

Media Release

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CHURCH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM WILL DEVELOP LEADERS ACROSS STATE

Wichita, Kan., -- The Kansas United Methodist Church received two \$38,000 grants to fund the L³ Leadership Incubator system, a program that will provide sustainable, peer-group-based, mission-driven, leadership development programs in 212 congregations across the state beginning in September 2006.

L3 Leadership Incubator creates an environment where spiritual leaders and ideas are born, nurtured, and developed by using cutting-edge technology and prayerful dialogue. L3 stands for three levels of development: love, learn and lead. L1, loving God and neighbor; L2, learning personal gifts and abilities for the future through investigation of current context and congregation; and L3, implementing an Incubator Ministry Action Plan with others in the church setting.

Participants in the Incubator make a commitment to meet once a month for 12 months for peer-to-peer learning and support. Participating pastors will facilitate an incubator group for laity in their congregation where they create a ministry action plan that develops disciple-making ministries in their specific congregations. These groups also will participate in four continuing-education seminars following the Incubator.

“What I saw in the Incubator was both an opportunity to focus my ministry and an opportunity to establish collegial relationship with other clergy,” said Kent Melcher, Area Superintendent of New Church Development for the Kansas West Conference. Melcher led Topeka-area pastors through the 12-month process in 2004 and 2005. “There was a great sense of community among the clergy, a great depth of sharing where we challenged each other as well as supported each other.”

The first three Incubators begin in September. Eight members of the first-generation will lead second-generation incubators starting in January 2008. This process will provide leadership development opportunities for 228 clergy leaders and 212 congregations in the state.

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Funding for this project was provided in part by the Kansas Health Foundation, Wichita, Kan., and the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, Hutchison, Kan. The Kansas Health Foundation is a philanthropic organization whose mission is to improve the health of all Kansans.

The incubator process will be supplemented by additional strategies aimed at revitalizing small-membership congregations, some served by full-time clergy, but many of whom are served by part-time clergy.

The implementation will be carried out by a new area-wide revitalization task force that will be responsible for implementing, evaluating and adjusting the plan. Additional grants of \$25,000 from the Kansas Health Foundation and the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund will support the evaluation of the initiative.

There are more than 164,000 United Methodists and nearly 700 United Methodist churches in Kansas.