

Ron Ramsey
Bishop, US National Conference

Office of the Bishop

2005 – 2007 REPORT TO THE US NATIONAL CONFERENCE

In the past few years the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, has gone through a period of dealing with controversial issues, transitions, and significant structural change. In light of all that has happened, I thought it would be well to reflect for a moment on what has changed, what has not changed, and what changes are still needed.

What has Changed

A new structure that eliminated annual conferences. Instead, we now have pastors and churches organized in “clusters.” I have been very pleased with the way the cluster structure is working. The cluster leaders have for the most part worked hard leading the churches in their cluster. In particular, it has been a great benefit when they have become involved in stationing pastors when I was unable to be present. I have appreciated their support and encouragement.

A new licensing process. It gives responsibility to cluster leaders and members of the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

A new process for stationing pastors. While pastors are still stationed, the stationing committee consists of the bishop as chairman, the local Personnel Relations Commission chairperson, a member of the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team, and the local church’s cluster leader. In effect, every church has its own stationing committee. Allowing some of the cluster leaders to assume leadership in several churches was very helpful and efficient.

Shortly after the 2005 National Conference, I implemented the new system to station a pastor at King Street Church in Chambersburg, Pa. It was a delight to work with the elders, cluster leader, and Todd Fetters in bringing about a great result due in large part to the cooperation of the elder team and Todd’s leadership. I have been blessed to not have a huge number of churches needing a new pastor, thus allowing us the time to work on the system.

A new assessment system. In the past, assessments for supporting denominational ministries were collected from local churches by the conferences, and the conference treasurer forwarded a check to the national office. Now, the UB Headquarters deals directly with each local church. This is a major change. However, it has gone much better than we expected, with nearly 95% participation.

Discipline. The *Discipline* underwent massive changes in 2005.

For the most part, the adjustments have gone fairly well. Disbanding the conferences, entering into a covenant agreement, forming clusters, assessing 3.5% of local church tithes and offerings—all of this has gone very smoothly.

What has Not Changed

- The name of our church. We are still the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.
- Our Confession of Faith.
- Our Core Values.
- God has not changed.
- Scripture.
- The Gospel.
- Inherited depravity has not changed.
- The purpose of the Church, which is to “make disciples.”

What Needs to Change

- Doing business as usual needs to be replaced with an outward focus that leads us to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples for Jesus. While this is beginning to take place in some churches, many more need to come on board with this mission.
- Our lack of focus on the real issues of evangelism and discipleship. In their place, maintenance and tradition have become the priorities.
- Outdated methods of ministry that do not lead to the engaging of our culture. There is a tendency to continue to do what we always

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have done without honest evaluation as to effectiveness.

- Changing the inward focus of “church is for me” to an outward focus where church is also for those who “aren’t here yet.”

- From a management system to a governance system where boards/elders govern, pastors lead, staffs manage, and congregations minister.

- Church dysfunction to church health. We need a true spiritual revival that comes as the result of applying biblical truths to our lives and in our churches.

- The rebranding of the denominational office. We will begin to unpack this later in the summer or early fall.

- Recruiting a number of successful pastors to plant churches or do restarts of some existing churches.

Mission and Vision

A new mission and vision statement for the national office has been adopted:

Mission: Our mission is to effectively resource pastors and congregations of the US National Conference to fulfill the Great Commission.

Vision: We envision every United Brethren in Christ USA church working together for spiritual health, which will result in:

- Courageous leaders and churches impacting their communities.

- Increasing numbers of people being won to Christ and growing to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

- Involvement in church multiplication.

Strategic Initiatives

At the first Executive Leadership Team meeting in September 2005, five strategic initiatives for the US National Conference were presented, debated, and approved. Those five strategic initiatives are:

1. Implement and encourage an atmosphere where multiplication of leaders and churches will be considered as normal.

2. Encourage spiritual formation and renewal within the church of the United Brethren in Christ.

3. Actively equip churches and pastors for effective ministries.

4. Develop a plan to identify and retain those who are being called into fulltime Christian service.

5. Discover, evaluate, and articulate the

perceived brand image of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

Strategic Transition Plan (see Report 43)

A strategic plan was adopted by the Executive Leadership Team in October 2006. This plan is based on our mission, vision, and strategic initiatives. Its purpose is to assist our churches in transitioning to becoming healthy, reproducing congregations. This plan is based on four convictions:

1. Local churches are the God-ordained vehicles for reaching the lost.

2. Reaching the lost must be the highest priority of the church.

3. Everything rises and falls on leadership.

4. The sole purposes of the national office are to recruit leaders, to resource and develop leaders, and to assist local churches to fulfill their mission through assessment, coaching, and support.

Executive Leadership Team

The 2005 US National Conference elected one minister and one layperson from each of the four districts, and then I had the freedom to recommend four more persons (one person from each district, two of them clergy and two of them laypersons). We held our first meeting September 12-13, 2005.

These persons served on the ELT during the past two years (the third person listed with each region is the one that the ELT appointed):

- Ron Ramsey, bishop (chairperson)

East Region:

- Todd Fetters (senior pastor, Devonshire UB, Harrisburg, Pa.).

- Annette Sites (pastor's wife, Jerusalem Chapel, Churchville, Va.).

- Sherwood Cook (layperson, Mount Pleasant UB, Chambersburg, Pa.).

Central Region:

- Tom Brodbeck (minister, Prince of Peace UB, Springfield, Ohio).

- Brian Hughes (layperson, Mainstreet Church, Walbridge, Ohio).

- Debbie Voight (pastor's wife, Lancaster UB, Lancaster, Ohio). *Note:* Debbie was appointed to replace the original appointee Molly Kessler. Molly attended one meeting, but left the ELT when her husband, Josh, accepted a staff position in another denomination.

North Region:

- Lester Smith (senior pastor, Hillsdale UB, Hillsdale, Mich.).

- Dan Paternoster (layperson, Fowlerville UB, Fowlerville, Mich.).
- Phil Whipple (senior pastor, Colwood UB, Caro, Mich.).

West Region:

- Dennis Miller (senior pastor, Emmanuel UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Thad Clements (layperson, Chanute UB, Chanute, Kansas).
- Tom Datema (senior pastor, Zanesville UB, Zanesville, Ind.).

Serving in advisory capacities were: Gary Dilley, Pat Jones, G. Blair Dowden, Steve Dennie, Marci Hammel, Tom Blaylock, and Donna Hollopeter.

Leadership Teams

The *Discipline* calls for six leadership teams. As bishop, I recommended a chairperson to the Executive Leadership Team and then worked with that chairperson in selecting the remaining team members. All of these appointments were subject to approval by the Executive Leadership Team. I am also automatically a member of each leadership team, most of which meet twice a year.

Healthy Church Leadership Team

The Healthy Church Leadership Team held a couple of meetings. However, it became clear that we didn't really need this team, and that it would be better to just let Pat Jones, the cluster leaders, and myself handle these functions. So during the second year of the biennium, this team became inactive. The funds saved (mostly travel costs) then became available to help local churches more directly.

These are the persons who served on the HCLT:

- Phil Whipple, chairperson (senior pastor, Colwood UB, Caro, Mich.).
- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Roger Burk (associate pastor, East Washington UB, Ashley, Mich.).
- David Riddle (senior pastor, Element Church, Blissfield, Mich.).
- Paul Hirschy (bishop emeritus; College Park UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Frisco Short (layperson, King Street Church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Dana Gretzinger (worship leader, Lighthouse Community Church, Williamston, Mich.).
- Dan Reimenschneider (Missionary

Church USA Healthy Church Coordinator).

- Jim Bolich (senior pastor, Prince Street UB, Shippensburg, Pa.).
- Mark Vincenti (Associate Pastor of Student Ministries, King Street Church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Pat Jones, advisory (Director of Healthy Church Ministries).

Global Ministries Leadership Team

Gary Dilley was instrumental in giving me recommendations for members of the Global Ministries Leadership Team. Seven of these person also served during the 2001-2005 quadrennium, including Luke Fetters as chairperson. The entire team during the past two years consisted of these persons:

- Luke Fetters, chairperson (professor at Huntington University; College Park UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Dave Datema (endorsed missionary, US Center for World Mission, Pasadena, Calif.).
- Randy Fennig (senior pastor, Prince of Peace UB, Springfield, Ohio).
- Lois Mason (layperson, Element Church, Blissfield, Mich.).
- Ruth Ann Price (missionary in residence at Huntington University; College Park UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Jeff Sherlock (professor at Tri-State University in Angola, Ind.; College Park UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Billy Simbo (senior pastor, Evangel UB, Kendall Park, N. J.).
- Kurt Uhen (layperson, Emmanuel UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Brian Magnus (bishop, United Brethren Church in Canada).
- Ruth Benner (layperson, Grace UB church, Sherkston, Ontario).
- Gary Dilley, advisory (Director of Global Ministries).
- Donna Hollopeter, advisory (Associate Director of Global Ministries).

Church Multiplication Leadership Team

Tom Blaylock was hired in the fall of 2005 to work part-time as our Director of Church Multiplication; he simultaneously filled a similar role for the Michigan District of the Missionary Church. I named Tom to chair this team.

The members are:

- Tom Blaylock, chairperson (Director of Church Multiplication).

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- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Dan Kopp (senior pastor, Northpointe UB, Lewis Center, Ohio).
- Howard Matthews (senior pastor, Homefront Church, Grandville, Mich.).
- Bob Ransom (Director of US Ministries, The Missionary Church USA).
- Pat Jones, advisory (Director of Healthy Church Ministries).

Higher Education Leadership Team

Because of requirements in the Huntington University Bylaws, the members of the Higher Education team were given four-year terms. Members of this group also serve as trustees of Huntington University. The following persons were appointed to this team, and will continue serving until 2009:

- Paul Moyer, chairperson (layperson, Faith Community Church, Findlay, Ohio).
- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Mike Caley (pastor, Banner of Christ UB, Byron Center, Mich.).
- Randy Carpenter (pastor, Oak Harbor UB, Oak Harbor, Ohio). Randy served only one year in this position, and was not replaced.
- Tom Clounie (layperson, Emmanuel UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Pat Jones (Director of Healthy Church Ministries).
- Kelly Savage (layperson, Banner of Christ UB, Byron Center, Mich.).
- Keith Schall (layperson, Morning Star UB, Kokomo, Ind.).
- G. Blair Dowden, advisory (Director of Higher Education; President of Huntington University).

Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team

This is a new team created in 2005. Tom Brodbeck chaired the PMLT for the past two years, and prior to that chaired the Commission on Ministry, its predecessor. A lot of work has come to this group. They did the following:

- Appointed regional Ministerial Licensing and Ordination teams to interview and assess ministerial candidates.
- Revised the Pastoral Ministry Handbook, most of which was previously part of the *Discipline*.
- Dealt with a variety of issues regarding ministerial licensing, training, accountability, restoration, recruitment, etc.

The members during the 2005-2007 period were:

- Tom Brodbeck, chairperson (former superintendent of Central Conference; Prince of Peace UB, Springfield, Ohio).
- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Roger Burk (associate pastor, East Washington UB, Ashley, Mich.).
- Craig Burkholder (senior pastor, Hudson UB, Hudson, Ind.).
- Jim Ellifritt (former superintendent of Northwest Conference).
- Daryl Elliott (senior pastor, Fountain UB, Keyser, W. Va.).
- Tim Flickinger (senior pastor, Fowlerville UB, Fowlerville, Mich.).
- Gary House (professor in the Huntington University Graduate School).
- Marty Pennington (senior pastor, Mainstreet Church, Walbridge, Ohio).
- Edwin Recinos (senior pastor of The Cellular Church, Canyon Country, Calif.). Edwin served until the fall of 2006, when his congregation withdrew to affiliate with the Missionary Church.
- Ray Seilhamer (bishop emeritus; associate dean of the HU Graduate School; senior pastor, New Hope UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Denny Sites (senior pastor, Jerusalem Chapel, Churchville, Va.).

Administrative Leadership Team

The ALT oversees the financial operations of the US National Conference and the operation of the UB Headquarters building. This includes such things as the pension, insurance, and investment programs, staff, payroll, equipment, and maintenance. These persons served on the ALT during the past two years:

- Carol Morehead, chairperson (layperson, College Park UB church, Huntington, Ind.).
- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Tom Ayers (layperson, Anchor UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Russ Baker (layperson, Anchor UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Dale Hauptert (layperson, College Park UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Bob Loar (senior pastor, New Horizons UB, Rockford, Ohio).
- Lee Rhodes (senior pastor, Countryside UB, Breckenridge, Mich.).
- Marci Hammel, advisory (Finance Director).

Women's Ministry Team

The Women's Ministry Team is not a

full leadership team, but functions under the Healthy Church Leadership Team. The members during the 2005-2007 period were:

- Kathy Bruce, chairperson (Emmanuel UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Stacy Gentry (New Hope UB, Camden, Mich.).
- Jeanie Helman (King Street Church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Donnelle Raab (Banner of Christ UB, Byron Center, Mich.).
- Molly Shull (King Street Church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Annette Sites (Jerusalem Chapel, Churchville, Va.).

Donna Hollopeter served on the team until January 2006, when she stepped down. Stacy Gentry was appointed to take her place.

Youth Ministry Team

The Youth Ministry Team, like the Women's Ministry Team, served under the Healthy Church Leadership Team. These are the current members:

- Kent Koteskey, chairperson (Director of Student Ministries, Emmanuel UB, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Ron Ramsey (bishop).
- Matt McKeown (youth minister, First UB, Holly Hill, Fla.).
- Roger Vezeau (Pastor of Student Ministries and Education, College Park UB, Huntington, Ind.).
- Brent Liechty (associate pastor, Pathway Community Church, Jackson, Mich.).
- Craig Mickey (youth pastor, Prince Street UB, Shippensburg, Pa.).
- Brian Kramer (Pastor of Student Ministries, King Street Church, Chambersburg, Pa.).

Conferences

Disbanding of Conferences

Eight of the nine annual conferences have now disbanded.

Central Conference. Central Conference voted to disband during its meeting July 11-12, 2005. However, they couldn't formally disband until a lawsuit was settled. A six-person conference council provided oversight until the fall of 2006, when Central Conference was dropped from the lawsuit. Tom Brodbeck, formerly fulltime superintendent of Central Conference, continued serving part-time

until the conference could be dissolved. The conference was dismissed from the lawsuit in September 2006, and the conference council met on November 28, 2006, to sign the papers to officially dissolve the conference effective January 1, 2007.

Sandusky Conference. Sandusky Conference approved disbanding during its July 2005 meeting. All funds left over are to be given to Huntington University to be used for scholarships for students from the former Sandusky Conference.

Mid-Atlantic Conference. On November 12, 2005, at its mid-year session, Mid-Atlantic Conference voted unanimously to discontinue the conference at the end of 2005. Legal ownership of Rhodes Grove Camp and Conference Center was transferred to its board of directors. The Mid-Atlantic Foundation was established to provide group health insurance and stewardship services to churches.

Michigan Conference. Michigan Conference held its mid-year session in February 2006 and took action to disband the conference as of July 2006. They formed a new association to provide oversight of the Lane-Dulcena Home, Carson City Christian Camping Center, and the insurance program. This association is not under the authority of the general church. The conference had earmarked \$100,000 for a new church in Portland, Mich. That money was reallocated to church planting projects in Michigan during the next five years, under the oversight of the national Church Multiplication Leadership Team. Any money left after five years (2011) can be used by the CMLT for church planting anywhere.

Michindoh Conference. During its meeting in June 2005, Michindoh Conference voted 72-10 to empower its conference council to care for all the details of dissolution. Issues regarding the fate of the Michindoh Camp and Conference Center drew out that process. A special session of the annual conference was held on December 12, 2006, with most pastors and church delegates in attendance. The delegates again authorized the conference council to determine what would be done with the camp. In March of 2007, we were notified that ownership of Michindoh Camp and Conference Center had been transferred to Gull Lake Ministries, a well-respected Christian ministry near Battle Creek, Mich. Steps were being taken to make the dissolution of Michindoh Conference final. However, Gull Lake has since refused to

accept the camp, so the conference will need to continue until the future direction of the camp is settled.

Camps

Three of the major camps are now independent entities, with legal ownership having been transferred to the camp's board of directors. Those camps are:

- Rhodes Grove Camp and Conference Center (Chambersburg, Pa.). This was the campground of the former Mid-Atlantic Conference.

- Camp Cotubic (Bellefontaine, Ohio). This was the campground of the former Central Conference.

- Camp Living Waters (Luther, Mich.). This was a campground of the former Michigan Conference.

As already mentioned, the fate of Michindoh Camp and Conference Center remains uncertain.

Scioto Youth Camp in southern Ohio is operated during the summer by the Scioto Youth Camp Board.

The Carson City Campground in Carson City, Mich., is now under the umbrella of the Michigan association.

Churches

Churches that Withdrew

Otterbein Church. Otterbein Church of Waynesboro, Pa. withdrew on June 19, 2005, just a few days prior to the US National Conference meeting and is now an independent congregation. It was then our fourth-largest church, with an average attendance of 814 in 2004.

California Churches. Most of the churches of California Conference withdrew from the denomination during the fall of 2005 and started their own group, called United Believers in Christ. Although those churches had strongly supported the initiatives of UBHope, the group which opposed joining with the Missionary Church, and although we ultimately adopted many of the ideas which originated from UBHope, we were told by the California churches that they didn't agree with the direction we were going. Only two churches remained with us: the Cellular Church, a Hispanic congregation in Canyon Country; and the UB church in Pixley, Calif. These churches withdrew:

- Aguas en el Desierto (San Fernando).

- Casa del Dios Viviente (Lakewood).
- Faith Christian Fellowship (Sacramento).
- Glendale First Hispanic (Glendale).
- New Hope (Riverbank).
- Open Arms Community (Lakewood).
- Oxnard Hispanic (Oxnard).
- Palmdale Hispanic (Palmdale).
- Simi Valley Hispanic (Simi Valley).
- Victory Celebration Center (Burbank).
- Victory Hispanic (Burbank).

Cellular Church. In late 2006, we were informed that the Cellular Church had withdrawn in order to affiliate with the Missionary Church. The church, located in Canyon Country, California (the Los Angeles area), was perhaps our most successful church plant in the last 20 years. The church started in 1994 under the leadership of Pastor Edwin Recinos and, in 2005, reported an average attendance of 505 people. The Pixley UB church in Pixley, Calif., is now the only United Brethren church in California.

Hilltop. Hilltop UB church in Lake Havasu City, Ariz., withdrew on January 22, 2007. They wrote in a letter to the bishop, "We are not upset about any issue, and we hold no ill will toward the denomination. The decision was put to the congregation for a vote, and it was unanimously approved. We feel this move is the best for our church."

Hilltop began in the mid-1960s as First United Brethren Church under the leadership of Rev. Marvin Price. Using property donated by the McCulloch Corporation, First UB grew to become the largest church in what was then called Pacific Conference (later Arizona Conference). The most recent year for which we have statistics, 2005, shows an average attendance of 116. The only other churches remaining in Arizona are in Fountain Hills and Phoenix (the latter a Hispanic church).

Other Churches. In addition to the churches mentioned above, several other churches chose to withdraw from the denomination.

- Open Bible Fellowship (Safford, Ariz.) withdrew and went independent soon after the 2005 National Conference.

- Eastside UB church in New Castle, Ind., withdrew as of March 2006.

- The UB church in Leavenworth, Kansas, withdrew in early 2006.

- Southwest Community church in Wichita, Kansas, withdrew during the latter part of 2006.

- Cornerstone UB (Decatur, Ind.) joined the Missionary Church in 2006. They had, the year

before, merged with a local Missionary Church congregation, but hadn't yet decided which denomination they would stay with. The pastor is Mark Beers, who previously served the Gaines UB church in Caledonia, Mich.

● Highland Heights (New Castle, Pa.) withdrew in the fall of 2005.

● Jerry City (Jerry City, Ohio) withdrew in the fall of 2005.

● Mainsville UB (Shippensburg, Pa.) withdrew in March 2007.

● Pennfield UB (Battle Creek, Mich.) withdrew in early spring 2007.

Churches that Closed

● Living Water (Clarksburg, W. Va.).

● Red Mountain (Birmingham, Ala.).

● Mount Zion (Shade, Ohio).

Churches Received

Bethel Temple of Praise (Yonkers, N. Y.). This Jamaican congregation was accepted into the denomination in October 2006 by the Executive Leadership Team. The pastor, Dalton Jenkins, grew up as a UB in Jamaica Conference.

Lighthouse Community Church (Williamston, Mich.). Lighthouse was originally planted by Tom Blaylock. Under the current pastor, Thurm Payton, the congregation organized as an official UB church and was received January 28, 2007.

Church Fires

Three churches were severely damaged or destroyed by fires.

Park Layne. Two men were arrested on June 6, 2006, for starting a fire that morning which totally destroyed the Park Layne UB church in New Carlisle, Ohio.

Pleasant Hill. The Pleasant Hill UB church near Muncie, Ind., suffered a major fire on May 1, 2005. A dedication service for the restored building was held on May 7, 2006.

Jerusalem Chapel. On May 25, 2006, Jerusalem Chapel in Churchville, Va., suffered a major fire which destroyed the old sanctuary (going back 100+ years) and the Sunday school facilities, causing \$750,000 in damage.

Church Plants

The Sunfield UB church (Sunfield, Mich.) and Impact Wesleyan Church of Lowell, Mich., are partnering to start a church in Portland, Mich. Several families from Sunfield are participating in starting what will, eventually,

be solely a Wesleyan Church. This is a great example of Kingdom building.

In early 2007, Gordon Kettel began working to plant a church in Grand Ledge, Mich., on the west side of Lansing.

People

Headquarters Personnel

We have had just two staff changes during the past two years, both involving the same position. Sherry Rupert served as administrative assistant to myself, Pat Jones, and Steve Dennie until March 2006. Erinn Caley was hired to replace her, but she left on October 31, 2006, to accept a teaching position. Marsha Biard, a member of Anchor UB church in Fort Wayne, Ind., started in that position in December 2006.

The other staff are Darlene Burkett, who serves as Administrative Assistant to Global Ministries; Mabel Mundy, who is the assistant to Marci Hammel in Finance; Marilyn Waters, the manager of our bookstore; and Phyllis Stouder, the part-time shipping clerk in the bookstore. We are blessed to have such a staff of conscientious, dedicated persons. They go over and beyond on a regular basis.

Retirements

Larry Reinertsen (Bethany Evangelical Church, Carlisle, Pa.).

Ralph Fry (Ebenezer UB, Greencastle, Pa.).

Richard Raab (Richfield Road UB, Flint, Mich.).

Ron Cook (Salem UB, Chambersburg, Pa.).

Ordinations

Josh Kessler is the only person ordained during the past two years. He was assigned as pastor of Bethel UB in Elmore, Ohio, but soon accepted a staff position with another group.

Deaths in the Family

Dr. Richard Prabhakar, a long-time missionary in India, passed away in August 2005.

Archie Cameron, a missionary pioneer who started the Spanish work in Honduras, passed away on September 29, 2005, at age 87. He first went to Honduras in 1952, and continued living there until his death.

Jacob Stover, a long-time minister and superintendent in Mid-Atlantic Conference, passed away February 24, 2006.

Rev. W. M. Souder, a long-time minister

and conference superintendent in Midwest Conference, passed away on the morning of March 28, 2006.

Rev. Arnold Wagaman, a minister in Mid-Atlantic Conference, passed away October 27, 2006.

Rev. Nick Maynard, a minister in Midwest Conference, passed away early in 2007.

Rev. Matt Blanton, a minister in Central Conference, passed away April 20, 2007.

Rev. Gordon Overholt, a minister in Michigan Conference, passed away in April 2007.

Rev. Paul Flick, a minister in Mid-Atlantic Conference, passed away April 30, 2007.

Other Matters Worth Noting

Significant Meetings

January 25-26, 2006. We brought all of the newly-appointed cluster leaders to the Michindoh Camp and Conference Center (Hillsdale, Mich.) for two days of training. Over 30 cluster leaders came.

April 24-27, 2006. Youth Workers Summit at First UB church in Holly Hill, Fla. (sponsored by the Youth Ministry Team).

May 6, 2006. Day of Missions at Salem UB church in Chambersburg, Pa. (sponsored by Global Ministries).

May 20, 2006. Day of Missions at PraisePoint UB church in Willshire, Ohio (sponsored by Global Ministries).

June 10, 2006. The United Brethren Church in Canada held a big celebration to commemorate 150 years of ministry in Canada. Over 600 people attended.

September 22-24, 2006. UB Women's Conference in Shipshewanna, Ind. (sponsored by the Women's Ministry Team).

October 28-29, 2006. Tom Blaylock led a two-day retreat for church planters at The Legacy golfcourse near Blissfield, Mich. I participated, along with Pat Jones, Gary Dilley, and Steve Dennie. Tim Roehl, who serves in a church planting role with the Evangelical church, was the resource person.

November 6-8, 2006. Attend the Drive Conference at NorthPoint Community Church in Atlanta, Ga., with pastors and staff from UB churches with at least 400 people attending.

December 1-3, 2006. Pat Jones and I conducted our first Church Consultation at Banner UB, Grand Rapids, Mich.

January 3-4, 2007. The cluster leaders were brought to a hotel in Columbus, Ohio, for two days of instruction and encouragement. Dr.

Paul Borden was the resource person.

January 5-7, 2007. Pat Jones and I conducted the second church consultation. The church was Gaines UB in Caledonia, Mich.

March 10, 2007. Day of Missions at Eden UB church in Mason, Mich. (sponsored by Global Ministries).

April 23-25, 2007. Youth Workers Summit at First UB church in Holly Hill, Fla. (sponsored by the Youth Ministry Team).

May 11 - 13, 2007. Pat Jones and I conducted our third Church Consultation at the Eden UB church, Mason, Mich.

May 31 - June 3, 2007. The US National Conference met at Sawmill Creek Resort in Huron, Ohio, with over 820 people attending from around 150 UB churches.

Miscellaneous Notes

We did not publish the 2005-2007 UB *Discipline* in printed format. It was only made available online, though people could download the *Discipline* and print it out.

Bishop Emeritus Paul Hirschy began a new job as a development officer at Huntington University on January 25, 2006.

On October 17, 2006, Jeff Pelley, now 34, was sentenced to 160 years in prison for the shotgun slayings of his father, step-mother, and two step-sisters in 1989. Robert Pelley, Jeff's father, was pastor of the Olive Branch United Brethren church in Lakeville, Ind. (just south of South Bend). The bodies were found in the parsonage the next day, Sunday morning, by parishioners. Investigators said he was angry at his father for grounding him just before the high school prom.

Corporation papers were filed with the new name, Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

King Street Church of Chambersburg, Pa., held seven services on Christmas Eve Sunday, 2006, with a total attendance of over 3000.

Tim Walberg, a member of Element Church in Blissfield and Adrian, Mich., was elected to the US Congress in November 2006. Mark Souder, from Emmanuel UB in Fort Wayne, Ind., has served in the US Congress since 1994. He was re-elected in November 2006.

Conclusion

Observations

1. I am encouraged with the progress made in the past two years. There is developing an excitement of what can be as we have worked to present a new mission and vision. We are

gaining some traction. We still have a ways to go, but more and more positive attitudes are being expressed.

2. These past two years have been times of learning and growth for me personally. I have taken advantage of some key conferences, training seminars, mentoring from Paul Borden in church assessments, participation in the Great Commission Network, meeting with the pastors of our churches with attendance of over 400, participation in two separate times of Cluster Leader Training, and hiring an executive coach.

3. I have made 70 visits to local churches, some multiple times. I have visited churches in every geographical region and attended the disbanding sessions of every annual conference.

4. The staff in the UB Headquarters have been a busy group of people. All of the directors and managers have been very active in supporting the new vision and direction. The support staff work hard and are extremely loyal to the church. I owe each of them a debt of gratitude. Pat Jones has been tireless in coaching, training, and encouraging the cluster leaders. Gary Dilley continues to amaze with his perceptive thinking. Pat and Gary have been good sounding boards for me. Steve Dennie continues to support our efforts by providing good communication on our behalf. Marci Hammel and her staff have worked hard this year switching the accounting systems to a Mac-based program. It has been difficult in making what we need fit the Mac platform. Marilyn Waters has managed the bookstore very well and generated a nice profit for 2006. The support staff, Darlene Burkett, Phyllis Stouder and Mabel Mundy, go way beyond the "second mile" to make the office a pleasant place to work. Then the Administrative Assistant to Pat, Steve and myself, Marsha Biard, has been a great addition to our staff. I thank them all for their support as we try to resource our pastors and churches to fulfill the Great Commission.

National Conference Planning Team

In conclusion, I want to thank all the members of the planning team for their hard work at making this US National Conference event so successful. For an event like this to happen, it takes a lot of people working very, very hard for a relatively long period of time. We met four times beginning last fall, including once at Sawmill Creek Resort. Plus, we have had numerous email communications between the various team members. The members of the team were:

● Amy Pennington (Mainstreet Church, Walbridge, Ohio), who worked tirelessly on locating our site and working out logistics with Sawmill Creek.

● Marsha Biard, my Administrative Assistant, who worked so hard on the registrations.

● Chris Kuntz (Union Chapel, Fort Wayne, Ind.), who took the lead on developing the worship experiences including the sound, lights, and videos.

● Lee Rhodes (Countryside UB, Breckenridge, Mich.), for his work in arranging equipment for the seminars. Lee worked with Josh Greenfield (Gaines UB, Caledonia, Mich.) in developing the signage for the seminars and conference.

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● Dan Chamberlain and his team from King Street Church (Chambersburg, Pa.) for leading worship.

● The seminar leaders, the speakers, the exhibitors...

The problem of starting a list like this is the fear that someone will be left off inadvertently, and I hope that hasn't happened. I thank each one...thank you! Now we can begin working on National Conference 2009.