

Town Hall Meeting, April 17, 2007

Remarks by Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, President of the Council of Bishops

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.

