



The Rev. Dale Shotts speaks at a March 10 rally in Washington calling on Congress to reform bankruptcy laws.

UMNS photos courtesy of the PICO Network

Methodists join rally against foreclosures

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — As a community organizer in Kansas City, the Rev. Dale Shotts has first-hand experience of the effects of home foreclosures on families and neighborhoods. “People are losing their homes because our nation has made a god of excessive profits, and we have not listened to the voice of real prophets of many faith traditions,” declared Shotts, who is director of social justice ministries at St. Luke’s United Methodist Church and a leader of “Communities Creating Opportunity” in Kansas City. Shotts was among the clergy and foreclosure victims riding the “Recovery Express” bus caravan, which made an eight-city cross-country tour March 6-10 before joining a rally and prayer service on Capitol Hill in Washington. The caravan and rally was sponsored by PICO, a national network of faith-based community organizations working to revitalize neighborhoods in 150 cities and 17 states.

Mission agency to cut \$3.9 million from budget

NEW YORK, NY (UMNS) — The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries is reducing its 2009 operating budget by \$3.9 million, or 7 percent, because of a combination of economic factors. The reduction affects an approved core budget of \$57.6 million, a figure that does not include the Women’s Division, the corporate unit of United Methodist Women, or the United Methodist Committee on Relief. A Feb. 13 letter to Global Ministries’ directors indicated that the operating budget could change if the financial picture improves in the coming months. “This is stressful but essential to keep within our means in this time of global economic downturn,” said the Rev. Edward W. Paup, the mission agency’s top executive.



Edward Paup

Michigan churches adjust to economic downturn

ADRIN, Mich. (UMNS) — For the first time in memory, eight senior pastors in the Detroit Conference are projecting their churches may not be able

to pay their 2009 apportionments in full. They serve some of the largest churches in the conference. They recently sent a letter about their concerns to the president of the conference’s Council on Finance and Administration. The pastors cited cutbacks in program and staffing already made and forecast a cut in dollars budgeted for apportionments in 2009.

“At this point we conservatively anticipate the combined shortfall could total \$250,000,” they wrote. They stressed the need to “balance our support for the ministry of the annual conference and the General Church and caring for our responsibility to build strong local congregations which in turn will be able to pay their apportionments.” The letter noted the “dramatic compromise on the local level” and looked for the same on the conference level.

Florida apportionments rolled back to 2008 levels

LAKELAND, Fla. (UMNS) — Local churches in the Florida Conference, already hit hard by the downturn in the economy, massive foreclosures and job losses, are receiving some good news courtesy of the conference’s Council on Finance and Administration. Effective immediately and retroactively, apportionment levels for 2009 will be “rolled back” to 2008 levels. This will result in an approximate 10 percent reduction in the amount of money churches will contribute to their connectional giving, known as apportionments. The rollback, approved at the council’s Feb. 13 meeting in Lakeland, will send a signal to local churches that the conference is taking the financial crisis seriously, said the Rev. Tim Smiley, chair of CFA and pastor at Plantation UMC. Smiley said that conference reserves will make up the difference between what was apportioned in 2009 and what will now be, in effect, 2008 apportionment levels.

17 conferences pay 100 percent of general church commitment

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Seventeen U.S. annual conferences gave 100 percent or more in 2008 to The United Methodist Church’s apportioned funds, and 37 conferences increased their giving over 2007 figures, according to the United Methodist Council on Finance and Administration. The total collected from all 63 U.S. conferences was \$130.6 million. The total percentage paid in 2008 was 86.24 percent of the apportioned amount of \$150.97 million, said A. Moses Rathan Kumar, top executive for the denomination’s financial agency. “Indicators of the U.S. financial markets tell us our levels of giving should be down significantly,” Kumar said. “The numbers in this report indicate that the people of The United Methodist Church see a different reality.”

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