



# LAITY • VOICE

A newsletter of the Methodist Laity Reform Movement

Vol. 1, No. 1

## **YOU are invited!** **Annual Meeting and Issues Briefing** **Saturday, June 2 — Noon to 4:00 PM**

**Holiday Inn Gateway Center, Ames**  
**Lunch is provided. Free-will offering.**

What is happening in our Church, and what can we do about it? What's new in the UMC reform movement? What are the big issues at the Iowa Annual Conference, June 8-10?

Come and find out! Dr. Ira Gallaway, a well known national reform leader from New Mexico, will give us important information we need to hear.

*Methodist Laity Reform Movement's* first Annual Meeting last year was great! This one will be even bigger and better!

Bring your friends, lay and clergy.

### **Make your reservation now:**

E-mail [mreform@yahoo.com](mailto:mreform@yahoo.com), or  
Fax 563-264-3363, or  
call Bob Morrison toll-free at  
1-800-334-8920, ext. 393.

shared his hopes and dreams for our Iowa Church.

Please join us in praying daily for continuation of Bishop Palmer's health and energy, and for our Lord's guidance as he leads our Church. We pray that together we will make disciples for Jesus Christ and witness a bountiful harvest within the Church of our Lord and Savior.

## **Make Your Voice Heard!** **Return Our Enclosed 2001** **Opinion Survey Now!**

Your opinions count! Church officials need to hear you! Use the enclosed envelope to send your survey now!

Last year our first Opinion Survey had a big impact and showed Iowa United Methodists want faithfulness, reform, and accountability in our Church. See the report of that survey on our Website: [www.mreform.org](http://www.mreform.org).

---

---

## **Welcome, Bishop Palmer**

All of us in *Methodist Laity Reform Movement* warmly welcome Bishop Gregory V. Palmer and Mrs. Palmer to Iowa. We are grateful for his deep commitment to Jesus Christ and his eagerness to bring the Gospel to all Iowans.

Bishop Palmer has met twice with several of our officers. He was generous with his time, listened attentively and sensitively to our concerns, and

## **Principles and Goals of** ***Methodist Laity Reform Movement***

Please read the important statement of our principles and our Reform Agenda.

To get your copy, or get more to give to friends, e-mail, fax, or phone us — or use the enclosed reply envelope.

Our information packet includes the Principles and Goals; you may order as many packets as you want, with no charge.

## **Laity Voice — A New Resource for The United Methodist Church in Iowa**

— by Noreen Miller, Editor

*Laity Voice* is published by *Methodist Laity Reform Movement*, a new group organized to allow laity in The United Methodist Church to have a support group and a place to express their viewpoints. This newsletter is a vehicle for individuals to present ideas and opinions, and to share resources that can help make our Church the best it can be.

For many years Iowa Annual Conference representatives have said the Conference exists for Local Churches. It has been said that laity should be more involved and take a more active part in making disciples for Jesus Christ. A school for laity was organized, district representatives were hired to work more closely with local churches, and emphasis was placed on developing leaders among the laity.

Now, *Methodist Laity Reform Movement* is furthering these ideas by organizing lay persons who want to make disciples for Jesus Christ by (1) keeping Scripture the primary emphasis; (2) honoring our Wesleyan heritage; and (3) being accountable to our *Book of Discipline*.

We believe laity in The United Methodist Church have many ideas that will encourage others in working to keep our denomination the dynamic church it has been in the past — ideas that will expand our efforts to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. *Laity Voice* will provide laity a new and exciting avenue of expression.

---



---

## **Don't Leave! Stay in The United Methodist Church and Help Us Work for Reform!**

We are loyal members of our Church. Let's not abandon all that is good in this great Church and John Wesley's heritage of heart-warming Christianity.

*Methodist Laity Reform Movement* believes faithful Christians are the majority within the UMC. With God's guidance we can change

what is wrong and strengthen all that is good.

Don't leave! Stay in The United Methodist Church and help us work for reform. You can make a real difference!

---



---

## **United Methodist Men's Congress at Purdue University, July 13-15. Plan to Attend!**

*Methodist Laity Reform Movement* strongly endorses this great gathering with the theme "2001: A Men's Odyssey: Christ's Men in the New Millennium."

Great speakers, great singing, great inspiration!

For information or to get a registration form, go to [www.gcumm.org/events](http://www.gcumm.org/events), or call United Methodist Men at 615-340-7145.

You may also contact Jim Smith, President, Iowa Conference United Methodist Men —

Phone: 641-673-4908 or

E-mail: [jamess@dcgnet.net](mailto:jamess@dcgnet.net)

## **Send Us Names!**

This first issue of *Laity Voice* will reach at least 20,000 Iowa United Methodists — a good start! But our Iowa Church has 200,000 members. Help us reach more of the other 180,000!

Please use the enclosed envelope to send us names and addresses of Iowa United Methodists. And send us your church directory or member list; mark everyone who might be interested. We will send our information packet to every name and address you give us.

## Legislators Are Warned: Church Lobbyist May Not Speak for Most Iowa United Methodists

The Board of Directors of *Methodist Laity Reform Movement* sent a letter to all Iowa Legislators, warning that the Iowa UMC's paid lobbyist, Lana Ross, is lobbying on some issues on which the UMC Iowa Annual Conference has not taken a stand.

For example, the lobbyist registered to lobby on the following issues even though the Iowa Annual Conference has not adopted a position on any of them:

— **against** property tax limits, veterans' organization honor guards, statistical information on abortions, a tax credit for teachers' expenses for students, a speed limit increase, and expanding Iowa's farm mediation law; and

— **for** reducing criminal penalties for burglary and forgery, and for automatically restoring felons' right to vote when they are released from prison or parole.

Our MLRM Board said, "These are among the many issues on which there is no clear Christian position; sincere Christians can and do disagree; and the church should not take sides."

*Methodist Laity Reform Movement* believes our Church should not have a paid lobbyist and should never allow any political faction — left-wing, right-wing, Republican, Democrat, Socialist, or any other — to promote its agenda through the Church. We oppose the paid lobbyist position, not the person.

Where do you stand on the paid lobbyist issue? Tell your Pastor and your Local Church's Lay Member of the Iowa Annual Conference, which meets June 8-10.

Read our entire letter to Legislators at [www.mreform.org](http://www.mreform.org), under Current Issues.

**Be certain to visit our website:**

**[www.mreform.org](http://www.mreform.org)**

## Something Good is Happening

Many good things are happening in United Methodist Churches across the country and in Iowa. Send us news of positive things so we may share with our readers.

For example, the Prayer Conference in Des Moines in November was well-attended and inspiring. Dr. Maxie Dunnam, Evelyn Christianson, Nancy Wilson, and workshop leaders provided strong motivation and help for a deeper, stronger prayer life.

The Prayer Conference was sponsored by the Iowa Board of Discipleship, Iowa United Methodist Men, and UMORE (United Methodists Organized for Renewal and Evangelism.)

Tell us about something good happening in your church or community. We'll spread the Good News. Write your ideas, comments, and suggestions to the Editor, Noreen Miller at 204 Eagle Drive, McGregor, Iowa 52157.

— Noreen Miller, Editor

### Pray and Speak Up: Iowa Annual Conference, June 8-10

Please join us in prayer for God to guide the Annual Conference and *Methodist Laity Reform Movement's* work for positive action in this Conference.

Tell your Pastor and your Local Church's Lay Member of the Annual Conference what you think about some issues in the enclosed Opinion Survey.

## Sex Education Manual: Caution Is Suggested

A group of *Methodist Laity Reform Movement* members carefully studied the *Christians and Sexuality* manual developed by the Human Sexuality Task Force of the Iowa Annual Conference for use by junior high youth and their parents.

Their report, written by our Co-Chair, Noreen Miller, recommends that this manual should not be used by anyone in its present form. They said the manual has some good material but it rejects God's judgments on sexual behavior, minimizes the authority of Scripture, promotes homosexuality, and omits Christ's transforming power.

The 2000 Iowa Annual Conference directed the Board of Discipleship to review this manual and take any needed action to ensure it is fully consistent with the UMC *Book of Discipline*. This action was proposed by Methodist Laity Reform Movement and accepted by the Board of Discipleship. We await its report.

The study group pointed out that a better sex education manual, *Let's Be Real*, is available as a United Methodist Church publication from Cokesbury at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com).

---



---

## God is Calling Your Name

By Sandy Cupples

Years ago, I was able to participate in a study of the Old Testament people who were called into God's service. I found myself often astonished at their responses to God's call. I was surprised by Moses, "Who? Me? Not Me!" and Jeremiah, "I'm too young! Who will listen? I couldn't believe that these men, upon hearing the call of God, would hesitate. Yet despite their fears, they went on to be mighty instruments for God.

Isaiah's answer to God's call is my favorite. "Here I am, Lord ...Send me!" Don't we all see ourselves answering in much the same manner? Don't we all in our heart of hearts, strive to be like Isaiah? Who

would not like to see ourselves as bold, strong, and courageous servants of our Lord?

Our problem may not be with our willingness to serve, but only in our hearing. Our world is so fast-paced these days, that we forget to make the time to "Be still, and know that God is God." I imagine God has whispered our names many times ...maybe even shouted them. Our response is sometimes worse than Moses and Jeremiah's. At least they recognized the call of God. We are often more likely to deny it altogether, "Did I hear something? No, couldn't be ...not me." And so we sit quietly, passively in the pews.

It's time to stop being deaf to God's call. We see the Church in trouble. We know there are problems within the system, and yet we keep sitting and nodding and smiling. Perhaps some of us think God couldn't be calling us because we aren't well educated on how the politics of the church work. We're not even sure we want to know. We're not in a position of power. We don't have a lot of clout. For the most part, we are just common people.

And, of course, there lies the answer. It's the common people for whom God is looking. It is YOU God is calling. It's His wisdom that guides the simple, and His power that strengthens the weak. God exalts the humble; His glory shines through them. He requires nothing of us, except our obedience.

Time and again in the Scriptures, God's people were led astray. Each time, God called a common man to take a stand and call His people back to Him. I see no difference between that time and now. Our Iowa Conference has strayed ...let us return to our foundation. Let us return to our God! After all, isn't that where Jesus leads us?

And the next time you're sitting quietly in the pew, listen up...I think God is calling your name. It's time to take a stand.

---

**Editor's Note:** Sandy Cupples is a Vice-Chair of *Methodist Laity Reform Movement*.



<p><i>Methodist Laity Reform Movement</i>          PO Box 763          Muscatine IA 52761          Phone: 800-334-8920 or 319-264-8000          Fax: 563-264-3363          E-mail: <a href="mailto:mreform@yahoo.com">mreform@yahoo.com</a>          Website: <a href="http://www.mreform.org">www.mreform.org</a></p>
--