folkwax artist of the year.

Mount Sequoyah UNplugged—Singer/Songwriter Retreat

The weekend retreat, sponsored by Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, is scheduled for August 14-17 at the Conference Center in Fayetteville. The retreat will feature a workshop and showcase concert on Saturday by Gretchen Peters. Thursday evening a free Guitar Masters Concert will feature Jack Williams, Shane Adkins, and Kelly Mulhollan. Song Circles in the evenings will give everyone a chance to share their songs with other songwriters in the supportive and peaceful environment of the Mountain.

The event will also include workshops featuring:

Shane Adkins - 2005 International Fingerstyle Guitar Champion
Jack Williams - One of the best guitar players in America
Charles Gaby - Musician, songwriter, and Director of the Center for Creative Transformation at First United Methodist Church of Fort Worth.

Effron White - 2006 & 2007 Northwest Arkansas' Best Singer/Songwriter of the year

Emily Kaitz - Northwest Arkansas Music Hall of Fame Inductee

Kelly Mulhollan - Voted "Best Guitarist" in NWA

Donna Stjerna - Prolific songwriter with over 400 songs to her credit

Steve Smith - Award winning songwriter for Hannah Blaylock and Eden's Edge

The retreat is open to artists of all ages and skill levels. This is a great opportunity to learn from outstanding professionals. Details about the retreat and registration information are available online at <http://www.mountsequoyah.org> or call 800-760-8126.

Wesleyan Live announces courses for Nebraska clergy, laity and community members

This program offers continuing education courses for clergy, laity and community members. Courses are taught by Nebraska Wesleyan faculty in Lincoln and televised live across the state. The participants and professors are able to interact with each other throughout each telecast.

Course Location

The sessions are televised live from the Nebraska Education Telecommunications Building in Lincoln. The possible transmittal sites, which will be determined according to registrations, include Ainsworth, Beatrice, Grand Island, Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, North Platte, Omaha and Scottsbluff. A minimum of six registrants is needed at each location.

Registration & Credit

The enrollment cost is \$40 per person or \$20 for retired clergy and retired clergy spouses.

Wesleyan Live, Fall 2008

Christians Listening to Muslim Voices: Dialogue in the Midst of Conflict

Tuesdays, 12:00 -- 1:00 p.m.

October 14, 2008 -- November 18, 2008

"Interfaith Dialogue" - What is it? When do we engage in it? With whom can we be in dialogue? Does dialogue help us to avoid conflict(s)? If so, how do Christians and Muslims understand the role of religion in political processes? The course will feature guest speaker Shakil Ahmed, from the Muslim community in Omaha.

This course will be led by Dr. Paul Williams, Department of Religion, University of Nebraska at Omaha; and Dr. Fred Richart, UNO Campus Minister.

Save the date for Wesleyan Live, Spring 2009 Renewal the Wesleyan Way: How Our Unique Heritage Can Fuel a Modern-Day Revival

Tuesdays, 12:00 -- 1:00 p.m.

February 3, 2009 -- March 10, 2009

It's time for a revival! After decades of decline in America, the United Methodist Church stands on the brink of a period of opportunity for revival and renewal. How can we use the best of our heritage as a catalyst for our movement into our faithful, fruitful future? How can John Wesley's insights on servant leadership reignite and inspire the way we grow together? What practical, effective solutions can we implement to contribute to thriving ministry?

- [Wesleyan Live Fall '08/Spring '09 flyer](#)
- [Wesleyan Live Spring '09 flyer](#)

Bishop Ann Brookshire Sherer to visit Gateway District June 22

Laity and clergy of the Gateway District are invited to meet with Bishop Ann Brookshire Sherer on June, 22, 2008, at First United Methodist Church in Kearney. The meeting will be held from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

Dietz Memorial United Methodist Church in Omaha to be featured in the May-June 2008 issue of Interpreter magazine

Read about Dietz Memorial United Methodist Church in Omaha in the May-June 2008 issue of Interpreter, the official ministry magazine for the people of The United Methodist Church. The church's Blue Flamingo thrift shop and arts venue is featured in "It Worked for Us." You may read the story on-line at <http://www.interpretermagazine.org/interior.asp?ptid=43&mid=12723>.

This issue of Interpreter includes several features on the growth of The United Methodist Church among immigrant communities in the United States—as well as the growth of the church in Africa and the Philippines.

Read, too, about the centennial of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits and the 60th anniversary of The Advance—the United Methodist Channel for designated second mile giving. You can also read about how the Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development is giving poor children an opportunity for a brighter future. "UMC 101" previews the July jurisdictional conferences when as many as 11 bishops will be elected to lead Episcopal areas in the United States. As always, enjoy reading the popular "IdeaMart" department as well as "The World Is My Parish" and "Lighter Fare."

Interpreter serves lay leaders—those who serve by role as well as position—and clergy with inspiration and information to connect leaders and potential leaders across the denomination with God, with each other and with ideas and resources.

Check out Interpreter online at <http://www.interpretermagazine.org>. Then order your personal subscription by calling United Methodist Communications at 888-346-3862.

Seminary Scholarship applications now being accepted

The Nebraska United Methodist Foundation is currently accepting application materials for the seven seminary scholarships it administers for students planning to pursue careers in the ministry within Nebraska.

These scholarships are:

- The Alva Clark Seminary Scholarship
- The Cowles United Methodist Church Memorial Scholarship
- The Alice Kruse Ministerial Scholarship
- The Alice Kruse Seminary Scholarship
- The Baldwin F. & Amy L. Kruse Scholarship
- The Sylvia Miller Memorial Scholarship
- The Albert R. Murdoch Ministerial Scholarship

The deadline for application submissions is June 30, except for the Baldwin F. & Amy L. Kruse Scholarship, which is May 31. All applicants will be notified of the scholarship recipients by August 4, 2008.

For more information and printable application materials, please visit the Foundation's Web site at http://www.numf.org/special_programs/scholarships.html.

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