

**GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE
ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS CONFERENCE,
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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In relation to geography, the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) is worthy of close scrutiny. Established in 1996, with a mission to form disciples of Jesus Christ (according to the conference website), the IGRC consists of 10 districts in downstate Illinois. The conference centers on United Methodist churches in the southern three-fourths of Illinois, as seen in Figure 1, and excludes all or part of 15 counties in the northern portion of the state. The other conference in Illinois, the Northern Illinois Conference, is, of course, much smaller in terms of geographical area covered. However, it is almost as big as the IGRC in terms of clergy and churches present because of the urban areas of Cook and surrounding counties.

The IGRC is geographical raw material in several ways. First, I will focus on district boundaries, as shown in Figure 2. When looking at the map of the conference, the boundaries of the 10 districts do not seem to follow a consistent pattern. Boundaries sometimes run along county lines, roads, or waterways for a bit, but eventually they follow nothing notable. The boundaries will randomly curve and skew, sometimes multiple times depending on the district. Second, I will discuss the district names, comparing the old naming system to the new and reflecting on interviewee thoughts regarding the two systems. Third, I will examine pastoral migration from one church to another in the conference and talk about the process of assigning pastors. Finally, I will look at cultural geography across the conference and share some cultural facts and impressions that I learned when talking with interviewees.

Methodology

I consulted several sources as I gathered commentary and published data for my study. The audience I was targeting to talk with for the project included people with knowledge of either the IGRC or the United Methodist Church. At the early stages of the project, I came up with four different questionnaires I would use to interview different categories of people. The people I targeted had different knowledge bases regarding the information I was trying to access. The questionnaires were as follows: Questionnaire for Pastors/Retired Pastors/other Church Members, Questionnaire for a High-Ranking Conference Official, Questionnaire for the Bounding Committee, and Questionnaire for District Superintendents (DS) (Appendix). In addition to the questionnaires, I also prepared and got approved an informed consent script sheet for each human subject I talked with during the project. I handed the sheet to the person if the interview was done in-person. If the interview was done over the telephone, I emailed the sheet as an attachment to the interviewee. The informed consent script outlined the purpose of the study and said that it was a voluntary interview and that the interviewee could discontinue the interview at any time without penalty. Finally, the sheet had three phone numbers the interviewee could later call if he or she had questions about the project.

When I spoke with different people to get answers for this project, I contacted them ahead of time. For people I knew before the interviews, I asked them if they would be interested in answering a few questions to help me with a project. For people I did not know, I sent them an introductory email introducing myself and explaining the project. I then asked if they were

interested in participating in an interview in-person or via telephone, depending on where they lived. To the email I attached the informed consent script. For some people, I attached the questionnaire so they would be able to look at what we would be discussing. Eventually, people would email or call me back and I would then set up a date and time for the interview. The interviews were a big chunk of the project. I did a total of 15 interviews in person and six interviews over the telephone. The times of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to two hours.

The interviews I did in-person required minimal travel for the most part, with a couple of exceptions. I went to the conference office in Springfield and interviewed a high-ranking member of the conference, one of the District Superintendents, and another person. Earlier, I had also spoken with a DS face to face and with an Iroquois River District pastor in his hometown as well. Otherwise, the interviews in-person required only short drives within my hometown of Troy or close to or on the campus of Illinois State University. The first person I interviewed for the project was a very big help, and I consider the person to be a “super source.”

As for the phone interviews, the locations of the people I talked to were spread out across Illinois. These dispersed phone interviews included 20-25 minute conversations with two members of the DS rank. I also used the phone to speak with pastors serving the Vermilion River District and Kaskaskia River District. The phone interviews were helpful, but the in-person interviews were more helpful. I understood things more clearly with the in-person interviews. At times, it was difficult to follow and understand what the other person was trying to say on the telephone. Other than the conference office and DS offices, places at which I spoke with people included restaurants, churches, homes, apartments, a retirement home, and offices.

When I went to the conference office, I left with some materials that I referred to when necessary while working on the project. The conference office gave me official Journal-Yearbooks from 1996 until 2011. I already had the 2012 and 2013 copies from another source. The Journal-Yearbooks have tons of information regarding the conference and happenings over the previous year. They also contain things discussed at the annual conference meeting, where the entire conference convenes each year. The Journal-Yearbook contains contact information for all conference personnel and pastors, as well as records of where pastors have served since they were ordained. I obtained there a large road map of the state of Illinois, which had the districts drawn onto it previously.

For the other major aspect of my project, pastoral migration, I utilized the Journal-Yearbooks and the conference website. Originally, I had a Microsoft Excel sheet of 150-200 pastors; and I was interested in finding out where they had served over the course of their career and in displaying the results on a map. I had more columns with notes regarding each pastor such as total number of churches served and if they had served out of state as well. However, I only ended up looking into where they served during their years as a pastor. The sample of pastors I used was random. To draw my random sample I utilized the historical record of clergy section of the 2013 official Journal-Yearbook and picked the first pastor on the far right-hand column of the right pages in that section for my sample. There were some exceptions in the sample, however. First, for a few pastors, in my original sample, for those who served out of state, in the military, or at other states, I was not able to figure out where they were located, so I omitted them and chose a replacement farther down the column. Second, for others in the sample, I skipped down and used someone else because I knew, for the replacement pastors, where all the places were located at where they had served. I moved on and used these clergy because I knew I would be able to map all the places they had served because I knew I could find where all the locations were located geographically. In all, I had just over 60 pastors for whom I made a

migration map for. The map showed the cross-country route from church to church that they travelled over their career as a pastor.

When I created the migration maps, I had two main steps I had to do for each one. The first step was getting all of the towns the pastors had served at onto the map. I did this through a process called geo-coding. For each pastor, I would type in towns in which they had served onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. One column was the town, and the other was the state (Illinois). I would save this information and then open up ArcMap 10.2, go to the geo-coding option, and use it. I used the world geo-coding system option on ArcMap. In order to have access to this system, I had to create an account with ArcGIS online. I made sure that town and state were both selected under dropdown options. I would then save each different map as an output file using the pastor's last name (e.g., Smith). Then, I would hit okay and the computer would geo-code the towns I typed in on the Excel sheet. Geo-coding is when the computer calculates where the towns are at on a map. After it geo-coded the towns for each pastor and the towns they had served, it would give a report of how many towns the system matched, tied, or did not match. A score of 100 is a perfect match and this means the computer matched the town with complete accuracy. This high rate was the case for the majority of the towns. A couple of towns received scores around 98; and a few towns tied, meaning they were matched at the same place as another town. Unmatched means the geo-coding system was not able to calculate the town's location. I did not have any unmatched towns, but I had a few ties. Overall, the computer was very accurate in matching the towns.

The second part of the mapping aspect of the project was showing movement of a pastor over his or her career. The process for showing movement of the pastors was relatively simple, but was time consuming to do for the 60 plus maps. In ArcMap, I created arrows and from the first town the pastor served, I pointed that arrow in the direction of where the pastor moved to next and so on. When looking at the map, people can see the distance the pastor has travelled over the course of their career. I also made a legend noting that the arrow was the route to the pastor's new appointment and the dot was the town they had served at over their career. One final step I did was figuring out the average distance pastors had travelled as they were re-assigned to a new church. I did this by measuring the distances between the places they had served. I added up all the distances in miles and divided by the number of times moved. That number gave me the average distance a pastor had to move each time they were re-assigned.

District Boundaries

The reason this project got going originally was due to an interest of the boundaries of the IGRC. When examining the map of the current IGRC, to me the boundaries stand out. They do not follow a consistent pattern of features like country boundaries, roads, rivers, parallels, or meridians. At times, some of the boundaries for an individual district will follow a county boundary, but not continually.

The bishop has the authority to set and establish the boundaries. There is some history to how this process started as well. A former DS I spoke with described how boundaries were established. He said a group called the "Bishop's Cabinet" started in 1975-76 to talk about re-drawing the district boundaries. He went on to describe that a group worked on a proposal that was presented to the entire cabinet and was later approved by the Bishop and the cabinet as well.

One thing that affects the boundaries of the IGRC is the workload for which each District Superintendent is responsible. Workload, in this case, means the number of clergy and churches

per district. The conference attempts to keep the workload for all the DS's as equal as possible. This is the primary reason for why the boundaries seem so random. If the size of one district is much larger than its neighboring district, but the two districts are equal in terms of responsibility for the superintendents, then the conference officials are happy. The LaMoine River District is much bigger than the Illinois River District in terms of geographical area. The churches in the LaMoine River District are spread out, with few major cities, whereas churches cluster together in the smaller Illinois River District in bigger cities like Peoria and Pekin. Despite the different sizes and random boundaries, the workload is pretty close to uniform. Essentially, if the boundaries seem random to outsiders, the conference does not care about that. They care about the uniform amount of work for each DS.

The number of churches and clergy dictates the number of districts. As I mentioned before, the goal is to have close to the same amount of churches and clergy in each district for the respective DS. A district might be added or taken away if a bunch of new churches are emerging or if churches are closing. A district might lose enough churches to where it could combine with another district, for example. The former DS I spoke with in-person described how it was determined how many districts to establish. Before the IGRC was formed, there were 12 districts (four in the Southern Illinois Conference and eight in the Central Illinois Conference), and that was ultimately reduced to 10. Twelve districts were part of the IGRC until two were omitted around 2004-2005. He also said money was a factor in determining the number of districts as well.

A former employee of the IGRC, whom I spoke with at the start and end of my research, gave me a good piece of information regarding the IGRC. She described Interstate 80 (I-80) to be the "top portion" of the conference. In other words, she meant that I-80 is about the cut-off point for how far north the IGRC runs, from the Quad Cities on the west going over to Kankakee on the east side. These are the last major cities before you cross into the Northern Illinois Conference. I-80 is not an official boundary for the IGRC, as some parts of the conference are north of it. It is a good estimate of where the conference approximately ends, as it is a notable geographic feature on the map. If you told a person who was not familiar with how far north the conference ran, they would likely understand if you told them that I-80 is an approximate cut-off, as I-80 is a major landmark in Illinois.

When 12 districts were reduced to 10 districts, the committee that established the boundaries of the 10 final districts took several things into consideration. A current DS I spoke with personally told me that the committee was provided with multiple maps including county boundaries, school districts, junior college districts, and shopping areas. She explained shopping areas as popular areas where people in a given area would likely drive to shop or see a movie. All of these maps, according to her, were examined and considered when drawing and establishing the boundaries for the conference. Another thing she mentioned was that the IGRC officials attempted to keep all schools of a particular school district in the same district of the IGRC. She also said district office locations were to be kept in the same places they previously had been. The reason was that the locations were already central within each district as well. County lines were of low influence when the final boundaries were drawn. Overall, in terms of district office locations and being in central places, I think the committee did a good job. The one exception that caught my eye was the Iroquois River District. I thought Champaign was a bit farther south and less central, looking at Figure 3. Champaign, in my opinion, does not look to be in the most central location in that district. However, there are few major cities in that area and Champaign is a well-known city. Maybe that is why it was chosen as the district office location.

Looking at the Sangamon River District, Springfield is not exactly right in the middle of the district; but I think it is the logical choice of where the district office should be seeing as it is a major city, the state capital of Illinois, and the location of the conference headquarters.

District Names

One of the most basic issues I enjoyed discussing with my interviewees was whether they preferred the current river naming system for the districts or if they preferred the previous naming system, which used city names. Overall, I got a mix of responses. Some people did not have a reaction because they were not serving at the time when the districts were named after cities. Of the church personnel I interviewed and from whom I got a firm answer, four prefer the current river naming system and three prefer the old city naming system. I interviewed more pastors; but some answered no preference, neither, etc. Two of the pastors that preferred the old naming system were older; and I came to the conclusion that the younger generation seems to be more open to the current river naming system, which obviously was a change from the old system. Likewise, the older generation seemed to prefer the old method and to me that generation seems less adapted to change than the younger generation. Granted, there were exceptions to this statement. I am not saying this is how everyone felt, but I think it is a good conclusion. I can say that everyone I talked to seemed to think the river naming system was a bit confusing to comprehend. One pastor I spoke to personally in the Iroquois River District said, "Rivers are not as well-known as towns. Towns are better reference than rivers. LaMoine and Embarras are not very well-known river names." A retired pastor I spoke with on the phone told me he prefers city names because it is easier to know what is what when you use city names.

The pastors who preferred river names made valid points as well. One pastor I talked with personally in the Mississippi River District said that rivers "give geographic aspect and go with the lay of the land." He emphasized that, when cities are used, the cities got preference over other cities in the district, which is a fair point. I like his point regarding rivers giving geographic aspect. A younger pastor I spoke personally with from the Vermilion River District shared similar thoughts. He likes the fact that the districts are focusing on a geographical feature (e.g., river) rather than focusing on a city. Another pastor from the Vermilion River District, who preferred neither system, brought up an interesting idea I had never thought of. He said he did not like either naming system and that he would have liked to have seen them named after saints (e.g., Matthew, Mark, Luke).

Talking to the people who had an effect on getting all of this approved proved to be interesting as well. The general vibe I got from them was that they did not want to see a change to the naming system. A DS, with whom I spoke in-person, said she did not want a change. She said it was too soon for a change, although this way is difficult for people to understand and people do not know where rivers are. A former DS I spoke with gave me a solid answer to the question about whether he would do anything different in the future. He said, "Though the use of rivers as names for the districts made good sense given the name of the conference, I do think it has created some confusion. That confusion has lessened over the years, but it is more difficulty, at least for me, to remember rivers than it is cities/towns. However, I don't know that, if given the opportunity to do it over again, I would change the pattern we followed in naming the districts." In one of my personal interviews with a DS, I recall her saying that, although the rivers are confusing, she would not want to see a change because it took such a long process to get that approved. In other words, it would be a headache to have to start over with a new system and go

through the approval process again. She seemed to feel it was best to leave the names the way they are.

Pastoral Migration

Pastors in the United Methodist Church agree, upon becoming ordained, to be willing to move and serve in different areas around their conference(s). Pastors are often re-assigned to different churches within their own conferences and they can also be moved to a completely different conference as well. Looking through the yearly conference Journal-Yearbooks of the IGRC, I became interested in the aspect of pastors being re-assigned and then “migrating” to new areas and investigated this topic further. Why do pastors migrate to different churches? How does the process work? As I sought answers to the questions, I put together maps of actual pastors showing places they have served the IGRC. These maps reveal a record of where the given pastor had served over the course of his or her career. Again, all of the clergy I chose to make maps for were from a random sample.

Looking at Figure 4, Pastor A has seen several areas of the conference and has served six different districts. Six may seem like a high number to some, but an important thing to remember is that I-80 is the approximate boundary for the IGRC. That being said, the given pastor has served in a decent portion of the state that belongs to the IGRC. When this pastor was re-appointed to another church, the average distance A travelled was 87.5 miles.

Figure 5 depicts the movement of Pastor B from church to church over a career. Towns served vary greatly in size, with two well-known towns served being Champaign and Decatur. This pastor has likely seen a large amount of diversity in terms of culture, as a result of having served in northern, central, and southern Illinois. Another thing that caught my eye was that the cross-country routes, from one appointment to the next, do not ever cross paths. The average distance this pastor travelled whenever they were re-appointed was 73.8 miles.

Pastors do not always get to serve in a variety of places in the conference. In Figure 6, for example, Pastor C primarily has served towns in central Illinois, the majority of which are well-known. Aroma Park is the only town of those six with which I was not familiar. Another thing when looking at this particular map strikes curiosity. Why does this pastor more often seem to serve larger towns than smaller towns? Although Pastor C primarily served in central Illinois, C still had an average move of 77 miles each time C left for a new church.

Remember what I said above about pastors having to be open to moving when becoming a pastor. As seen in figures 4, 5, and 6, moving is likely something United Methodist pastors will experience in their career. Moving even a couple times in life, to me, is a stressful experience. Looking at Figure 7, I cannot imagine the stress that this pastor must have felt from moving, let alone serving all of those different churches. Pastor D has been all over the conference. Several of the moves were not that far in terms of distance, but at least five were lengthy. For example, from Appointment 7 to Appointment 8, the pastor moved from nearly the northeastern boundary of the conference to the most southern district in the IGRC. When making a move that lengthy, I would guess the adjustment to the culture of the new district moved to would be a big challenge. This pastor averaged a move of 116.5 miles each time the IGRC made a church assignment.

The last map I chose to include of a pastor’s re-appointment history also included a large number of re-appointments. For the most part, Pastor E did not have as far to travel to new appointments. What amazed me the most about this pastoral history was that the 10 appointments are tightly packed with respect to latitude. All appointments are in the northern part of the conference and are fairly close together, as shown in Figure 8. When I picture I-80 on the map, they also seem to be hovering around that major landmark in Illinois. They may not be

right at it, but they are not far off from it. This pastor only had an average of 52.8 miles to travel to the next church.

An appointment is defined as when a pastor is assigned to a church to another and one of superintendents I spoke with personally said an average appointment is seven years. She also explained that the DS for the given district meets with the pastor and the staff parish committee of the church to get feelings from both parties, to learn if they are happy with the present situation. Essentially, the DS is the Bishop's eyes for their respective district. The pastor and staff parish committee get their say as to whether they are happy or unhappy with the church and current pastor, respectively. Another DS I spoke with, in-person, made a good point regarding their job as superintendents. He said that a DS needs to be familiar with their churches and pastors, so they can advise the Bishop on these things. Since the districts are large and contain at least 60 churches, this is a demanding task. Taking the time to travel and visit all the churches is another requirement, as one DS told me in a personal conversation.

The next step of the process of re-appointment involves the cabinet, which is made up of the Bishop, the 10 District Superintendents, and a few other people from the conference office. According to a DS I spoke with in-person, the cabinet votes on different options of where Pastor X could be re-assigned. However, she told me that the Bishop has the final say on pastoral appointments. Individual pastors and staff-parish committees at the churches have no control over what happens either. Oftentimes, pastors and their respective congregations are not happy with appointment decisions.

Re-appointments are common for United Methodist pastors and I found that to be true for pastors in the IGRC. For the sample I drew in order to learn how often pastors were re-assigned, I discovered that it was extremely rare for a pastor to be at the same church for more than 10 years. Oftentimes, pastors over the course of their career, get the chance to serve multiple congregations and move multiple times as well. Because of that, they experience different lifestyles and cultures. Some pastors are more confined to certain areas in the conference they serve in. It is also possible they have served in multiple conferences.

A question I looked for answers to in the project was why pastors get re-appointed. Some answers I got included conflict between the church and pastor, the pastor has done all they can do for that given church in a particular building phase, salary issues, and personal needs in a pastor's family. To people who are not familiar with why pastors are moved frequently, I found one phrase shared with me by the high-ranking conference official to be the best reason why they are moved. According to that official, the goal is to try to, "Find pastor's gifts who best meet the church's current and immediate need." Thus, if the pastor who best matches the need of the church is somewhere else and if they are at a good point to move from the previous church to the new church, the trigger will oftentimes be pulled, as I understood from the official. The official also told me that the person they bring in continues to move the church in the right direction. Diversity is found all over the place in the world. It is no different in churches. In the IGRC I am primarily talking about size of churches/districts and mixture of culture across the state of Illinois. The official made another important point in saying that moving pastors of larger churches is not made a bigger priority than those of smaller churches.

Another reason that a pastor may move is because they have finished the building phase they were brought in to do and can no longer do as much for the church. A DS I spoke to on the telephone listed reasons pastors stay at a church, such as, good ministry at the church and that the church was thriving. Reasons he included for pastors to move could be if there is conflict between the pastor and church, a need to live where aging parents reside, or because the pastor is

retiring. I assume when he said “retire” he meant the pastor’s last appointment may be somewhere where the pastor hopes to retire following the end of his appointment.

Cultural and Regional Geography

As I talked with everyone in this study about the IGRC, I wanted to get a sense about their feelings of the culture of the given areas they serve or have served. The districts are by no means the same and each one has something special about it. A pastor I spoke with who is currently in the Iroquois River District gave a good example regarding culture. He explained that the LaMoine River District is different from where he is now in that it is in western Illinois and made up of mainly rural area. He said that the LaMoine River District has a “more laid back type culture.” He noted Peoria, in the Illinois River District, is quite the opposite, simply due to size and because of major businesses like Caterpillar. One of the most interesting comments I got in all the interviews I did came from this pastor as well. As a follow-up to the question asking if culture differs by district, I asked if it was easy to notice the differences. He emphasized that it is not something he notices immediately and that he learns it instead. He also said, “Some things you don’t learn until you ask the wrong thing and then you know not to ask that again.” He gave the example of asking where to hunt for mushrooms. He indicated that asking that same question when he served in Peoria would not have raised an eyebrow. However, he said that is a bad question to ask in a small rural area where the activity is popular, because mushroom hunters guard their sites. That was the example he gave as to how some of the culture you do not learn until you ask questions like that.

Another pastor I talked to personally from the Vermilion River District gave me an noteworthy fact about the district. She said that a camp, a Wesley Foundation, a children’s home (the Baby Fold), a nursing home, and a historical Methodist college are all located in the Vermilion River District. She noted that to find all five of these in a district is rare.

Another common thing I got from talking to people regarding culture was the southern way of life for the Cache River District. A pastor I spoke with in the Vermilion River District noted that the Cache River District is very “rural” and “southern” in flavor and warmer. The biggest difference he said with the Cache River District compared to other districts are the sizes of the churches and the fact that the area is rural instead of urban. He noted that he also gets anxiety about going back to southern Illinois after being in central Illinois and after going to school in Chicago.

A DS with whom I spoke personally gave me a fact on diversity. She described her district to be “ethnically diverse” and that the sizes of the church vary. She said the smallest church has 11 in worship with the largest having 1600. Overall, she said she was thankful for the diversity.

Another DS I spoke with in-person pointed out that his district contains four prisons within its boundaries and four universities. Growing up close to St. Louis, I especially found this comment interesting.

A pastor I know from the Mississippi River District emphasized how the district is located within the St. Louis metro area and is influenced by St. Louis. His main point was that the Mississippi River District does not interact with St. Louis or Missouri for church-related events, unlike the way we do for so many other things. Examples he gave were St. Louis Cardinals baseball or the 4th of July events. Another thing with the Mississippi River District was

the number of East St. Louis churches. There is only one there today, but there were about five dating back to the 1960s.

Pastors kept adding to my cultural and regional knowledge. A retired pastor I spoke to on the phone talked about how fast pastors speak. He said that the farther north you go you tend to see faster talking preachers. Overall he said there are different types of languages of how one talks in the state. I spoke to a clergyman in the LaMoine River District, and he told me that their district calls themselves “Forgottonia.” He also made the point that the people in general think that the state as a whole ignores them, and it is not just the church. I got a good laugh from talking to one pastor in the Vermilion River District who said that when he served in Decatur there were about an equal amount of Cardinals and Cubs fans.

I also spoke with a DS in southern Illinois. He noted that it was the most beautiful of all the districts and gave examples. He included the Shawnee National Forest, orchards, and the Illinois Ozarks. He noted that people would almost think it is not part of Illinois and he also said people of southern Illinois are “hospitable” and “friendly.”

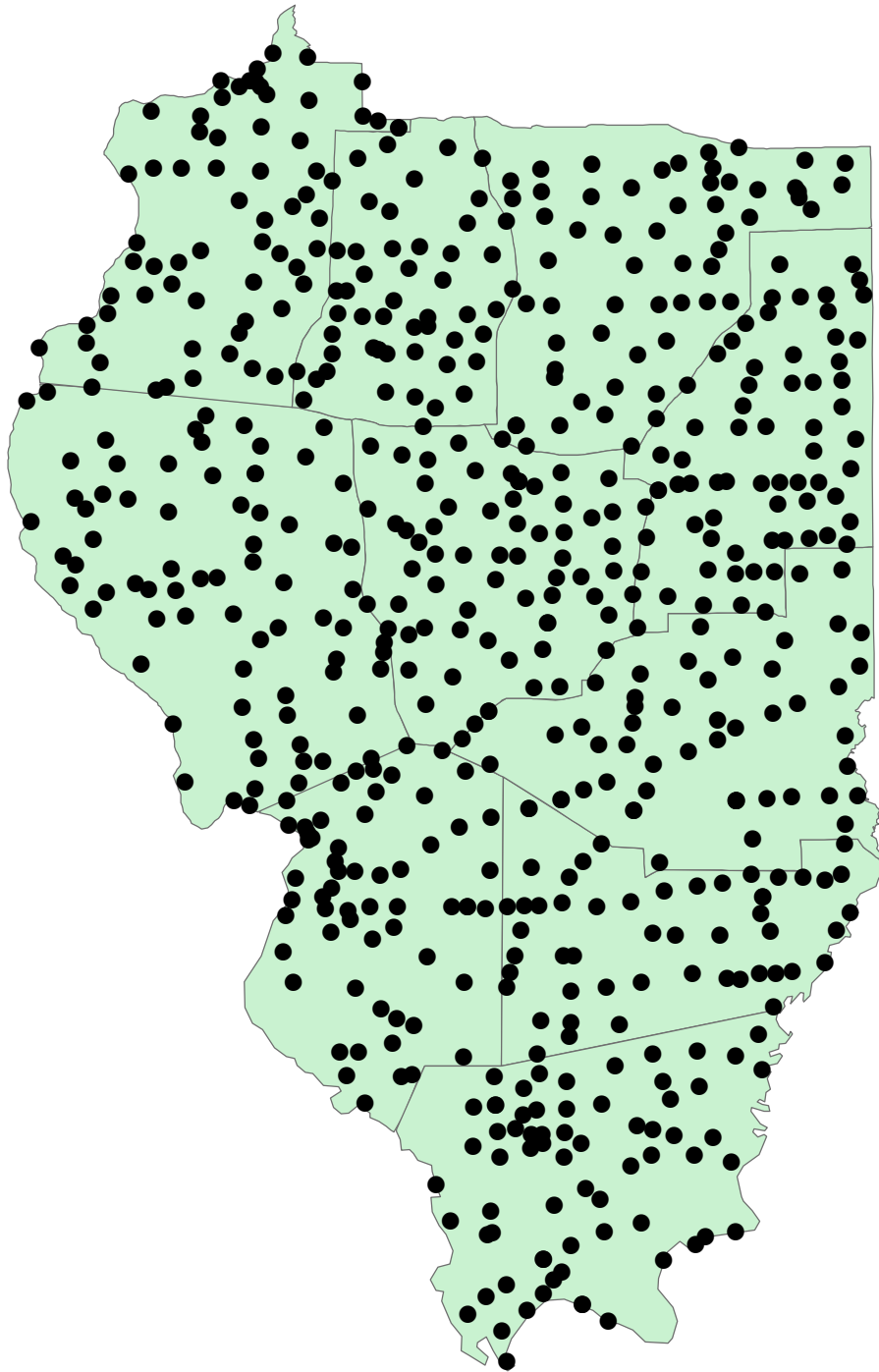
I also spoke with a pastor from the Kaskaskia River District. He talked about how the Kaskaskia district “eliminated” the former Little Wabash District. He added that how it got re-drawn created some challenges for the Kaskaskia River District and described the district as “almost like too much in one district.” He said there was a lot of empty space between Mt. Vernon, the western portion, and Olney, the eastern portion of the district.

Conclusions

After studying the IGRC in great detail, I found that geography connects to the church in many ways. The boundaries and the way they are laid out are unusual. They do not consistently follow anything notable such as county lines, rivers, parallels, or meridians. Across the IGRC, we see districts named after geographical features: rivers. The chosen river for each district flows through or alongside it at some point. Some of the rivers are not well-known and sometimes not as well-known as the cities that were previously used to name the districts. Rivers can be a confusing way to identify the conference, but these names have stuck for almost two decades. In the case of the United Methodist pastors, they have probably moved more times than the average person, due to pastoral re-appointments. The more places they have been, the more they have experienced in terms of culture. Some pastors have served all over the conference while some have been confined to only one or two districts. Regardless, each pastor has their own unique experience to look back on at the end of their career. The individual districts themselves each exhibit different features, making each district special. Distinguishing features include universities, different types of towns ranging from villages to metropolitan areas, land types, and cultural habits. Geography is, without a doubt, a huge part of the IGRC and the United Methodist Church.

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Districts and Church Locations of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference



Legend

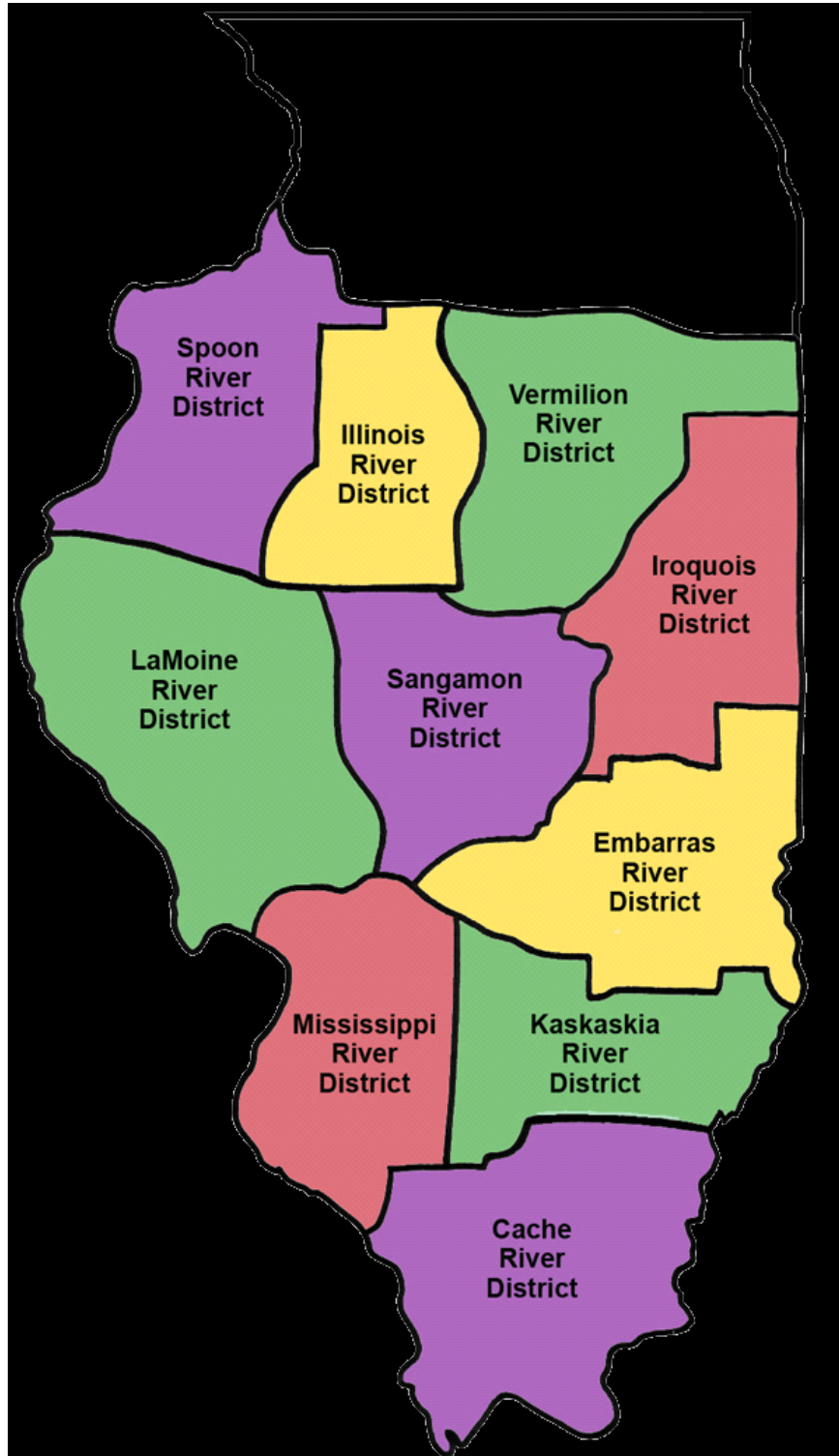
● Church Locations

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Source: IGRC.ORG

Figure 1

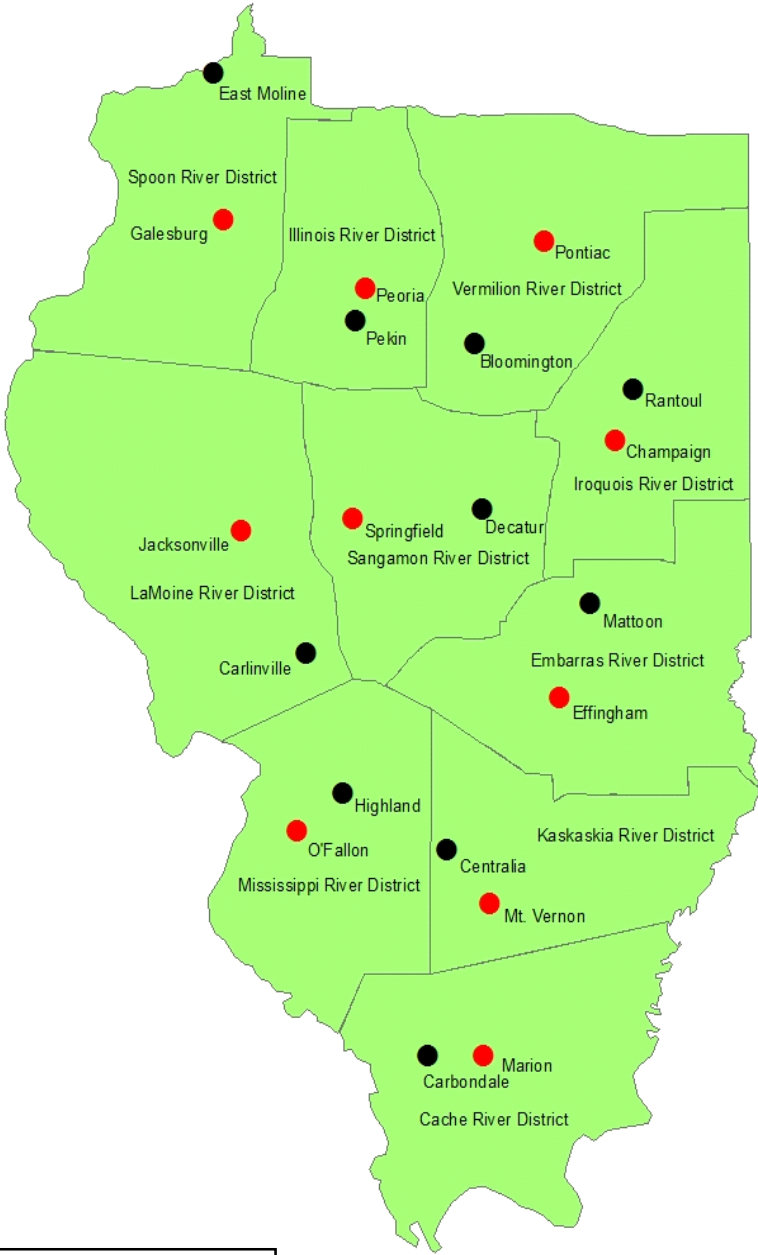
Illinois Great Rivers Conference



Source: IGRC.ORG

Figure 2

Illinois Great Rivers District Office Locations and Other Towns

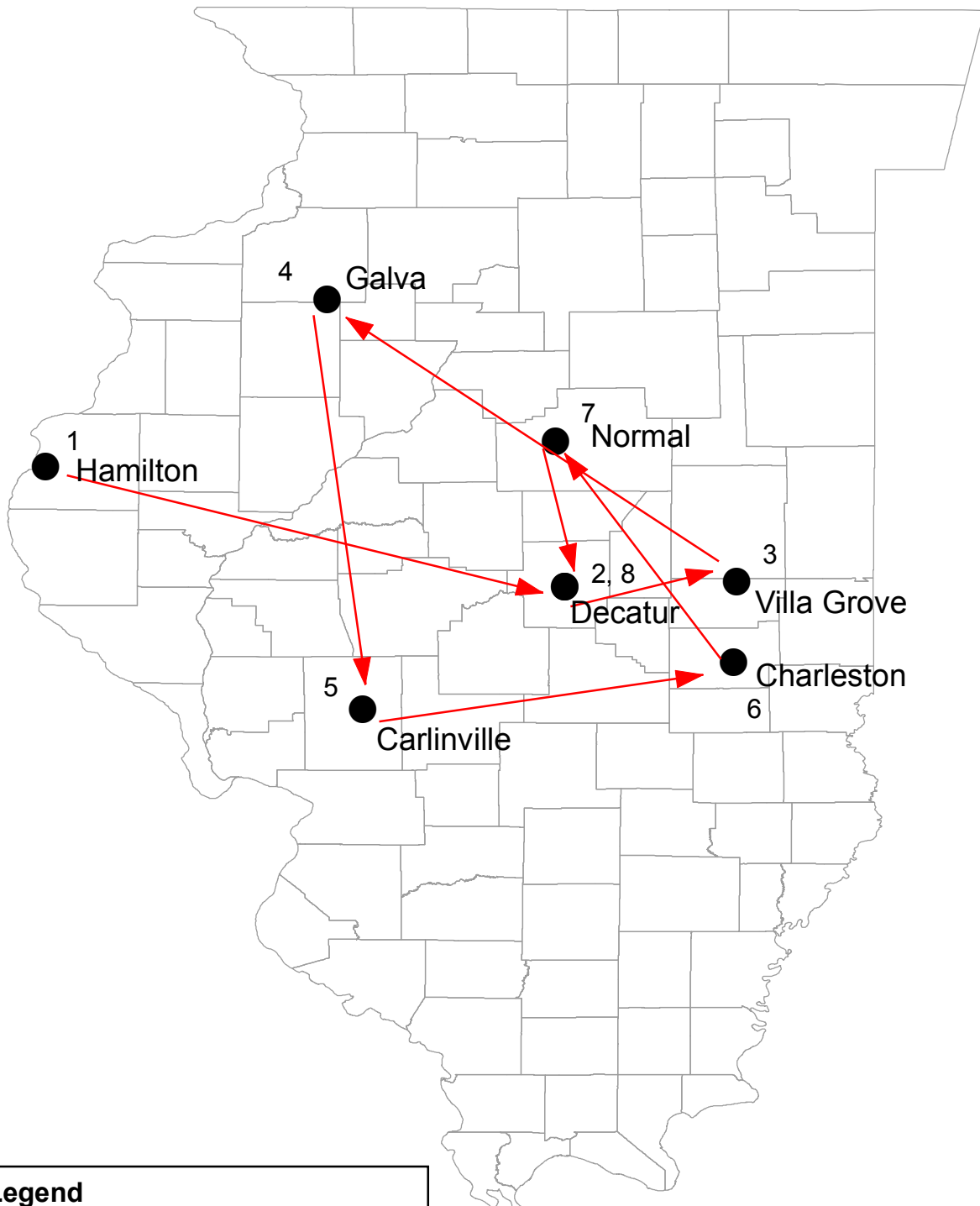


Legend
● District Office Locations
● Other Towns

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Figure 3

Source: State of Illinois Road Map

Movement of Pastor A over the Years



Legend
● Towns Served
➔ Cross-Country Route to New Appointment

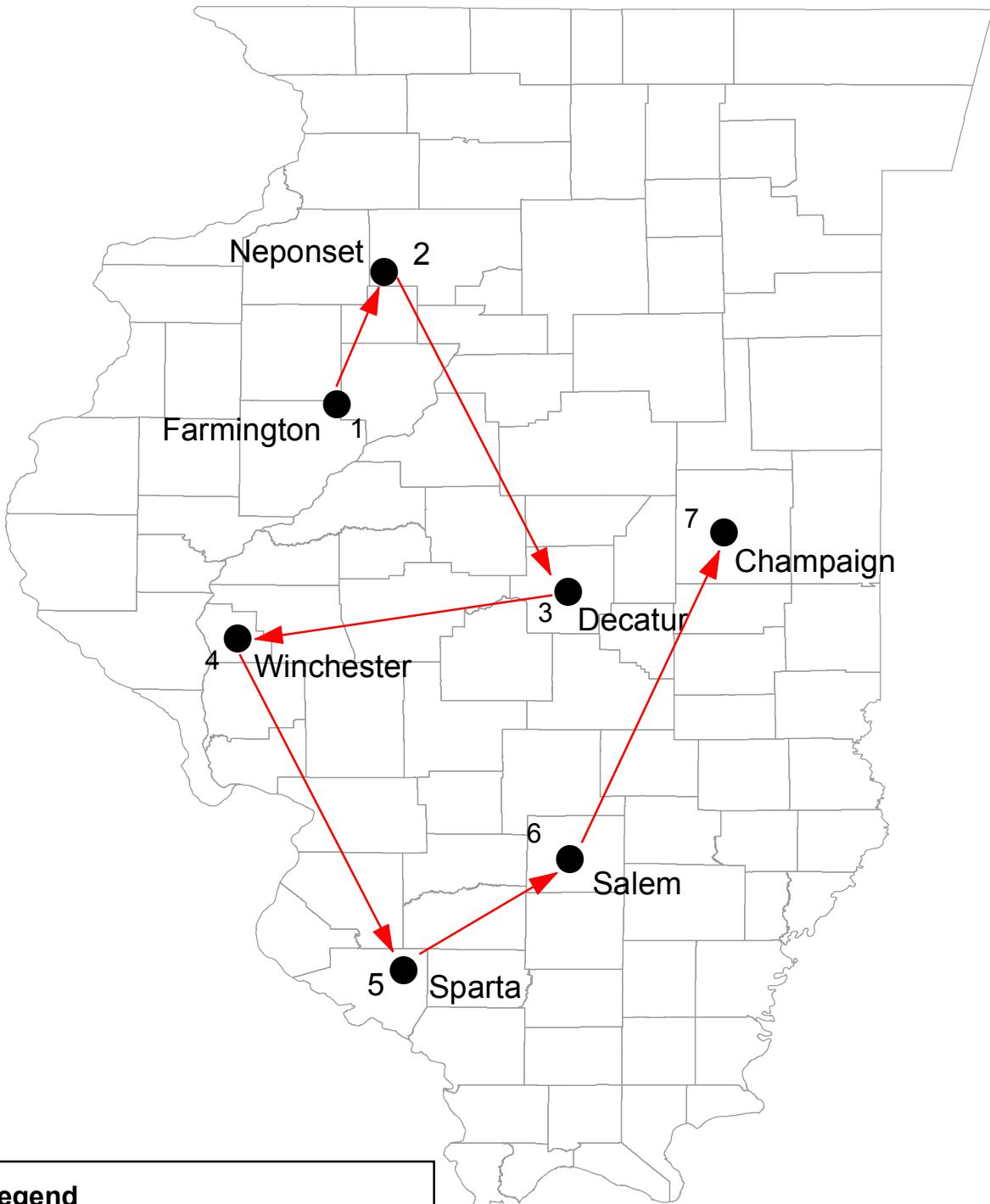
Average distance travelled = 87.5 miles

Nick Goodwin

Source: Official Journal-Yearbook 2013

Figure 4

Movement of Pastor B over the Years



Legend

● Towns Served

➔ Cross-Country Route to New Appointment

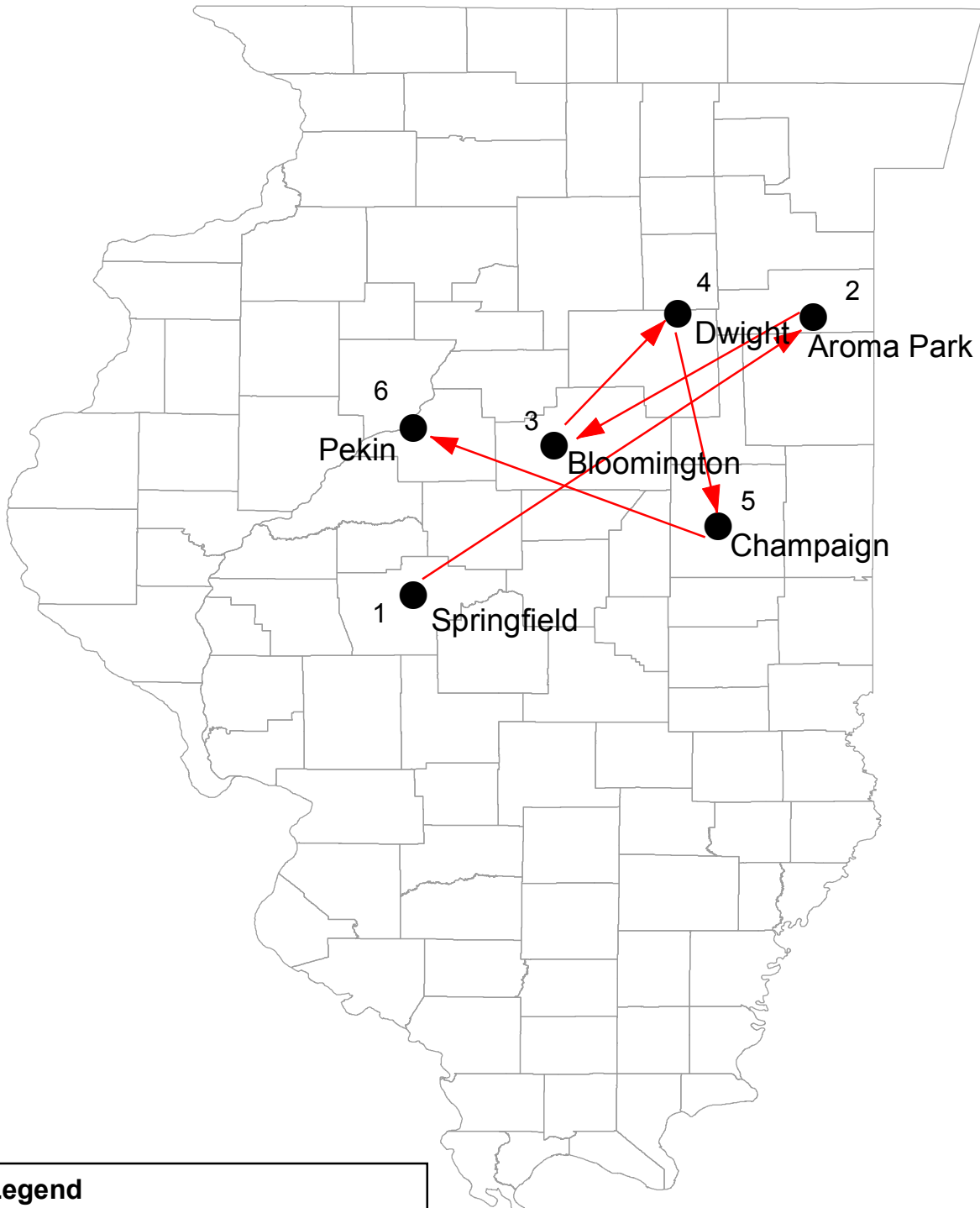
Average distance travelled = 73.8 miles

Nick Goodwin

Source: Official Journal-Yearbook 2013

Figure 5

Movement of Pastor C over the Years



Legend
● Towns Served
➔ Cross-Country Route to New Appointment

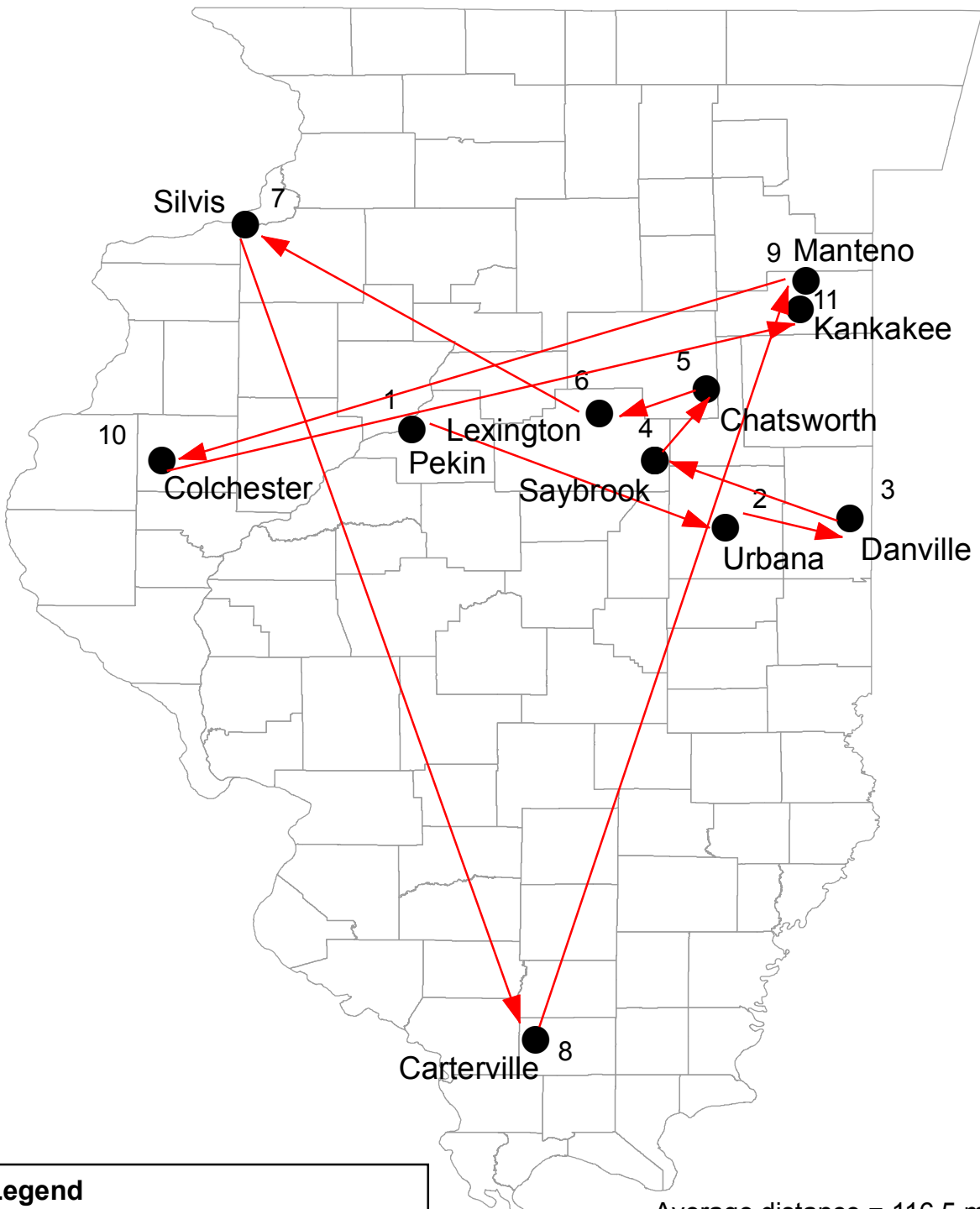
Average distance travelled = 77 miles

Nick Goodwin

Source: Official Journal-Yearbook 2013

Figure 6

Movement of Pastor D over the Years



Legend
● Towns Served
➔ Cross-Country Route to New Appointment

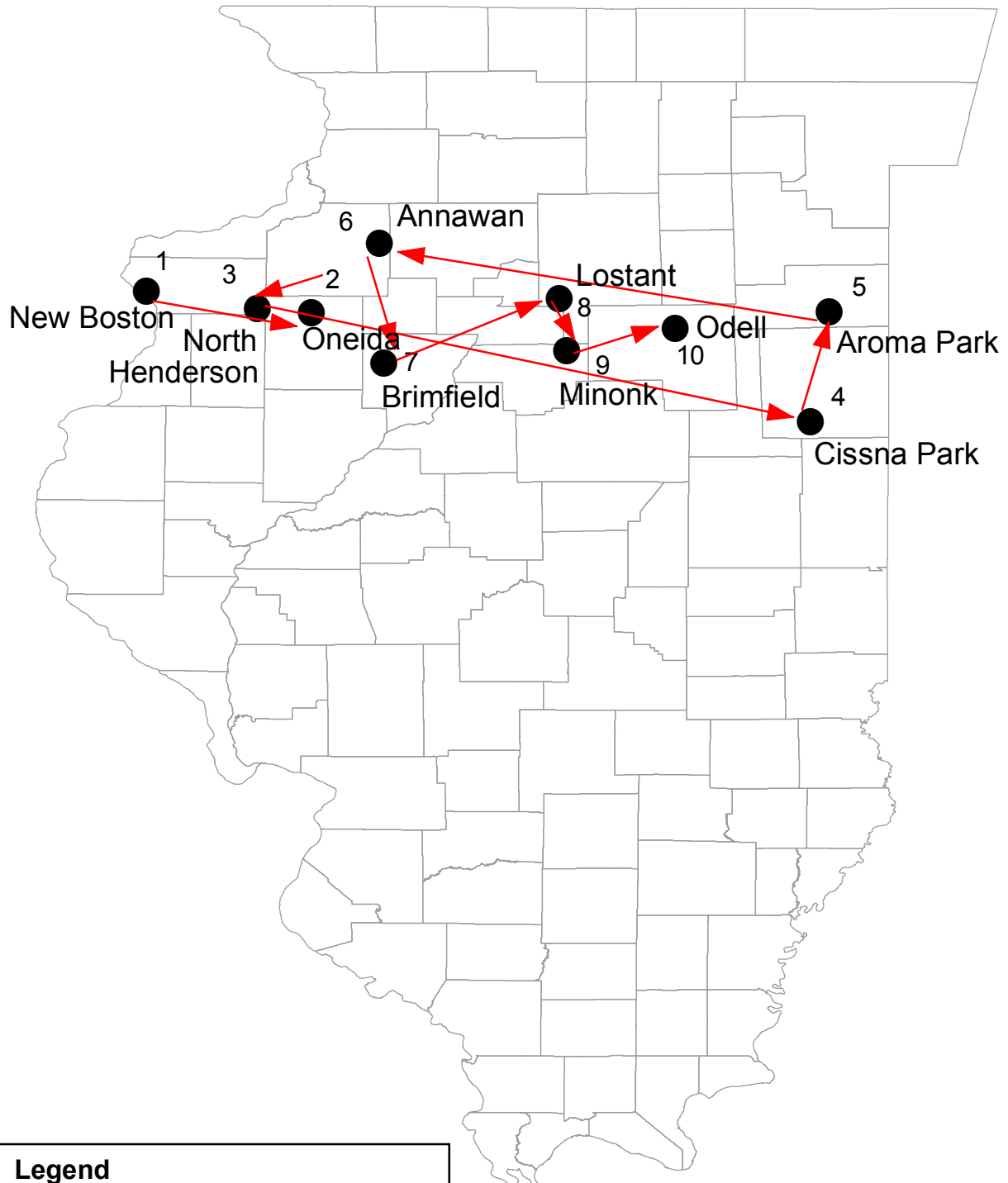
Average distance = 116.5 miles

Nick Goodwin

Figure 7

Source: Official Journal-Yearbook 2013

Movement of Pastor E over the Years



Legend
● Towns Served
➔ Cross-Country Route to New Appointment

Average distance travelled = 52.8 miles

Nick Goodwin

Source: Official Journal-Yearbook 2013

Figure 8

Appendix

Questionnaire for Pastors/Retired Pastors/other Church Members

1. When you look at this map (of the 10 districts), what thoughts come to mind?
2. Did you have anything to do with bounding the Illinois districts?
3. Did you have anything to do with naming the Illinois districts?
4. Are you aware that the IGRC was once two conferences: Central Illinois and Southern Illinois? (If no, skip to 7)
5. For the IGRC districts, do you prefer the current river naming system or the previous naming system, which included city names?
6. Are you happier with the present layout of the conference or the one prior to the merger that established the Illinois Great Rivers Conference in 1996?
7. Have you served or belonged to churches in more than one district in the IGRC? (If no, skip to 10)
8. Having been in multiple districts, does the culture differ greatly or not at all? (If no, skip to 10)
9. Is it easy for you to notice these differences?
10. Is there something from your current district that you find interesting that you would like to share with me?

Questionnaire for a High-Ranking Conference Official

1. When you look at this map (of the 10 districts), what thoughts come to mind?
2. Did you have anything to do with bounding the Illinois districts?
3. Why was the northern portion of Illinois excluded from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference?
4. Under “Conference History and Boundaries” on the Conference website, there is a careful description of the boundary between this conference and the Northern Illinois Conference. Do you know why the boundary does not just follow county boundaries?
5. Do you know why Springfield was chosen as the headquarters for the conference and the bishop?
6. Did you have anything to do with naming the Illinois districts?

7. Would you like to see changes in names (e.g., alternative naming method for districts instead of using river names) for the districts?
8. Do you know why previous southern and central conferences were combined?
9. What role do you play in pastor movement?
10. Why are pastors moved and why are they retained?
11. I would like to interview persons who were part of the bounding committee? Can you help me find these people?

Questionnaire for the Bounding Committee

1. When you look at this map (of the 10 districts), what thoughts come to mind?
2. Please discuss the process of laying out district boundaries.
3. What existing lines or other features did you follow with your district boundaries?
4. Did the committee follow a strategy of a neighboring state (e.g., Indiana) when establishing the boundaries or was that not a consideration?
5. Were the district boundaries drawn by one person or by multiple personnel when they were established?
6. Do you think this was an effective way to draw boundaries and create districts?
7. Please discuss the process of naming the districts.
8. Do you know why rivers were used as names for each of the 10 districts?
9. How was the size of each district determined (e.g., geographical area covered)?
10. How was it decided on how many districts to establish?
11. Why was the northern portion of Illinois excluded from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference?
12. Under “Conference History and Boundaries” on the Conference website, there is a careful description of the boundary between this conference and the Northern Illinois Conference. Do you know why the boundary does not just follow county boundaries?
13. Do you know why Springfield was chosen as headquarters for the conference?
14. If you could do it all over again, would you do anything differently?

Questionnaire for District Superintendents

1. When you look at this map (of the 10 districts), what thoughts come to mind?
2. Would you like to see changes in the Illinois district boundaries?
3. Did you have anything to do with bounding the Illinois districts?
4. Would you like to see changes in names (e.g., alternative naming method for districts of using river names) for the districts?
5. Did you have anything to do with naming the Illinois districts?
6. Do you know why rivers were used as names for each of the 10 districts?
7. Do district's name and boundaries resonate with your pastors? Parishioners?
8. Is there something interesting from your district you would like to share with me?
9. What role do you play in pastor movement?
10. Why are pastors moved and why are they retained?
11. I would like to interview a few pastors/retired pastors from the conference. Can you refer me to a couple of these people?

Sources Cited

IGRC.ORG. Illinois Great Rivers Conference, 2014. Web. 9 July 2014.

Personal Interviews with:

Current Pastors: 16, 24, 27 February 2014; 3, 11, 23 March 2014

District Superintendents: 6, 10 March 2014

Former District Superintendent: 23 April 2014

Former Employee of IGRC: 2 January 2014

High-Ranking Conference Official: 10 March 2014.

Shirley, Alice J., ed. *Official Journal-Yearbook*. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Great Rivers Conference, United Methodist Church, 2013. Print.

Telephone Interviews with:

Current Pastors: 25, 30 April 2014

District Superintendents: 3, 28 April 2014

Former Pastor: 22 March 2014.