

Town Hall Meeting

Transcript of Town Hall Meeting April 17, 2007

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Hello, and thanks for joining us for our first "Town Hall" meeting.

I'm Emily Reece, from United Methodist Communications, and today we'll be hearing from: *Bishop Janice Huie, Ms. Sandra Lackore, the Rev. Dr. Jerome King Del Pino, the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, the Rev. Randy Day, the Rev. Larry Hollon, and Mr. Jim Winkler.*

We'll begin our time together with a prayer. Bishop Huie, would you center us?

BISHOP HUIE:

Yes, let us pray. Holy God, in this joyous season of Easter we have discovered how Good Friday has intruded on our world again, particularly at Virginia Tech University. It has intruded upon the school, the community, students everywhere, indeed all of us.

We pray this afternoon for the healing of all those who have been directly affected by the tragedy there. We pray for their healing of body, mind and spirit. And we pray that we ourselves may be a witness to your steadfast love, to your forgiveness, and to your own grace and mercy.

And now, O Holy God, we pray for your church, our own beloved United Methodist church and we pray in the words of our own tradition. Gracious God, we pray for your holy church that you would be pleased to fill it with all truth and all peace; where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; wherein anything is amiss, reform it; where it is right, establish it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it for the sake of Jesus Christ who died and rose again. This we pray in his name. Amen.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thank you Bishop Huie. I would also just make a note to folks who are listening that if there are folks who are interested in having a time of prayer in their worship on Sunday that there are going to be resources available on umc.org from GBOD, and UMCCom, and others so please look for that in the coming days and hours.

We want to welcome everyone and hope that you can spend the next hour with us in an informative conversation about the vision for our church in the 21st Century.

We will hear about the Vision Pathways identified by our Council of Bishops, and the four "provocative propositions" recommended by the leaders of our church agencies. There will also be information from the "This is our Story" report produced by the General Council on Finance and Administration. And we will share some success stories of individuals, and congregations around the globe.

We hope you will learn a lot, ask questions, and take this opportunity to hear firsthand from your church leaders. Since we have so much to talk about, we've asked each of our speakers to keep their comments concise, and at the end of our time together we will have time for your questions. You can submit questions by email, at [Infoserv \(I N F O S E R V\)@umcom.org](mailto:Infoserv(INFOSERV)@umcom.org) (and please put in

the subject line: Town Hall meeting) OR we'll tell you how to submit questions via the phone after we've heard from our speakers. Tape and transcripts of this call will all be available at umc.org/townhall also.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Let's start with a look at where the denomination is today. We've asked Sandra Lackore to lead us through the highlights of the new report, "This is Our Story."

SANDRA LACKORE:

Good afternoon. I am pleased to be with you as the General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church releases today our most recent report of membership, attendance, and giving trends. This report is titled, "This is Our Story." It reports the story of a faithful, generous people in dozens of nations who continue to make a difference in the lives of people around the world. It is the story we tell through the millions of data elements we have shared and collected about ourselves for over 200 years. It is a story about our Church in our time.

You can find the full report on our website, but let me tell you about some of the more interesting findings that both give us hope and challenge us to find new ways of responding to God's call for us in the world.

- We are a large and growing denomination. We have 13.7 million members in over 50 countries. United Methodists in the United States gave over 5.86 billion dollars in 2005. Globally our churches report nearly 1.9 million more professing members than they did 10 years ago. When we look at the whole picture, United Methodism is big and getting bigger.
- At the same time, we do have some challenges, and we need to be realistic about these challenges.
- The good news is about 35% of our churches in the U.S. grew in 2005.
- However, over 41% of our churches did not report a single profession of faith in 2005.
- All of that is said in a context that 50% of the population in the U.S. has no ongoing relationship with any faith community.
- Big aggregate statistics can be a little overwhelming so one of the things we've tried to do here is to dig down a little deeper, to show some of the stories behind our numbers. What we know is that every church has stories of holy living, vital ministry, relevant mission, and faithful witness. We've included in this report stories that aren't necessarily the biggest churches or the fastest growing churches; they are simply a few of the many congregations who are working to change lives and change communities.

We all have stories to tell from our faith communities. In this document, we want to encourage others to think about their stories, and how, together, we will intentionally write the next chapter of our ongoing story.

There is a sense that God is leading The United Methodist Church to do something different. The leadership of our bishops has caused new things to happen. Responding to our bishops, the Connectional Table, the General Council on Finance and Administration, and our general boards and agencies, are outlining a new chapter of a new story. The foundation for this new chapter will be highlighted in conversations that will follow. But the real work of our denomination, and the places where lives are changed, remains in the hands of our churches and the faithful people

who call them home. The future for our church depends upon our leadership at all levels capturing this vision and being willing to work hard—each of us—lay and clergy.

I truly believe that the spirit of God is moving through us and within us, creating change—a transformational change that inspires us as the people of The United Methodist Church to move forward into a future with hope. This is our story.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thank you Sandra.

Now let's hear from Bishop Janice Huie, outlining the Bishops' vision pathways, the roots of the provocative propositions.

BISHOP JANICE HUIE:

Good afternoon, dear friends. Greetings in the name of our Resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My name is Janice Riggle Huie.

It is my privilege to serve as the president of the Council of Bishops and the resident bishop of the Houston Episcopal Area.

Along with a team of ten people, I have just returned from a wonderful week of visits with the people of The United Methodist Church in Cote d'Ivoire. Cote d'Ivoire, or Ivory Coast as most of us know it, is the newest annual conference in The United Methodist Church. We went there to identify how we might work together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Cote d'Ivoire is one of the fastest growing conferences in our denomination, and we believe we have lots to learn from them. We focused on evangelism, starting new churches, leadership development, health care, education, media, finance and much more.

The Texas and Cote D'Ivoire conferences are working together with the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Communications and the United Nations Foundation. I think all of us are pretty excited.

This story is a metaphor for how the church is changing in order to fulfill the mission that Jesus gave us. The world has changed dramatically in the last forty years.

In order to make disciples who transform the world, the United Methodist Church must change as well.

As the president of the Council of Bishops, I see that change happening more everyday. Early this quadrennium, bishops identified some potential pathways for transformation of the church.

We believe these pathways can serve as a roadmap for making disciples of Jesus Christ. They focus on new church development; transforming existing congregations; racial/ethnic ministries; leadership development; reaching children; eliminating poverty; and teaching the Wesleyan model of disciple-making.

As we have worked with the church's general agencies, these pathways have been shaped into four key propositions, or priorities.

However the final language is shaped, all of us understand that we need to focus on at least:

- Teaching and practicing a Wesleyan view of the world in contemporary terms;
- Starting new congregations all over the world. I personally believe our goal should be one new church start every day in the U. S. alone;
- Identifying and fast-tracking gifted, young, diverse leaders—both clergy and lay;
- Reaching out and working with the poor, especially children in health and education.

Of course, there are other important issues, and they are not getting left behind. We believe these are vital elements for the transformation of the church.

In fact, we believe that God is already transforming the church. Our job is to pay attention and work with the Holy Spirit.

Thank you.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

As Bishop Huie mentioned, the Connectional Table and the general secretaries have named four interdependent proposals.

They are:

- Develop new leaders.
- Build congregations.
- Be in ministry with the poor
- And combat the preventable diseases of poverty.

Let's look at each of these proposals. The Rev. Dr. Jerome King Del Pino will describe the first goal: to recruit and develop both lay and clergy leaders for the future.

JEROME KING DEL PINO

Good afternoon. My name is Jerome King Del Pino, and I'm the General Secretary of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

I've been asked to speak to you today about Leadership Development which is the first of the four Provocative Propositions.

I believe that the key challenge facing The United Methodist Church today is the kind and quality of our leadership. Preparing a new generation of Christian leaders is GBHEM's mission; however, every general agency, annual conference, and local church has a vital stake in the task of forming, nurturing, and deploying Spirit-led, creative, and faithful leaders for the future of our local churches, our educational institutions, and our ministries of outreach.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is committed to nothing less than a covenant that binds the boards and agencies in a common vision for clergy and lay leadership, a set of shared commitments to outcome-based collaboration, and a concrete plan for turning this vision and these commitments into reality.

In 2005, research done by Lovett Weems showed there were only 850 commissioned and ordained clergy aged 35 or younger in the whole United Methodist Church in the United States. This is only 4.69 percent of current elders and reflects a decline from 15.05 percent of the elders serving in 1985. These young people need to be seen as the foundation for building a future church based on their leadership. Therefore, the church needs to invest in their development as leaders.

The Millennial Generation has demonstrated interest in and desire for developing their spiritual lives. However, The United Methodist Church has not been able to connect to this generation in relevant, authentic ways that address this generation's needs.

The church must build a streamlined structure for the development of young leaders that will result in doubling the number of young people in positions of leadership as pastors, and specialized clergy and lay ministries. We must provide a system of support for young clergypersons as well as for mid-career persons who bring experience and wisdom to ordained and lay ministry.

GBHEM, in cooperation with GBOD and in consultation with other agencies, has a plan of action that provides a concrete way for the general agencies to address the leadership crisis in the denomination forthrightly and creatively. For example, first begun in 1990, we are now reaping the benefits of the EXPLORATION events for youth and college students for discerning God's call. And the renewal of the UM Student Movement and the annual Student Forum for college and university students are helping to feed into the EXPLORATION process. GBHEM's campus ministry, student ministries, vocation, and enlistment staff and GBOD's Division on Ministry with Young People are looking at ways to partner on future programs.

I do not believe it is hyperbole to say that The United Methodist Church finds itself in a crucial moment in history, when seismic demographic, social, cultural, and religious shifts are redefining our global reality. Guiding the church amid these momentous changes requires nothing less than global leaders for a global church, whose vision for the church's ministry is as expansive as the connection itself. Such leaders will be marked by three principal characteristics.

1. They are guardians of the United Methodist connection. Our emerging global village also harbors fragmentation, misunderstanding, fear, and suspicion that can undermine our desire for a global church. The United Methodist connection, committed to unity in diversity, is an extraordinary gift to our world and to the emerging Christianity. Global leaders for a global church guard the connection with a combination of spiritual maturity, theological dexterity, and practical innovation.
2. They are bearers of a renewed vision of the church. Global leaders for a global church refuse the temptation to substitute survival for renewal in addressing the church's malaise. Thus, they brook no self-interested denominational naval gazing or anxious preoccupation with institutional maintenance. Amid the upheaval, uncertainty, and insecurity of our day and the social, spiritual, and intellectual confusion in our churches, such leaders uphold a vision of a United Methodist Church as a community of hospitality that welcomes in holy love the stranger and the different and that rejects barriers between insiders and outsiders, erected out of suspicion and fear.

3. Global leaders for a global church are advocates for a learned leadership. Global leaders for a global church advocate for an educated and educating leadership. They know that healing the divisions and rancor that characterize so much of our communal discourse as a church calls for leaders with skill, insight, and wisdom possible only through rigorous, wide-ranging, and ongoing learning. They also realize that leading the church in faithful ministry in our rapidly changing times requires a company of leaders as diverse as the world itself and trained, able, and willing to serve wherever and whenever needed. And so, global leaders for a global church actively advocate the revitalization of an education pipeline that stretches around the world, providing access to education to all people, particularly the poor and the underserved. Affirmed at the 2004 General Conference, GBHEM's Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development will provide assistance to scholar leaders in Africa, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the U.S.

GBHEM's Strategic Plan contains our Vision Statement that states: "A new generation of Christian leaders who commit boldly to Jesus Christ and are characterized by intellectual excellence, moral integrity, spiritual courage, and holiness of heart and life." I invite each of you to join us in making this vision a reality for our church.

Thank you.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR)

Thank you Dr. Del Pino.

The next proposal involves building congregations, and we can find many examples of thriving churches to emulate, and celebrate. Before the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt discusses new church starts, let's take a minute to hear from pastor Ken Hughes, from a small church in Kentucky with what he describes as "an exploding" attendance.

Ken Hughes Script:

(nat sound cars)

West Side Community United Methodist Church sits on a busy road in Hustonville, Kentucky. Pastor Ken Hughes describes it as a rural area that is seeing rapid growth. The 300 members on the church roll are a sign of that.

"I have never had so many baptisms at any church I have ever been in. People are excited about God."

Hughes says church members are working together to provide a vibrant worship experience and to encourage others to come and see what is happening on Sunday.

"Our Sunday school classes are growing. There is a hunger and you see it in the people. The attendance has begun to explode...the praise band is drawing people. And we have a dynamic worship team and a song leader, and dedicated people who are inviting people."

On Wednesday nights, volunteers drive vans an hour or more into neighboring counties to reach new families.

“We have a children’s program, 70 to 100. We bring the children to us. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the children that come to us on Wednesday nights belong to parents who do not go to church on a regular basis and we are reaching out to those parents. It is awesome. It is amazing to see. It is like a vacation bible school every week.”

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

That’s the kind of leadership that’s transforming our congregations now, and will continue in the future. ... Rev. Greenwaldt has more information about the church growth proposition.

KAREN GREENWALDT:

Thank you so much for this opportunity to share about this important area of our church life—Church Growth.

There may be some disagreement on the various reasons why the United Methodist Church has experienced decline, but there is little disagreement about one major reason -- we simply do not start enough churches.

Across the United States, where the principle decline is occurring, we are presently starting, on average, ninety congregations a year. Ninety.

Membership in Jurisdictional Conferences continues to decline.

The same is true with attendance in many of our churches.

And there are other statistics, all of which support the temptation to dwell on what’s wrong with us as a denomination.

Rather than dwelling on those, I prefer to suggest an appreciative model, which is the foundation for virtually all vital and revitalized congregations inside and outside our denomination. This model calls us to focus on our gifts while placing the urgency of the gospel before us as a guide for our action. One of our principle gifts lies in John Wesley’s proclamation that “the world is our parish.” It’s a charge we need to make more real.

Our call to action doesn’t just come from John Wesley, but church planting is a biblical mandate as well. The Gospel passage from Matthew 28 says to “Go into the world and make disciples.” It’s one of the clearest mandates in Scripture.

Responding to this commandment means that we must learn our way into the future while experimenting with new forms of ministry, building new and renewed congregations, and re-opening our hearts, minds and doors for a new movement of God’s people.

In order for this experimentation to succeed, we will need to risk both the church’s most gifted leadership and our financial resources. The time has come to risk both in order to make real Wesley’s call and our response to Jesus’ mandate.

The church growth provocative proposition calls the church to focus on possibilities – the incredible possibilities of starting of new churches in the USA and the renewal of existing churches.

I want to be sure I note that every goal in the Church Growth area is collaborative, none solely coming from any one general church agency. Let me lift up just a few:

The first has to do with widening our vision.

A team for new church starts in the US called the PATH I Team has been formed. Members include leaders from the Council of Bishops, the Board of Discipleship, the Board of Global Ministries, Higher Ed, United Methodist Communications, the network of congregational developers, the racial ethnic national plans, and others.

This bold initiative includes the goal to train 1000 new church planters to start 650 churches in the USA by 2012. Through this goal, conference leaders will have a pool of qualified church planters who will in turn start new churches that will reach thousands of new people on behalf of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second objective is to build a system for orienting and training Bishops and District Superintendents so that they are better able to make strategic church planting decisions. Although many of our bishops and DSs have excellent church planting skills, many do not. It's simply not a requirement for the job.

These leaders currently have few United Methodist tools to help them. We want them to have a rich database, a library of best practices that is tied to decision-making calculators that allow these leaders to answer simple questions like: "Based upon population need, where does a church need to be planted and where will it likely have the greatest possibility to succeed?"

And there are other objectives, such as:

- Helping annual conferences to allocate more of their budgets to new congregational development efforts – we want to help them allocate at least 5% more by 2012.
- Helping annual conferences to develop hundreds of new multi-cultural and racial ethnic churches within the U.S.
- Creating a "Church Plant Package" that will provide additional tools for local leaders.

These are just a few of the goals related to new church starts that are being presented to General Conference next year around the church growth proposition. But, let me conclude by naming a few other areas within this provocative proposition.

The Board of Discipleship, working with other agencies and with the Council of Bishops, will continue to provide help for church renewal.

The Board of Discipleship, working with United Methodist Communications and the United Methodist Publishing House, will continue to create a sustainable system for resource sharing that gives churches outside the U.S. access to basic church print and on-line resources that they deem a priority and in their own language. We will continue to focus work in Africa and will extend this work into the Philippines and Europe.

And, working with nearly all of the general agencies, the Board of Discipleship will offer the quadrennial 'Healthy Churches' training conference in early 2009.

In this short time, I have lifted up just a few of the areas that are part of the Church Growth provocative proposition.

The United Methodist Church serves not only those presently in our churches – all people and the whole created order are God’s domain and all are within our care. We must never settle for the status quo or be satisfied with a church that reaches fewer and fewer people and that impacts less and less of the decision makers who affect the very world in which we live. Rather, we are a people of a movement – a movement of United Methodists called and claimed by God to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the very transformation of the world.

I am eager to take your questions and to be in dialogue about any of these areas I’ve briefly addressed. Thank you.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Another church, in a very different setting, is led by the Rev. Lurone Jennings in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. Let’s take another moment, to hear from a United Methodist pastor who is revitalizing his own church--and his city!

Lurone Jennings Script:

(The Rev. Lurone Jennings)

“My name is Lurone “Coach” Jennings, Sr. and I am the pastor of Bethlehem-Wiley United Methodist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee.”

(Bettye Johnson)

“I’m Bettye Johnson. I have belonged to this church for over 40 years when it was Wiley United Methodist Church. As the membership grew older, we just became almost a dying church. We looked at Pastor Jennings’ vision and the things that he had going on in his church, who were meeting in the community center. And we were here with this large, beautiful building with no members. And it was a perfect marriage.”

(Jennings)

“We’re really not merging the two churches, we’re trying to create a new church.”

(sound of church service)

“Oh, how I love Him...”

(Jennings)

“Before it was just kind of a slow kind of middle of the road kind of service. But we’ve juiced it up a little bit. Matter of fact, we’ve had people come to visit us and said, ‘You’re all kind of like the United Methodist Church on steroids.’ So Wednesdays, noontime, the local business people in this community, they don’t have to wait to come back downtown on Sunday, but they get a chance to worship God during the workday.”

(Kimberly Bowles)

“I’m Kimberly Bowles. And I just look forward to it. Almost I don’t like to take a vacation ‘cause I think I’m gonna miss something.”

(Jennings)

"How's everybody? Fine! Good to see you. Welcome to our children's church."

(Children singing)

"When I came through as a young boy, 6 –years-old, I started coming to the Beth Center. The center for me was a lifesaver. That's why I feel so passionate about what I'm doing."

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

The church on steroids? Church on Wednesdays?! What exciting ideas.

Outside the U.S., our denomination is growing and we can learn great lessons from our sister churches in other parts of the world.

The third proposal challenges us all to be more intentional in partnering with the poor. Let's hear about the work of a missionary striving to improve the quality of life in Cambodia.

Cambodia Faith Engine Script:

(Sound of engine starting)

In Phnom Penh, a rumbling engine can break the cycle of poverty.

Young Cambodian men are learning auto mechanics in a program run by United Methodist Missionary Emmanuel Barte.

"We provide them food and then the place for them because most of them they cannot contribute because their parents, they don't have a job. They are only working in the field."

The average yearly income in Cambodia is 256 U.S. dollars.

(More engine sounds)

Local pastors pay a few pennies a day so students can learn mechanic skills to support their families. In 2005 the program received a one-time grant from the Youth Service Fund.

(Singing in Cambodian)

Each lesson begins with singing and a devotional...an opportunity to give thanks for this life-changing ministry.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

The Rev. Randy Day has some more insights about how our global church is recognizing opportunities to change lives and communities.

RANDY DAY:

Greetings to all of you who have joined us for this Town Hall meeting. We are a church with global vision, global mission and a global presence. Through the General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church has personnel and projects in more than 125 countries.

We are a growing church in Africa, parts of Asia and Eastern Europe. I believe that this growth is helping the entire denomination to reconnect with our roots in the theology of John Wesley, who taught that personal holiness, the private side of faith, is never complete unless it is also expressed in social holiness, including social ministries and mission. This combination of personal and social holiness is very evident in the lives of new United Methodists in places where our church is expanding.

The initiative to be in ministry with the poor and to reduce poverty and the causes of poverty is not only a call to the general agencies but also to individual Christians, to congregations, and conferences. It is an area of ministry that applies to all of us. More than 800 million people in the world go hungry every day, many of them are children. In a world of unparalleled wealth and food production, people are still hungry, not because there is a lack of food, but because there is a lack of access to resources and there is unequal distribution based on geography, regional economic crises, or political systems.

As your international mission and humanitarian assistance agency, Global Ministries is already laying the ground work for this initiative. Since the causes of poverty are multiple, the ministry to counteract poverty must also have many parts. It includes:

- Economic opportunity and justice which is addressed through education and training, microcredit and enterprise development. We applaud the leadership of United Methodist Women in their advocacy for debt relief for impoverished nations and their opposition to sweatshops and child labor.
- Alleviation of hunger by mobilizing resources for sustainable agriculture, supplemental food programs, and food resource banks, clean water and an accessible water supply, as well as fair trade for farmers and their families.
- World migration and immigration are examined and supported as people move to find safety and new opportunities for their families as they flee from wars, natural disasters and poverty.
- Health risks and poverty are often bound together. Many of you have already joined us in our efforts to reduce what the World Health Organization refers to as “diseases of poverty:” malaria, TB, AIDS. Our newest efforts in Mongolia include hospice care for the very poor.
- Networking and organizing are a hallmark of our ministry, whether in community institutions, Shalom Zones, or community development.

I hope that every United Methodist will be asking questions like these:

- Where are the poor in our community and what are their most pressing needs?
- What can our congregation do to minister with the poor and bring them into the life of the church? What happens in countries that have extreme poverty? How can the children be fed and how can they get an education in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty?

John Wesley taught us that loving God means loving our neighbors in this “world parish” that is ours. We can multiply the good we do through our collaboration and common focus on ministry with the poor.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Another example to celebrate is the work of the Appalachian Service Project, which offers a “cup of cold water” to those in need.

Home Repairs Bring Hope Script:

(Sound of a saw)

Volunteers are outfitting homes in the Appalachian Mountains with things most Americans take for granted.

“We finally have running water... cool!”

Jerry and Kathy Jackson are grateful.

“Now you’re able to cook your meals, go to your faucet to get water instead of going outside, carrying your water in, heating it on the stove.”

The Appalachian Service Project was founded in 1969 by United Methodist pastor, Glen “Tex” Evans. The program has helped more than a thousand families in four states... drawing volunteers from across the U.S. like Justine Norys.

“I’m just so thankful for all that I have and that God has given me this opportunity to help others.

The Jacksons have a new bathroom, kitchen sink, wiring... and a new outlook on the kindness of strangers.

“I appreciate it so much. I’m willing to volunteer and help some other family out because they helped us. Pass it on.”

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

“Living water” is a phrase that comes to my mind as I reflect on that story – and one that makes me think about how water relates to our next topic: global health. Fresh, clean water improves life for everyone and plays a key role in preventing the diseases of poverty.

The Rev. Larry Hollon will address the final proposal, combating the preventable diseases of poverty, but first, here’s a look at how teams are using preventative medicine to improve life expectancy in Haiti.

Better Health for Haiti Script:

(Child crying)

One in every eight children in Haiti will not live to see their fifth birthday.

(Child crying louder)

In 1967, United Methodists Jim and Virginia Snavley founded International Child Care to help Haiti’s poorest children.

ICC's Karen Bijou explains the 60 beds at Grace Children's Hospital in Port-au-Prince are reserved for the most gravely ill.

"To arrive here almost dead is not a good approach, it is not a good procedure."

In recent years this ministry has reached far beyond the walls of the hospital with mobile clinics to treat entire families.

"They would just stay at home and wait for their kid will be sick."

Nurses going into the community now treat 4,000 patients a month with preventative care and childhood immunizations...life-saving treatment in one of the most disadvantaged countries in the Western Hemisphere.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Welcome, Rev. Hollon. Please tell us more about ways the church can help eliminate diseases of poverty.

LARRY HOLLON:

Every day 3,000 children under the age 5 die from malaria, a disease that is easily prevented and treated if detected early enough. This is one child every thirty seconds, three thousand a day, ninety-nine percent of whom are in the so-called developing world.

44 million people are affected by HIV-AIDS. Hundreds of thousands of children have been left without parents. The future of the African continent is being shaped by the loss of life that results from these and other diseases of poverty.

The proposed Initiative on Global Health is a multi-layered, multi-faceted effort to engage the people of The United Methodist Church to address the diseases of poverty and significantly reduce the incidence of malaria and HIV-AIDS while also addressing the destructive effects of poverty.

It is unlike any initiative attempted before in that it seeks to engage congregations at the grassroots, annual conferences and the general agencies to address the diseases of poverty with the full resources and skills of the global United Methodist community. It will require deep and meaningful collaboration as well as long-term commitment.

This initiative is one of scale. It will seek to utilize the capacity of The United Methodist Church to affect change globally, recognizing that no single entity can do this alone. To achieve scale, we will also seek partnerships with others to provide the platform for significant change.

It will address issues of access to health care and advocacy, with an emphasis on developing health systems that meet the needs of all people. The broken health care system in the United States directly affects the uninsured in the U.S. and it affects the delivery of health services beyond the borders of the United States. The recruitment of professionals from the developing world and the foreign assistance provided to strengthen national health care systems are directly related to the delivery of health care in the United States. The United Methodist Church has

expressed its desire for health care for all, and this initiative is predicated upon redressing policies that negatively affect the health and well-being of people globally.

More than ever, the world is coming to understand that injustice in one part of the globe affects justice everywhere. The global health initiative is being advanced with the understanding that God's intent is for all of God's people to flourish and live in conditions that lead to health and wholeness.

The initiative will leverage funding and create new partnerships to increase health ministry, communication about health, and advocacy for changes in public policy.

In this regard, it has the capacity to connect the church at every point—local congregations, annual conferences, central conferences, general agencies and General Conference, our educational institutions and hospital systems historically related to the church.

The initiative will include public information and communication, fundraising, direct delivery of health services, education and training of community-based primary health care workers, opportunities for volunteers, public policy advocacy and collaborative partnerships in new forms.

The proposed Initiative on Global Health is integral to the four mission proposals being advanced by the Table of General Secretaries. Each contributes to the call of Jesus to make disciples, proclaim the good news of God's love for all, heal the sick and seek justice.

These four provide action steps that offer guidance for we who inherit the Wesleyan tradition to "live the United Methodist way."

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Certainly AIDS is one of the most devastating diseases of our time. Let's hear about a program in India specifically designed to help women with AIDS.

Women With AIDS Emily Reece (Moderator):

In India a diagnosis of HIV is often a death sentence. When a father dies, his HIV-positive wife and children are ostracized from the family with no means of support.

"They're afraid, when will I die like my husband? Will I suffer? What will happen to my children?"

Dr. Jessie Lionel and fellow physicians and nurses at the United Methodist-supported Christian Medical Center in Vellore, India are spending their own money to help these young mothers find ways to support themselves.

"We have been giving them a very minimal subsidy for food to eat and for the baby to have milk."

Doctors can offer little hope for long-term recovery but they can offer comfort and support for women abandoned by their families... "to have a hospice where these women and HIV-positive children when they are sick to be able to come and die with dignity and peace."

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

There are so many ways United Methodists are working to change the world. Jim Winkler can tell us more.

JIM WINKLER:

When I was a boy, I remember my father preaching regularly that the church exists for mission. We United Methodists believe the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. When people join the church we ask them if they will resist evil and injustice in all its forms. Ours is an active faith, one that strengthens the heart and the soul of the believer and prepares each of us to respond to the needs of the world.

John Wesley reminded us there is no holiness that is not social holiness. At a time when God's very Creation is in peril, we cannot afford to focus solely on individual salvation. Neither can the United Methodist Church carry out its mission effectively if our infrastructure is weak.

For more than 20 years, thanks to the commitment of our church to develop ethnic young adult leaders, the Board of Church & Society has operated a summer intern program. One of the 2005 interns, Erik Velez, has completed his degree. He has joined a new United Methodist Hispanic congregation in Nashville where he's helping to start an English as a Second Language Program. Erik works at the Fair Housing Council, an organization devoted to fighting racial discrimination in the housing industry. He's also been elected to the board of directors of Amnesty International.

Erik's exactly the type of leader our church needs: a committed Christian in a new congregation working for justice and peace because of his faith in Jesus Christ. The United States is a rapidly diversifying nation, but in this country the United Methodist Church remains 93% white. The general agencies can and do develop leaders like Erik.

In Arkansas, one of the poorest states in the U.S., there's been a long struggle to raise the minimum wage. This now successful effort was led by Rev. Steve Copley, pastor of First United Methodist of North Little Rock. Steve says, "The religious community was key. When leaders from local churches, both lay and clergy, as well as bishops and other leaders from a wide spectrum of the state's faith community united behind the effort, it created a powerful voice for change." That's an example of faith being put into action.

At the general church level, the Board of Church & Society has been involved in "Let Justice Roll," an ecumenical movement devoted to increasing the minimum wage. Our Social Principles call on all employers to "pay their employees a wage that does not require them to depend upon government subsidies such as food stamps or welfare for their livelihood."

Our ministry with the poor goes beyond feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked. It requires challenging the principalities and powers that profit from the misery of so many. We have to join justice and mercy together.

Another example: the Philippines is a poor country where a tiny percentage of elites control most of the wealth at the expense of the vast majority of the population. Shortly after the terrible events of 9/11, the Philippines was identified as the second front in the war on terror. A tragic consequence of this has been the assassinations and murders of more than 800 church leaders and human rights activists.

Last month, Bishop Solito Toquero accompanied a group of church leaders to Washington for an international conference on the Philippines crisis organized with the assistance of the General Boards of Global Ministries and Church & Society. Additionally, the boards helped arrange for the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold a hearing on the killings. Afterwards, our staff accompanied the delegation to Geneva, Switzerland as they testified before the UN Human Rights Commission.

This is the kind of ministry with the poor that must be part of our mission. We must question the growing gap between the rich and poor and advocate for fair trade and government priorities that care for the last, the least, and the lost.

A year ago, the general secretaries made a presentation to the Connectional Table about our work on the 2009-12 church budget. In the course of that presentation, we listed a few examples of how the agencies carry out ministry together on a daily basis. Afterwards, a district superintendent said to me,

“Jim, I’m embarrassed to admit I had no idea the agencies worked together. I always assumed there was no cooperation. In fact, I’ve always had the impression you compete against one another.”

Well, even though it is often unrecognized, collaboration is occurring and has been occurring in a variety of ways. Some current collaborative partnerships that are notable include:

Agencies working together to create model pension systems for Central Conferences; to create curricula and provide content for educational materials relevant to mission interpretation; to prevent drug and alcohol abuse; to provide seminars on national and international affairs for United Methodist youth and adults.

Friends, The United Methodist Church is a worldwide movement dedicated to spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. The general agencies help to provide resources and direction to the movement. The General Conference created the agencies to provide glue to connect and hold the movement together.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thank you Jim. And thank you to all our speakers. We appreciate sharing in your faith journey and we’re grateful for your commitment to working together on behalf of the people of The United Methodist Church.

Questions for Panel:

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Now it’s time to hear from some of our listeners. We’ve already received several questions via email and now we can also open up the phone lines so if you have a question and you want to email it, remember InfoServe: I – N as in Nancy, F as in Frank, O, S as in Sam, E – R- V as in victory at umcom.org, and please remember to put Town Hall Meeting in the subject line, or if you’re on the phone with us, press Star 1.

Now remember we can't take phone calls from speaker phones because of feedback, so if you are sitting on a speakerphone now and you want to talk to us, please make sure you pick up the headset before you begin talking.

We will try to take as many questions as we can in the next twenty minutes and so please keep them brief and phrased as questions instead of as comments. When we're finished with the call, you will find a recording and the transcripts of the Town Hall Meeting at umc.org/townhall. And that's also where you can find some of the reports – those are some of the questions that we've gotten already, so we can go ahead and answer that right off the top and say that the information that you're hearing about today can be found at that Town Hall site.

There are also other places where you'll find some other information. The report mentioned for "This is our Story" is actually available through the General Council on Finance and Administration's site. So I'll ask Sandra to give you a little more information about that.

SANDRA LACKORE:

The report was posted and is available as you said, Emily, in its full detail and I would be happy to have folks download it and use it as a resource in their local churches.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Great, Sandra actually there's another question that I would like to give to you and it's about an agency's work and if it directly relates to the propositions or if it doesn't relate directly to those propositions, what will that mean to that agency's funding?

SANDRA LACKORE:

The agencies are charged by the Discipline to provide basic work that they have done for years, and just like any local church budget or any family budget, the agencies prioritize their work based on the direction of the General Conference and the initiatives of our denomination. And that's what they'll be doing as we move forward in this new direction.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thanks for that information. A related question is about the propositions and how they might affect our apportionments.

SANDRA LACKORE:

If the General Conference votes the denomination's financial mission statement, that used to be referred to as our budget, that basically speaks to how we prioritize our resources of our denomination. When we vote that, that will be distributed on a formula, out to our Annual Conferences as apportionments or mission shares, just as it is now.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Great, thanks for responding. And I'm also getting word that there will be a link from that Town Hall page on umc.org to the GCFA place where they can download that report you mentioned.

SANDRA LACKORE:

Another way we cooperate.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Great. There's a phone call on hold right now and so I'd like to take the question from Robert Stemme? Is that how we pronounce your name?

ROBERT STEMME:

Yes, that's correct. I like to address this to Jerome Del Pino who is a longtime friend and I am a retired United Methodist clergy and currently I'm serving in park ministry to those who escape the northern climate and go to the South for the winter. And I find that we do not have a recruitment program for good solid people to do park ministry, I'd like to be able to drop that into the hopper as well.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Jerome are you ready to reply?

JEROME DEL PINO

Yes, I'll do my best. Hello Bob! Let me just simply say that the need for specialized ministries is quite extensive across the entire denomination, especially in the United States but it's growing globally. I would also indicate that we have a need for us to have a more streamlined approach to certifying and credentialing women and men who will be specialized in their ministry apart from serving in a local church. And so the problems that you are identifying are problems that are systemic and they will to be addressed, not only by our effecting a greater amount of resource to be provided for the identification and enlistment of women and men for such ministries but also to insure that they are properly received by their Annual Conferences and supported by them.

ROBERT STEMME:

Thank you, Jerome.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Robert, you didn't have a follow-up question? Took care of you? Great. There is another question here that I think I will have to have Karen Greenwaldt address. Karen, are you available?

KAREN GREENWALDT

I am. Thank you.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Great. The question is: how will we maintain a balance between helping strengthen existing congregations and starting new initiatives?

KAREN GREENWALDT:

The initiatives in relationship to starting new churches are balanced against the ongoing work to provide support for renewal of churches. And so we have at the general church level any number of initiatives moving in both directions at once. We have, for example, a Romans 12 Project in the United States that is working to identify best practices in congregations across Episcopal and geographic lines. To identify what it really does make for an excellent church of whatever size. That kind of information will be widely distributed once the study is completed this fall. It will impact the ongoing revision and work with the church vitality indicator, which is a tool for local church renewal efforts. The General Board of Discipleship is working to develop what's called Discipleship University which will be a two-year enterprise in which persons leading existing congregations, pastors and laity both, can engage in in-depth learning and practice around congregational renewal and revitalization efforts. And so the work of renewal of churches is going alongside the major new initiatives to start churches. And we are balancing very carefully how we continue to respond to both.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thanks, Karen. I appreciate that. Another question that came in via e-mail is about outreach, witness and evangelism and how will we focus our efforts for bringing in unchurched people? So I think Larry and Karen, actually I would like for you to talk about that since we partner so closely with our efforts at United Methodist Communications and the General Board of Discipleship. Would you care field that one?

KAREN GREENWALDT:

Sure. I'll start, Larry. Obviously the Igniting Ministries campaign has been in existence for a number of years. And we do work together to identify ways that churches can be part of that campaign and can, in fact, learn how to be very hospitable, welcoming places for new people. We also believe that it's frankly new groups for new people. And so our work continues to be around how we help churches start new ministry efforts both in existing churches and in brand new church starts, whether their faith community starts in small measure or whether they are new church starts expecting to create self-sustaining local churches. So outreach with witness and evangelism is always on the table in relationship to how we help people think about the generations. Currently there are four different generations in the adult population. And so ministry has to be tailor-made to meet the needs of young adults and older adults across the spectrum. The same is true with young people, with children and youth. And so our work with outreach witness and evangelism is not just one-size-fits-all. It's a variety of efforts around how do we actually reach people of different generational ages and viewpoints.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thanks, Karen. Larry, do you have anything to add?

LARRY HOLLON:

Yes, I do. I think in addition to Karen's overview, we have allocated from Igniting Ministry specific program funds, materials and staff time to support the new church starts initiative so that there will be targeted collaborative partnership in supporting new congregations and new faith communities as Karen has indicated. In addition to that the two agencies, the Board of Discipleship and UMCom are conducting joint research to be able to identify where we can address our messages and send invitation and welcoming messages to those four generations that Karen is talking about. And that means moving into new media. It means finding out where those generations are comfortable in terms of their media lives and finding ways and language to address them in those media where they are comfortable so that we are extending an invitation to the church in an environment that is favorable to people and in language that they can hear in a way that provides for them the opportunity to be responding to the church in new ways—at least new ways to us.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Great comments, Larry. Thanks. There's a phone call question that I'd like to take now from Robert Griffin. Robert, are you there?

ROBERT GRIFFIN:

Yes, I'm here. Two of us here in Western Massachusetts are interested in examples of empowering local witness by working ecumenically with other denominations around us?

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Anyone? Karen, do you feel that would be a good one for you to try to field?

KAREN GREENWALDT:

I'll start and then other folk can add on. Part of what we do in the whole conversation around new church starts has to do with how might we link up not only with United Methodist efforts, but where there are needs to link in ecumenical ways through federated churches or other initiatives, we certainly want to engage those possibilities. We think that there may be possibility, for example, in some parts of the country to link up varieties of denominations to reach new populations of immigrants, new changing neighborhoods, suburban life or whatever it may be. And it may be more effective actually to do that together than it would be to create several different denominational separate identities within those areas. So that's part of the thinking of the new church start work. It's also an ongoing question of how we do that work with existing churches and particularly when we have some smaller churches in places where if they link up together vitality might emerge across denominational lines. And so models and methods to do that are a part of the ongoing work of revitalization of existing congregations. And certainly we could talk, Larry and Randy.... Jim may want to talk about the ways of link ecumenically with mission and outreach efforts as well.

RANDY DAY:

Yeah, this is Randy. In terms of some of our work in starting new churches in other countries, which is part of the whole new church plan, Cambodia comes to mind. We heard a clip earlier on. This is basically within the larger Methodist family, but a very good illustration, I think. The Methodist Church of Singapore, the Methodist Church of Malaysia, the Methodist Church of Korea and the United Methodist Church, both from the United States, Switzerland and France, are all working together with the Cambodians to start a new church there. This has been going on now for a number of years of annual meetings, returning pastors putting money into that sort of training for the pastors and the laity. Churches are popping up like mushrooms around Cambodia. So it's very, very exciting in terms of how we do that. You said ecumenical interfaith. There's a lot of work going on in terms of new church and also the schools and humanitarian work that we do together. This certainly is the case in the post-tsunami areas in Asia, in Banda Aceh, the province in Sumatra that was closest to the epicenter. We're working a lot with the Methodists who were there who are small sliver in terms of the population. But they have a large school there—a highly-respected school—and a very active church in the midst of the largest Islamic country in the world at a very, very Islamic province of Banda Aceh. So that work is going on and the church is thriving as we move forth to build homes for the Muslims and the Methodists.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Robert, any follow-up on that?

ROBERT GRIFFIN:

No, I think that's good. Thank you. Go right ahead.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Any of the other speakers want to chime in on that?

LARRY HOLLON:

Emily, this is Larry. One of the more interesting and energetic ecumenical outreach efforts that I have seen that the church is engaged in recently is the Nothing But Nets campaign to provide bed nets for the United Nations measles program. It is a program that has taken the energy of

youth groups ecumenically and is really moving across the church in quite a remarkable way. And because it is very specific, because is very straightforward and the action is very clear, I think it offers an opportunity for organizing youth in an ecumenical way and perhaps even in an interfaith way that could be a very useful tool to local groups to try to empower young people. So I would refer folks who are listening, if they're not aware of the Nothing But Nets program, to check out the nothingbutnets.net Web site and also to check it out on umc.org and to be aware that The Advance has created an Advance account number so that United Methodists may contribute through the Advance to Nothing But Nets. But it's a perfect example of an activity that empower organizing at the local level.

RANDY DAY:

You know, Larry, a number of annual conferences have stepped up to the plate, but Texas Conference is right out there. Bishop Huie, you might want to say a word, brag a little bit. You all have had a good goal out there.

BISHOP HUIE:

Well, our annual conference is certainly engaged in trying to buy those bed nets. We're excited about and our thought in that as we developed this in the wider arena is to include its sports, high-school teenagers, and all of those reach far beyond an individual congregation. And they reach some of our younger people as well. So we're pretty excited about what the possibilities are here.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

That's great. There are so many exciting things happening with Nothing But Nets. And I want to just put a plug in for Malaria Awareness Day next Wednesday also. Our team at United Methodist Communications has been involved in creating some of those resources. And so we would encourage churches to place an emphasis on that. A couple of other questions. We're kind of running low on time. But I want to get to a couple of these at least. One is actually for Sandra and it's from our friends over at the Division on Ministries with Young People. And it asks this: Does GCFA find accurate ways to report youth and young adult statistics on membership and giving? And how will, as we look at these emphases, how will we continue to improve those reports?

SANDRA LACKORE:

Once every quadrennium a team from across the agencies comes together to make some recommendations on what data will be collected. I think that's a wonderful suggestion that we hone in particularly on youth. And I would be happy to refer that to our statistics department to start looking at how we can address those needs more straightforwardly.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

There have also been a couple of questions about the reports themselves. And so if there are questions for those reports, where should we send them at the General Council?

SANDRA LACKORE:

We have a research division at the General Council on Finance and Administration and folks can address those concerns to www.gcfa.org, to our research unit. The other interesting resource, Emily, that we have created to go along with the reports is a study guide so that local churches can take the data and use the study guide to work with the data themselves.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Excellent. There was another question, Karen, that I think I will toss your way and possibly Bishop Huie might want to weigh in on this one as well. What does translating the Wesleyan heritage in contemporary terms look like for younger generations? And what ways would the bishops suggest to make disciples of young adults who are not students and might not necessarily want to be in leadership.

KAREN GREENWALDT:

I think there are a number of ways to translate the Wesleyan heritage. Obviously one of the ways is to make very known the practices of faith, the means of grace, that Wesley so very much talked about. And so one of the things that we do is to help folk actively learn how to pray, how to read the Bible together, do biblical study together, learn what the sacraments mean and learn how to participate in the sacraments, experiment with varieties of forms of worship and be involved in mission outreach service in the community sorts of things. One of the ways that Wesleyan theology has always been taught throughout our history as a people has been through the hymns and the hymnology that we use in our churches. And so the hymns that we sing matter a lot. There are some experiments in congregations going on to take some of the Wesley hymns, to put them to new forms of music in order to teach the faith that we, in fact, practice through our singing. There are other ways of teaching the Wesleyan heritage. There are a number of resources available through Discipleship Resources, United Methodist Publishing House, through Abingdon Press, Sunday school materials, etc. that actively teach Wesleyan theology, practice, doctrine, polity, etc. And part of what we've got to do as a church is translate some of that into language that is accessible to younger people and frankly uses technology in ways that we don't use as well as we might.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

It appears that we've got about 8 folks with questions who are holding on phone calls. So I think we'll take those and any of the additional e-mail questions that we have received we'll make sure that we answer and get back to the folks that who've submitted them. So thanks for submitting those. I'm going to take a phone call first from Jaydee Hansen. Jaydee, are you there?

JAYDEE HANSEN:

I really appreciate the health emphasis. One of the things that I notice missing, though, are what I would call the environmental causes of poor health. Wesley emphasized this a lot with clean water. Global warming is already increasing malaria, encephalitis and dengue fever. I'm wondering how the environmental emphasis of clean water which causes diarrhea and global warming which is going to cause both drought and more malaria can be addressed as part of this health emphasis.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Randy? Larry?

RANDY DAY:

Well, Larry, I can start. The Women's Division, different parts of GBGM, have had an emphasis on the environment for some time as has the General Board of Church and Society in terms of advocacy. I think that in terms of the programming and the work that we're doing in many of the countries, take sub-Saharan Africa, we need and are trying to work more closely with the NGOs and the governments of those particular countries to address the issues of the environment. It's everyone's concern. And you're absolutely right, Jaydee, in terms of the issues of water and how that relates to malaria. Our whole approach is doing the primary healthcare on the ground and

working with folks in urban neighborhoods and in village after village and looking at the issues of not having the standing water with the mosquitoes, where you throw out the dish water, that sort of drainage issue, and then also looking at the clean water and doing that village by village. But then you need to have a national policy and obviously some international policies. I think as we look at the whole global health initiative we might do a bit more to work through some of the councils of churches such as the All Africa Council of Churches and the ones in Asia and other parts of the world, to lift these up because it really needs to be global effort.

LARRY HOLLON:

Jaydee, I think you're illustrating by your question the important point that malaria is an entry point. It is not reasonable for us as a church, nor I think for the world community, to focus on a single channel and attempt to address that particular disease as if it exists apart from all of the other relationships. People who are poor are people who are suffering from malaria. Then one has to ask, why are people poor? And what can we do about poverty as a means of preventing disease? I think you're also illustrating very accurately the connection between global warming and malaria. It is true that malaria is increasingly being seen at higher elevations because global warming is making it possible for mosquitoes to nurture, to lay eggs and to infect people at higher altitudes. And what I would say to your response is that the use of malaria as a focal point is a way to get to those other issues that we do need to address. And if we could mobilize the people of the United Methodist Church to become concerned about malaria as the entry point which would then lead to consideration of the interrelated issues that are underneath that disease of poverty. I think that we would have a wonderful opportunity to do education, to build activity around not only preventing malaria, but addressing poverty, dealing with public policy questions that are related to malaria and to other diseases of poverty. And so I see it as a doorway—not certainly the only consideration in terms of global health.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Jim Winkler, are you on the line with us still?

JIM WINKLER:

I sure am.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Hey, Jim. One of the issues, of course, that came up in that conversation is that of advocacy. And certainly Church and Society, that's part of what you do. Have you something to say on that topic as well?

JIM WINKLER:

Well, I think that this is where we need government priorities to be focused and that is on these sorts of matters like cleaning up the environment, clean water. And that's what we're working for. Organizations like World Health Organization and UNICEF and the World Bank and many other international organizations have studied how much would it cost to ensure clean water, basic healthcare, basic education, primary education, school lunches, for the people in the poorest countries in the world. And it consistently comes out to be a tiny fraction of the amount of money spent on arms and the military every year. I think this is the way that we need to align our priorities as societies and as churches. I think that it'll go much farther toward ensuring peace and stability in community than focusing on war and weapons.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Jaydee, thanks for that question. I need to move on to Marta Aldrich.

MARTA ALDRICH:

Yes, hi. I wanted to ask a question about the four provocative propositions. And this could go to Bishop Huie or someone else there who's been part of this initiative. This matter really has been just at the general agency level at this point. But I'm sure that the hope is that there's some consensus building going on so that this vision will someday be imbedded in the pews of our churches. My question is: At what point do you expect the church at the local level to begin to catch this vision?

BISHOP HUIE:

This is Bishop Huie. I'll be glad to make some response to that and invite others to join in. Certainly within the Council of Bishops, particularly as we've discussed those 7 pathways, and then as they've been distilled more toward the 4 propositions that we've talked about, we (within the Council) are in the process of trying to implement those propositions in our own Episcopal areas and report to one another in the Council about how we're doing that. Our hope and our expectation-and we've discovered that we have a lot to learn from one another-so that what's happening in one Episcopal area, a bishop learns about that and may decide to do that or something different from that, but in the same related area in their own Episcopal area. So in many ways the Council is one of the places where these priorities can be implemented at a district and a local church level. For example, building new churches, transforming existing congregations, racial/ethnic ministries, leadership development, all of that really is rooted in individual congregations. And I think that's starting to happen in a variety of annual conferences. I think it's happening in every annual conference to some extent. Some annual conferences are taking the lead in some areas. Other annual conferences are providing leadership in other areas.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thanks, Bishop Huie. We are at the end of our time together. And I hate to cut off conversation that's been so helpful and instructive for folks. Folks who are still holding on the line with questions, we'd really appreciate it if you would send those via e-mail. And so, if you would send those to infoserv@umcom.org we will make sure that we get those into the e-mail list and get those out to folks for response. Bishop Huie, would you please bless us with a benediction?

BISHOP HUIE

I'd be glad to. Let us pray. Holy God, we just thank you for each of the persons who has been on this phone call, both as participants and as listeners. And we ask that as you have heard all these things that have been said and the plans that have been made here today, that you would bless them, that you would draw them together and somehow take each of the pieces and make them into a whole so that as Jesus fed the multitudes with just 5 loaves and 2 fish, so may what we have done here today be multiplied many times over for the sake of your kingdom. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

EMILY REECE (MODERATOR):

Thank you, Bishop. Thanks everyone for listening in today. A few reminders to close out our time together. We want to remind you about the Virginia Tech resources for prayer times for your Sunday worship services at umc.org and also to remind you to check back at umc.org/townhall for a recap of what we've been talking about today. Thanks everyone for spending this time with us. And have a blessed afternoon and evening.