

Methodists reaffirm stance on homosexuality

Iowa delegate to national convention holds hope for more inclusive position in future

By Keith E. Gottschalk
The Gazette

The 8.3 million-member United Methodist Church wrapped up its two-week General Convention on Friday in Pittsburgh by reaffirming church teaching on homosexuality, despite efforts by liberals among the nearly 1,000 delegates for a more inclusive posture.

Iowa delegates found themselves in the middle of the debates over same-sex marriage, the ordination of gay clergy and funding of gay and lesbian activism.

"I went there particularly con-

cerned as to where the church was going with the homosexual issue, and that was a frustrating part of the two weeks," said the Rev. Kathleen Moore, an alternate delegate from St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 1340 Third Ave. SE in Cedar Rapids.

Church conservatives won every vote taken on homosexual issues, reaffirming the United Methodist Church positions taken in previous General Conferences that homosexual practice is "incompatible" with Christian teaching.

"My greatest disappointment is

that we tried to insert language that faithful Christians can disagree on the issue of homosexuality," Moore said. "We lost that vote by a narrower margin than four years ago, which makes me hopeful."

Despite the disagreements, a suggestion by the Rev. Bill Hinson, a leader of the conservative Confessing Movement in the Methodist Church, that the two sides part ways was rejected out of hand.

Philip Carver, associate council director of the church's Iowa Annual Conference and a lay delegate from Coralville, played down divisions over the homosexual issue, noting that the final unity statement released by the nearly 1,000 delegates at the end of the conference

confirmed the church as a single body.

"I think our unity statement says it all," Carver said. "My sense is that the mission and ministry is broader than any single issue. We'll always have problems to address, but my hope is that the covenant of our relationship together that's lasted 200 years will continue to help us serve faithfully as God leads us."

Carver said the homosexual issue overshadowed positive votes for additional funding to the church's disaster relief efforts, creating a new division of ministry aimed at young people, and appropriating additional money to build missions and churches in Africa and train more people for leadership in mis-

sions.

Despite setbacks on gay and lesbian issues she supported, Moore is hopeful that conservatives will eventually reconcile their stances with society's changing attitudes toward homosexuality. She said the liberals were not going away.

"It seems to many of us that Hinson and others are trying to push the liberal wing out of United Methodism, that we'll give up and say, 'OK, we'll start another church,'" Moore said. "We have no intention of doing that."

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Vilsack calls for sentencing reforms

Case of abused wife brings up question of mandatory guidelines

DES MOINES (AP) — Gov. Tom Vilsack said Tuesday that lawmakers need to take politics out of the debate over mandatory criminal sentencing and instead work on changes that make sense.

"It's time for both parties to put the swords away and basically suggest that crime and those issues are sort of off the table in terms of politics," Vilsack said.

The issue of the state's sentencing laws arose Monday when District Judge Charles Smith said during a hearing that the mandatory guidelines set in 1997 were wrong.

He said lawmakers removed judges' discretion and consideration of mitigating factors in cases such as Dixie Shanahan, who killed her husband in August 2002 and stored his decomposing body in a bedroom in the family home for more than a year.

Shanahan testified that she killed her husband in self-defense because he threatened to kill her and her unborn child.

Smith was critical of the sentence he had to give the 36-year-old Defiance woman to serve, which will require her to serve at least 35 years of a 50-year sentence before being eligible for parole.

Vilsack would not comment specifically on the Shanahan case because he said he could be asked to consider a pardon or commutation of her sentence.

Vilsack, who has supported mandatory sentences in the past, said criminals who injure others must be held accountable but that mandatory terms may not be as effective in non-violent cases.

DEATH NOTICES AND OBITUARIES

Death notices and obituaries can be submitted to The Gazette between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, 3 to 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and 4 to 7 p.m. on holidays. Daily submissions must be made by 7 p.m.

Arrangements pending and death notices, including immediate survivors, and a photo of the deceased are published as a news item on this page. These notices must conform to Gazette style and sequence or the item is subjected to the per-word charge.

Other obituary material, including additional survivors, employment, education, military service, civic and social activities, accomplishments, special interests and hobbies, friends, pets, memorials and eulogies will be published for 35 cents per word.

Second-day funeral notices and other deaths (formerly out-of-town) will be published at 35 cents per word.

Emblems to accentuate the deceased's involvement in various organizations are available at \$10 each. Up to three symbols may be used per obituary.

See your funeral director for help in preparing an obituary. For further information about The Gazette's guidelines call 398-8221.

Iowa honors fallen officers

Des Moines ceremony set to coincide with National Police Week

DES MOINES (AP) — As bagpipes played "Amazing Grace," Gov. Tom Vilsack and Department of Public Safety Commissioner Kevin Techau on Tuesday honored the 128 Iowa police officers who have died and to recognize those who continue to serve.

Vilsack and Techau placed a wreath at the Iowa Peace Officers Memorial during a ceremony, set to coincide with National Police Week.

"Our democracy is strong and free because we have men and women who are willing to put their life on the line every single day," he said. "So the rest of us could go about our business without having to think about whether or not it is a dangerous world."

Vilsack said the ceremony "gives us the opportunity to reflect and to remember and also to say thank you."

About 50 officers from various agencies and the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy stood at attention throughout the solemn ceremony, held at the memorial east of the Capitol.

About 150 people attended the ceremony, which included a 21-gun salute and a lone bugler playing "Taps."

"With a strange mixture of sorrow and pride we pause from the busyness of life and remember that these servants of society gave more than they should have had to give," Iowa State Patrol Chaplain Michael Roberts said.

While no officers were



With sword raised, Lt. Doug Mollenhauer of the Iowa State Patrol takes part in a ceremony at the Iowa Peace Officers Memorial on Tuesday on the state Capitol complex in Des Moines.

killed in Iowa last year, six Iowans are among 362 fallen officers whose names will be added to the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington on Thursday.

They include Dennis McDerry, a deputy with the Davis County Sheriff's Department, who died on Jan. 3, 2003.

McDerry was struck by a

Iowans honored

Six officers will be added to the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Thursday. They are:

■ Newton Fred Collings, 41, Union County Sheriff, died March 9, 1926. He was shot while informing a landowner that property would be taken under imminent domain.

■ Dennis McDerry, 45, a deputy with the Davis County Sheriff's Department, who died on Jan. 3, 2003. He was struck by a Wapello County reserve officer's car while placing road spikes on a highway during a high-speed chase near Bloomfield.

■ Jacob Neibert, 42, a Muscatine police officer, died on June 13, 1896. He was shot while arresting two suspects for vagrancy.

■ Charles C. Platner, 49, died Sept. 3, 1905. He was accidentally shot when his partner's gun fell from its holster and discharged during a foot pursuit of burglary suspects.

■ Virgil Untied, 33, a night marshal with the Minburn Police Department, who died on July 27, 1931. He was shot while attempting to arrest three people robbing a local grocery store. The suspects were never apprehended.

■ George Wilson, 50, a detective with the Council Bluffs Police Department, died on July 9, 1907. He was shot while searching for a suspect who had just shot another officer.

Source: Associated Press and the non-profit Officer Down Memorial Page Inc.

Wapello County reserve officer's car while placing road spikes on a highway during a high-speed chase near Bloomfield.

Intermodal facility may cut grain truck congestion in C.R.

By Dave DeWitte
The Gazette

Plans for a new truck-to-rail intermodal facility on the Iowa Northern Railroad in Butler County could mean fewer grain trucks clogging Cedar Rapids streets.

Shear Elevator Inc. plans to construct a facility for unloading and loading bulk materials near Clarks-ville in Butler County. The project's sponsors say it will offer corn producers in northern Iowa an economical alternative to trucking their grain to Archer Daniels Midland in Cedar Rapids, saving 3 cents to 5 cents per bushel.

The Iowa Transportation Commission approved a \$271,000 loan from the state's Intermodal Pilot Project Program on Tuesday to help finance the rail portion of the project.

"This will keep some more trucks out of Cedar Rapids, which is a good thing because there's quite a bit of congestion," said Peggy Baer, director of the Office of Rail Transportation in the Iowa Department of Transportation.

In addition to reducing congestion in Cedar Rapids, the project is expected to reduce the fuel used in transporting grain to market by 48,000 gallons annually.

Although the facility will be operated by Shear Elevator, Baer said the intermodal facility will be open to all grain shippers.

Although grain will be the primary commodity moving through the facility, it will also be able to handle other bulk commodities.

The \$271,000 loan at an annual interest rate of 2 percent will have a 10-year repayment period.

Iowa Northern Railroad, a Class III railroad, is based in Greene.

It runs in a southeasterly direction from Manley to Cedar Rapids, where it interchanges with the Union Pacific, Canadian National and CRANDIC railroads. ADM manufactures high-fructose corn syrup and ethanol in Cedar Rapids.

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IOWA NEWS

New York gay rights group joins Iowa gay divorce case

DES MOINES — A prominent New York-based gay rights group and the American Civil Liberties Union have asked the Iowa Supreme Court to uphold a divorce granted by an Iowa judge to a lesbian couple.

The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund filed its friend-of-the-court brief Monday.

The state's high court in February agreed to review a divorce decree granted last November by Woodbury County District Judge Jeffrey Neary to two Sioux City women. Neary later reworded the decree to refer to civil union instead of marriage.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, six state lawmakers and an Iowa church had appealed Neary's ruling, arguing that he overstepped his authority because Iowa law does not recognize gay marriage.

The Iowa Supreme Court has not set a date to hear arguments in the case.

Drunken driver given a 15-year sentence

DES MOINES — A Polk County judge has sentenced Donald Corwin of Ankeny to 15 years in prison for the latest of five alcohol- and driving-related crimes and required a \$1 million bond to free the man if he appeals.

Corwin, 54, was convicted last month of drunken driving and being a habitual violator of state laws. His history includes three other drunken-driving convictions and a fourth in 1996 for alcohol-related vehicular homicide.

John Hallengren, father of 19-year-old Heather Hallengren, who was killed during a 1996 collision with Corwin, said he was pleased with the sentence but still believes Iowa's drunken-driving laws are inadequate.

Virtual School to end due to lack of funds

FORT DODGE — After one year of operation, Iowa's Virtual School Program will end.

The Pocahontas School Board voted Monday to end the program due to a lack of funding. The state classified the program as home school assistance rather than a regular education program. That meant a 42 percent cut in state funding.

To keep the program going, class sizes next year would have had to be reduced from six to four, said Mike Wright, superintendent of the Pocahontas and Laurens-Marathon School District.

About 32 students participated in the virtual school.

Associated Press

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