

NIC VOICE News Update 06-29-2005 Elgin Methodist Church Closes

Please do not respond to this email unless you would like to send a distribution email to the entire group. All lists are moderated.

NIC VOICE is a network of laity in the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church.

NIC VOICE posts news related to the Northern Illinois Conference, as well as GC/JC/AC Conference updates at the **NIC VOICE** web site (www.nicvoice.org).

Other news of interest across the UMC included in **NIC VOICE** news updates are now being posted in the [NIC VOICE forum](#) at [Faithful Christian Laity Discussion Forum](#).

Grace United Methodist closes its doors after 123 years.

By Christine S. Moyer <mailto:cmoyer@scn1.com?Subject=SCN1.Story.Response>
STAFF WRITER

ELGIN - On the corner of South and Jackson Streets, tucked between houses of another era, sits the brick and stone building nearly 50 Elgin residents call home.

Behind its Venetian stained-glass windows have been countless baptisms, confirmations and marriages.

But today, Grace United Methodist Church is closing its doors after 123 years, sealing within its walls more than a century of memories as it waits to be sold to the highest bidder.

<snip>

Grace, like many small, neighborhood churches, was succumbing to mounting costs and declining membership, so it is merging with a larger church, Wesley United Methodist.

Wesley began as a German-speaking congregation and originally was housed in the basement of Grace, according to the Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Elgin district superintendent for the Northern Illinois Conference of United Methodist Churches.

Thus, Christopherson said the merging of the two is a really significant link.

However, Quisenberry viewed it as an example of the conference's new vision that the big church and the mega-church are the future.

"They feel if the church is going to grow, you have to get rid of the little churches bleeding resources," she said. "And if that's what you believe, then naturally you want to get rid of Grace."

According to Christopherson it was declining membership and increasing utility and insurance costs that led to Grace's closure.

Tension with denomination

But not all agree with that assessment.

Tension has existed for decades between the congregation of Grace and the governing body of the United Methodist Churches, according to parishioners.

And many blame the conference for Grace's problems and, ultimately, its closing.

Quisenberry said Grace most likely would have closed eventually, but decisions made by the conference caused it to happen 10, 15 or 20 years earlier.

Among the congregation's most prominent issues are the conference's choice of pastors for the church and its refusal to permit the local church to pursue historical landmark status.

Parishioner George Albee said many of the pastors recently appointed to Grace have been poor speakers and have had such thick accents they were difficult to understand.

And then there was the conference's objection in 2001 to the landmark status given to Grace's building by the city of Elgin.

After the conference's threat to sue the city and the church if the historical designation was not rescinded, the Elgin Heritage Commission stripped the church of its landmark status.

Christopherson said the conference discourages landmark designations for churches because "of the strings attached to that status."

She said it impedes a church and blocks property owners from modernizing or making changes to the church.

But for Albee it was simply blind opposition.

"There's absolutely no reason for it," he said. [Read More](#)

<snip>

NIC VOICE does not report all news that may of interest to United Methodists. Following are links for other sources of news:

For ongoing, updated news of interest about the UMC:

Click on "[News](#)" at: [The UnOfficial Confessing Movement Page](#) . This website is "unofficial" and in no way represents the views or opinions of "official movements." Its

purpose is to provide timely information regarding movements of spiritual, biblical, and traditional Wesleyan Methodist renewal and concern in the Churches called Methodist.

Renewal/Reform of UMC (evangelical/orthodox/traditional):

UCMPage.org

[UCMPage News](#)

[Good News](#)

[Confessing Movement](#)

[Institute for Religion and Democracy, UM Action](#)

[RENEW, a network for Christian Women of the UMC](#)

[Concerned Methodists](#)

UMC Related: Progressive/Liberal

[Church Within a Church](#)

[SoulForce - United Methodist Denominational Page](#)

[Methodist Federation for Social Action](#)

[Reconciling Ministries Network](#)

[Links & Resources on RMN Site](#)

[Affirmation United Methodists for Gay, Lesbians and Bisexual Concerns](#)

[Links Related to "Covenant Services" in the United Methodist Church](#)

UMC News and Information:

[The United Methodist Church Web Site](#)

[UMC Directory - Churches, Annual Conferences, Agencies](#)

[Newscope - Online](#)

[Interpreter Online](#)

UMC Independent News:

[United Methodist Reporter Interactive](#)

Additionally, for up-to-date news, you can set news alerts by topic at **Google News Alerts:**

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

Some potential topics:

- **United Methodist**
- **Methodist General Conference**
- **Methodist Annual Conference**
- **Methodist Jurisdictional Conference**
- **Your bishop**
- **Beth Stroud**