

THE COMMISSION ON COMMUNICATIONS

The Commission on Communications has been grappling with ways to increase the effectiveness of communication to the laity about conference events, ministries, and services and to assist congregations with their communication needs. The Commission recognizes that for communication to be effective, it must be done through multiple media and in multiple exposures. Both clergy and lay people have varied communications behaviors. Some will read e-mail, others the *Advocate* and newsletters, others brochures mailed to them, and others will seek out Web sites. E-mailing Web links or HTML documents to people who have requested them is one way to keep them informed about their UMC interests, such as lay speaking, UMW, UMM, youth activities or Disciple Bible study.

A communication audit to be performed by UMCOM was canceled as a result of the downturn in the economy. The audit would have provided useful information to the commission to shape new initiatives and improvements in conference communication. The commission will attempt to develop alternative sources of data to inform its actions to enhance conference communications.

The transition away from staff-driven communications to requiring boards and committees to do their own has raised some problems, and the commission and conference communications staff are attempting to provide information and advice to assist these groups.

Significant improvements have been made to the conference Web site, and moving some publications from printed products to the Web effects significant savings, though costs still are incurred in designing pages for the Web as they were for printed publications.

Greater use of e-mail newsletters about conference ministries and services is under consideration. Making it possible for lay members to register to receive information by e-mail about activities such as the Lay Convocation, Older Adult Spiritual Life Retreat, lay speaking retreat and camps and retreats would supplement the Web presence and reach persons who respond to e-mail but do not actively seek information by searching the Web.

The commission is cooperating with *The Advocate* and supports its efforts to inform conference clergy and laity of important activities and issues.

The commission plans to increase attention to the public relations and promotional needs of congregations and bodies within the conference and plans to explore ways to provide communications training in the districts to equip churches for ministry through communication.

Respectfully submitted,

J. William Click, Chairperson