

## Proceedings of the 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

**Thursday Afternoon,  
April 24, 2008**

BISHOP GOODPASTER: All right. That was the amendment that was presented last night, and the committee has recommended that it *not* be in our rules. Any conversation?

(pause)

All right. I see no cards. If you would get your keypads. If you support the committee *not* to include this, please vote “1” for yes; you are supporting the committee. If you would *not* support the committee, please vote “2.” Please vote when the clock appears.

(pause)

BISHOP GOODPASTER: All right, that was the amendment that was presented last night, and the committee has recommended that it not be in our rules. Any conversation? All right, I see no cards. If you would get your keypads. If you support the committee not to include this, please vote “1” for yes—you are supporting the committee. If you would *not* support the committee, please vote “2.” Please vote when the clock appears. [*Yes, 722; No, 122*]

(pause)

All right, you have supported the committee, and it is not included.

STEPHENSON: Bishop, this completes the work of the Rules Committee. And I would move the whole document, but since I am not a member of the annual conference or a delegate, I could move the motions when the work was in the hands of the committee, but now that it has become *your* work, we have to have a delegate make the motion. So, Elaine Stanovsky will do that for us.

### *Adoption of the Rules*

BISHOP GOODPASTER: Well, Janet, thank you, but this is coming to us from the committee, and it is properly before us. What we did last night and what we’ve done today is perfect various segments of the report. So now the entire report is before you to be adopted officially as the Rules and the Plan of Organization. So the entire report is before you. Any discussion?

(pause)

If you will get your keypads... If you would adopt the entire report, please vote “1” for yes; if you would not, please vote “2” for no. Please vote when the clock appears.

(pause)

I hurried the computer. It’s coming.

(pause)

OK, we’ll try this. If you would—we’re going to do a show of hands. If you would support and adopt the entire report, would you lift a hand? Opposed? [*adopted by show of hands*]

And it is adopted. And we thank the Committee on Rules and Plan of Organization for the work of the conference.

(applause)

(unintelligible)

All right, we are going to have a couple of other announcements. The Agenda Committee has a report for the remainder of the day and tomorrow. I see a card back there...mic. 11, maybe, or 8? Yes. Mic. 8.

MELODY N. ADAMS (Nebraska): This is just a request. Those of us sitting in the back don’t really

know which microphone is which. If we could have a placard or a sign on each side of the mic., so we know. Especially next week, when we get—

BISHOP GOODPASTER: Absolutely. Thank you. We’re seeing the numbers on this side, but they’re not on your side. Is that? The secretary.

(unintelligible)

REIST: Microphone, thank you. The signs have already been ordered, they have not yet been delivered.

BISHOP GOODPASTER: And I apologize, because I thought they were on the other side, and so—but thank you for going to those mic.

Now, I want to turn to the chair of the Agenda Committee for a report, and then we’ll turn to the secretary for some materials.

KANG: Thank you, Bishop Goodpaster. I’m vertically challenged, here, I don’t see anybody, but OK.

(laughter)

Maybe I should use *your* microphone, Gere.

(pause)

There. Thank you. Bishop Goodpaster and the Council of Bishops, and delegates and friends, it is my privilege to announce the agenda for the remainder of the day and tomorrow.

Now, after a few...having a fifteen-minute break, we will go to our organization of legislative committees meeting. It will start fifteen minutes after the adjournment. So we estimate that it will start at 4:15 P.M. After that, we will adjourn for dinner, except for those who are elected to serve as officers. So those

who are elected as officers of legislative committees will attend the training immediately following their election. After dinner break, we will have Legislative Committee meetings starting at 8:00 P.M. until 11:00 tonight. Now, you may not want to hear this, but please be aware that the General Conference pays overtime fees for work done after midnight, and the last shuttle bus leaves at 1:00 A.M. So please be mindful of the schedules as you plan your Legislative Committee work tonight and the remainder of the conference.

And tomorrow morning, we will begin with choral music at 8:00 A.M. And the worship service is at 8:15. And conference business will begin at 9:05. At 9:20, and starting, we will have several items, including greetings from the City of Fort Worth, and the nominations for the University Senate and Judicial Council. And then we will have introductions of Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Church and Affiliated United Church and Concordat Church delegates.

My friends, the agenda is full. After morning break we will go to legislative committees around 10:45 A.M. tomorrow, for the remainder of the day. Our work has begun, so let us continue our good work. May your day be touched and filled by God's spirit. Thank you.

**BISHOP GOODPASTER:** Thank you. And we will abide by that. The conference secretary has a report to read, and then some announcements. So Gere, I'll turn to you first, for the decision.

#### *Judicial Council Decision 1089*

**REIST:** I have received a decision from the Judicial Council, Decision No. 1089. In regards to a Request for Declaratory Decision from the Committee on Nominations of the 2004 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference with respect to the Meaning, Application and Effect of paragraphs 27.5, 705, 706 and 805 of the *2004 Book of Discipline* to the

Actions of the Secretary of General Conference Regarding Central Conference Representation and Proportional Jurisdictional Representation, the Concordat Agreement between The United Methodist Church and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, and in the Allocation of Membership of the General Boards and Agencies of The United Methodist Church.

**Digest.** The secretary of the General Conference did not have the authority to declare paragraph 705.3(a-g) of the *2004 Book of Discipline* superseded. The provisions for electing members to the general boards and agencies described in paragraphs 705 and 706 of the *2004 Discipline* are in conflict. The reconciliation of these two paragraphs must be accomplished by the 2008 General Conference for inclusion in the *2008 Book of Discipline*.

**The Statement of Facts.** The Committee on Nominations of the 2004 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference voted unanimously to request a declaratory decision regarding the secretary of General Conference's use of paragraphs 703.5 [*sic* 705.3] or 705.5 of the *2004 Discipline* and similar paragraphs to make allocations for membership on General Conference boards.

The substance of this petition revolves around three issues raised by the Committee on Nominations of the 2004 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference: 1. Did the Secretary of the General Conference correctly rule "due to actions of the 2004 General Conference regarding Central Conference representation and proportional jurisdictional representation (Calendar 1517) and the Concordat Agreement between The United Methodist Church and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (Calendar 15), that the text of paragraph 705.3 (a) through (g) was superseded"? 2. Did the Secretary of the General Conference correctly apply the *Discipline* when she allocated the members of the General

Boards and Agencies to each annual conference? If the allocation was not appropriate, what, if any, are the determining provisions of the *Discipline*?

If the *Discipline* is silent on the allocations to each annual conference, does the allocation revert to each Jurisdiction? 3. Did the Secretary of the General Conference correctly apply the *Discipline* when she allocated the number of members (regular members and/or at-large members) of the General Boards and Agencies to the Jurisdictions? If the allocations were not appropriate, what are the determining provisions of the *Discipline*?

The Judicial Council has jurisdiction under paragraph 2610 of the *2004 Book of Discipline*.

**Analysis and Rationale.** The secretary of the General Conference does not have the authority to declare paragraph 705.3(a-g) superseded. The secretary cannot make substantive changes in actions adopted by the General Conference. Only the General Conference has the authority to supersede the legislation of prior General Conferences.

In reviewing the disciplinary provisions for nominating and electing members to general boards and agencies, we find paragraphs 705 and 706 to be in conflict with each other. Reconciliation of these provisions can best be addressed by General Conference action. The reconciliation of the conflicting provisions of paragraphs 705 and 706 is an urgent matter and these changes must be made by the 2008 General Conference.

Nearly a full quadrennium has passed since the Connectional Table and the program boards and agencies were organized on the basis of the secretary of General Conferences' understanding of the General Conference legislation in paragraphs 705 and 706 of the *2004 Discipline*. We render no opinion on the appropriateness of the allocations made by the secretary of the General Conference. The Judicial Council recog-

nizes that nomination and election of members to General Conference boards and agencies is an enormously complex matter.

Decision. The secretary of the General Conference did not have the authority to declare paragraph 705.3(a-g) of the *2004 Book of Discipline* superseded. The provisions for electing members to the general boards and agencies described in paragraphs 705 and 706 of the *2004 Discipline* are in conflict. The reconciliation of these two paragraphs must be accomplished by the 2008 General Conference for inclusion in the *2008 Book of Discipline*.

April 24, 2008. Shamwange P. Kyungu was absent. C. Rex Bevins, the first clergy alternate, participated in this decision. This is a true copy of Decision 1089 issued by the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church on Thursday, April 24, 2008. Keith D. Boyette, Secretary.

BISHOP GOODPASTER: All right, thank you, Gere. Do you have announcements before we leave?

REIST: By the grace and mercy of God, Bishop, I have no announcements.

BISHOP GOODPASTER: Two in a row. We're on a roll. Now, according to my time, it is ten minutes after four. The Agenda Committee recommends a 15-minute break, so your legislative committees will begin at 4:25; and we are in recess to go to our break and our committees.

**Friday Morning,  
April 25, 2008**

*(applause)*

*(music)*

*(applause)*

BISHOP JANE ALLEN MIDDLETON: I invite you to begin to find your seats. Thank you.

*(music)*

*(applause)*

BISHOP MIDDLETON: My brothers and sisters, I call this conference to order for the purpose of discovering who we are and why we're here as we sing praises to our Lord.

*(applause)*

MARCIA MCFEE: I invite you to stand as you are comfortable and let us sing praise to God who reigns above.

*(music, song)*

BISHOP BENJAMIN A. JUSTO: I invite you to join me in a *(unintelligible)* spirit of prayer. Let us pray.

*(Prayer)*

BISHOP JUSTO: Amen.

*(music, song)*

AMY M. FORBUS (North Texas): Our call to worship is Psalm 1.

*(Responsive reading of Psalm 1)*

*(music, song)*

*(prayer)*

*(music)*

MATEUS S. A. FRANCISCO (Western Angola): Brothers and sisters, our Scripture reading we find in the Book of Ezekiel, 33:1-7. *[spoken in Portuguese]*

Galatians 5:7-10 *[spoken in Portuguese]*

Now I invite the congregation to stand for the reading of the Gospel. *[spoken in Portuguese]* The Gospel according to Matthew, 28:18-20. *[spoken in Portuguese]*

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

AUDIENCE: Thanks be to God.

FRANCISCO: You may be seated.

BISHOP JOÃO SOMANE MACHADO (Mozambique Area): Good morning. *[Repeats phrase in several languages, with audience replying.]* These are all the languages spoken in heaven.

*[speaking in Portuguese, with simultaneous translation into English]* To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world priority mission for the church. I want to thank the commission that was planning the worship services. They had divine guidance in choosing the theme. This theme is really the reason for the church's existence. After the eloquent message on the opening worship by the president of the Council of Bishops and the episcopal address, the magnificent and the pedagogical way that our colleagues provided yesterday, I started to think that there was nothing left to say. All I have to do is say Amen.

*(laughter)*

But I remembered a Brazilian pastor that had been transferred from one church and assigned to a new church. But before going, he had heard that this church was a church that was concerned on itself, looking inwards and only worried about its own self, but not really looking to the world around it. They would not notice or see what was happening even 100 yards outside their church. And around that church was a large community, a slum with a large number of very abject poverty situations. And so when the pastor arrived at the church, he saw that what people had said was actually true. And so the first Sunday, the pastor comes up to the pulpit and starts to preach, and he chooses the text of Luke 4:18-19, and he preached with dynamism, with eloquence, and with spirituality. And after his sermon, he went to the door to greet the members. And all the members were saying, "What an excellent sermon, a very spiritual sermon, fantastic!"

(laughter)

And so the following week, during the week, he then started visiting them in their homes, getting to know who they were, what they were doing. But on the second Sunday, he came and he preached on the same text and gave the same sermon.

(laughter)

But, so they're (*translation unintelligible*) "Well, thank you for the good sermon." And on the third Sunday after visiting his church and this congregation in their homes, he came back and he preached the same sermon again.

(laughter)

And so the chair of the pastor relations committee says, "No. Something's not quite right here."

(laughter)

So they called together the administrative board and the council to see what's happening: "So let's call this pastor and see." So, on a Wednesday they called for a meeting. And so the chair of the committee was saying—started praising him, saying, "We're very glad, you're a very dynamic, very enthusiastic, excellent pastor. But I don't know if you remember your first sermon that you gave us."

(laughter)

"Yes, I do remember," he said.

"And do you remember what your second sermon was?"

"Yes, it was the same."

"And the third one?"

"Yes, I remember. It was the same one. And perhaps the *next* sermon will be the same one, too."

(laughter)

And so he replied, "Yes, and until you can show that you are putting into action the sermons I am preach-

ing, I'm not going to change my sermon."

(applause)

And so that's why I feel that even though my colleagues spoke so well before me, I can maybe still keep repeating the same message.

(laughter and applause)

In the text that we read this morning from Galatians—and this is a question that Paul was asking to the Christians in the community of Galatia—and we know that Paul, in his last two, second and third missionary visits, is the one who founded that Christian community. He saw the birth of that community of the Galatians. And there were some people that had come and settled in that region—some of the Celts and the Gauls and others. And when he hears that something's not quite going right, that things are not going the way he had started, he then writes his letter to them. He asked, "What happened? You were running so well. Why are you losing steam? You were making disciples in such a fantastic way. What happened? Who made you stop?"

Brothers and sisters in Christ, our church in the decades of the '50s through the '70s putting this as the priority in everything that they would do and contribute, they contributed greatly in the transformation of the world in that time. I am a product of that great and glorious period. Many heroes of the faith died in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, working as missionaries or national church workers.

I have a few names that I would like to mention as an example of that exemplary spirit and period. In the decade of the '50s, we had a missionary that came to Mozambique by the name of Julian J. C. Rea. He was an agronomist. And when he came, he saw that the people were hungry, were starving, because their crops would only produce one harvest a year. So he drew out an ani-

mal, and he called this animal, this beast, "hunger." And then he drew 12 arrows that were trying to kill this beast of hunger. And each arrow had a name: January, February, March—all the way through December. And he started showing them, "What can you plant in January? What can you plant in March? in each month of the year, throughout December?"—and so helping to see what type of plants are good seeds to plant in the rainy season, what type of crops are best planted during the dry season.

In the area of health, we know Dr. Stauffacher, who came from Sweden; Dr. Flaxmayer, that came from Germany; and Dr. Robert Simpson, that came from the United States. He is still alive. And they dedicated and gave their lives to help save the people. We know Bishop Dodge, known in Africa as "the revolutionary bishop." He helped give the idea of what it means to be a citizen, what it means to be free. We have a missionary that worked a lot in Angola, by the name of Chad. He also was an agronomist, and today in Angola there is a mango, a special type of mango that is known as the Chad mango.

There are many other names that I could mention, but I also want to mention the names of some of our own African leaders that emerged in this period. Bishop Chungu, from Congo, and Bishop Zunguze, from Mozambique; these are also the first African bishops that emerged, and these are part of the heroes that passed on this mission to us today. And as a result of all this effort and this work, many of the children that were born and raised through this process were the ones that helped lead the independence of these many African nations today. In Mozambique we can talk about Eduardo Mondlane, Agostinho Neto in Angola, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Patricio Lumumba, and many others. This is all the result of the dynamism of our missionaries and our church workers.

So Paul is asking *us*, you as United Methodist Church, “What happened? You were running so well. What happened to you? What’s the problem that led you to stop running so well?”

There is not an easy answer to that question. But if I can try to attempt an answer, I think one part is, the church ceased doing good. The church started leaving aside doing good, stopped loving God. The three rules, the three simple rules, are very important for the life of the church, and that’s the only way we can have true disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world.

When I came in 1984 for the first time to the United States, I came to the General Conference, not as a delegate but rather as a member of the commission that was starting the creation of Africa University, a new pastor, just fresh out of school. So I was in Africa, and we kind of thought, *We are coming to the Jerusalem of the church.*

(laughter)

I found a wonderful theme for the General Conference—that was the theme that was being developed by the conference. And so when I went home, I took on this theme and started working on it full-steam, and I asked my bishop to translate the materials that had come from the conference. And so the bishop translated those texts, and I started teaching that in my small church, and in the school I was teaching the students of theology at the time also what it is to be a congregation with vitality, what it is to be a disciple with a burning faith.

And what happened was that my small church started to grow. In our small church in ’84, we were 15,000 members; and by ’88, we were 30,000 members. Throughout the whole country.

(applause)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, in my 20 years as bishop and as a

member of the Council of Bishops here, I see that this church is blessed with women and men, laity and clergy, with people with tremendous gifts and talents. So, what’s lacking? What’s missing? We need to *do* what we say. It’s the *action* that is missing.

Yes, the world does need transformation. And it’s important to note that the choice of this theme was very wise, and also we need to be certain about the choice of the people to carry out this urgent mission, to make true disciples of Jesus Christ. The Methodist Church proposes to make disciples of Jesus Christ; but not just disciples—*true* disciples of Jesus Christ. And only in this way can we *truly* transform. But to transform, we need *to be* transformed.

(applause)

We cannot say we are going to go out and transform the world if we are not transformed ourselves.

I remember one of our recent General Conferences—

(applause)

We cannot say we are going to go out and transform the world if we have not transformed ourselves.

I remember one of our recent General Conferences, the wonderful worship of reconciliation and forgiveness, and reconciliation to where people from the different colors could come together. And I saw the spirit of God over that worship service, and the words and the exchanges that we gave, asking for forgiveness from each other. I saw *that* was the time that the church could *truly* be united and reconciled.

But years later, as I come back, still it seems that we can only speak with words, not with actions yet. Churches can still say, “We don’t want this pastor, because he is of this type or that type, or one group or the other.”

So can we really be transformers? The prophet Ezekiel says that we as The United Methodist Church need to be the sentinel. When are we going to sound the alarm or blow the trumpet to warn the world that is filled with injustice, where the powerful can subjugate the weak and decimate generations in the name of their own freedoms? Who is going to sound the alarm or blow the trumpet warning that the children continue to die every day? Every 30 seconds a child is dying of malaria in Africa. Who is going to sound the alarm warning that 500 persons a day in Mozambique are becoming infected with AIDS and HIV? Are we doing enough in favor of those who are dying from the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Burundi, Sudan, and so many other places?

(applause)

What prophetic voice can we give to the problems in Zimbabwe and Kenya and Congo and other places? How can we give voice to that? A world with hope is only possible when the church goes back to engage in its principle mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. The transformation of the world would only come through true disciples.

And now, United Methodist Church, God speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, I appoint you, here at this General Conference, to be the sentinels for all of God’s people spread throughout the world. Amen.

(applause)

MARCIA MCFEE: The seed is sown; then we wait for it to grow. The plant grows; we wait for it to bear fruit. We wait for God’s action, for God’s time, for God’s will to be done. Waiting...waiting. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. If you are seated near a plant, I invite you to pass that along the row, in this next song, as a sign of your commitment to make disciples for Jesus Christ and to nurture new ministries.

(music)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  
Amen.

(applause)

BISHOP MACHADO:

(prayer)

(music)

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Let us now be in order for the business of the day. I would like to invite now to the podium the chair of the Agenda Committee, Youngsook Kang.

*Agenda for the Session*

YOUNGSOOK C. KANG (Rocky Mountain): Thank you, Bishop Middleton. Good morning. Bishop Middleton, the council, delegates, and friends, this morning, we will have greetings from the city of Fort Worth. Please note that there will be elections of the Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy, following the nominations for the University Senate and Judicial Council. Of course, there will be an introduction of affiliated and concordat church delegates from around the world.

After a break, we will go to our committee meetings. We will work in the committees for the rest of the day. Your meetings scheduled for the day will be adjusted or maybe adjusted according to your committee chairpersons or officers. As for tomorrow's agenda, we will see you back here tomorrow morning with choral music, worship service, and plenary. Orders of the day tomorrow include rural life celebration, central conference pension initiative, pastors to study episcopacy, study commission on the relationship between The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous Methodist Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. Tomorrow's agenda is pretty similar to today's agenda except that the plenary will continue through entire morning.

After lunch break, we will go to our legislative committee meetings for the remainder of the day. Now I ask all the chairs of the legislative committees to come to the Agenda Committee tomorrow morning at 7. The room number is 201C.

Today is the first day of legislative committee work, so let us get busy. As you are on your way to your legislative committee later, may the roads rise with you; and have a good day. Thank you.

(applause)

BISHOP MIDDLETON: And now I invite Harriett McCabe to report from the Committee on Presiding Officers.

HARRIETT MCCABE (Northern Illinois): Thank you, Bishop Middleton. I am pleased to report to you that our presiding officer tomorrow morning will be Bishop Nkulu Ntanda Ntambo. Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: And now I would like to invite from a host committee, Alan Goss, to bring greetings from Fort Worth. I would like to introduce to you with joy, Rev. Tim Brewster, who will bring greetings on behalf of the mayor of Fort Worth.

TIM K. BRUSTER (Central Texas Conference): Thank you, Bishop. I am so pleased this morning to welcome you, my brothers and sisters, to Fort Worth, on behalf of the city of Fort Worth. I am the pastor of First United Methodist Church here. And Mayor Mike Moncrief is a member of our congregation. He's sorry that he's not able to be here today. He's at a council retreat all day today and unable to greet you in person. But instead, he wrote a letter that I am reading on his behalf as a welcome to the city of Fort Worth.

*(Letter from Ft. Worth  
Mayor Moncrief)*

"On behalf of the citizens and the City Council of Fort Worth, it is my pleasure to welcome the General Conference of The United Methodist

Church. We are very honored and delighted that you all chose to be in our city for 10 days during the last weeks of April. It is our hope that you will savor your stay and time spent here enjoying the unique mix of cultural activities found only in the city 'Where the West Begins.'

"It is with great pride that I would like to tell you about our city: a city of cowboys, culture, and community. In 2004, our city received the prestigious designation of 'Most Livable City,' an honor bestowed upon us for 10 years. This distinction is based on criteria ranging from economic revitalization to community interaction to major attractions to an exceptional quality of life. Our city is clearly a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. The Texas Association for Workforce Mobility named Fort Worth one of the best cities to relocate families."

Fort Worth is also home to a wide variety of businesses, arts, and sports facilities, such as the Texas Motor Speedway, the world-renowned Bass Hall, a \$43-million Cabela sporting goods store, the Kimbell Museum and a number of other fascinating museums and interesting and fun venues. Last but not least, one of our most valuable assets is our people. Visitors often cite the "Fort Worth Friendly" spirit of our citizens and businesses as the top reason to visit and plan a return trip to our city.

It's very special to me that the conference is here because I'm a member of the First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth. I am proud to be a part of a global church engaged in life-changing and life-giving ministries not only here in our community, but throughout the world.

We're pleased you chose Fort Worth for your conference, and hope you enjoy your time in Cowtown.

Sincerely, Mayor Mike Moncrief  
Mayor of the City of Fort Worth.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Thank you.

BISHOP BENJAMIN CHAMNESS: Let me take a moment of

personal privilege on behalf of the Central Texas Conference and the Fort Worth area. I want to extend a warm welcome to all the bishops, delegates, observers, and visitors here. Dr. Allen Goss has been very ably serving as the chair of the local host committee and Dr. Thomas Childs as the director of the host operations. We have an army of volunteers who are eager to serve you while you are here. We also want to express gratitude to all the other annual conferences of the South Central Jurisdiction. They have provided financial support for the Central Texas Conference in the hosting of the 2008 General Conference. Now, may I read a letter to you from Governor Rick Perry of the State of Texas.

*(Letter from Texas  
Governor Rick Perry)*

As Governor of Texas, it is my honor to extend a warm welcome as you gather for the 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church. I am certain this event will provide you with the opportunity to share ideas and celebrate your faith.

Throughout our great nation, members of faith organizations have guided congregations toward positive and meaningful lives. Occasions such as this inevitably lead to moments of introspection, renewal, and new beginnings. I applaud you all for your commitment to strengthening ties and furthering opportunities by building bridges that deepen awareness and understanding within communities.

As you gather to reflect on the past and consider the opportunities that await you, I wish you continued success. Through fellowship and conviction, the spiritual community continues to lay foundation throughout our communities that will make a difference for generations to come, highlighting the best of Texas.

To our out-of-town visitors, I know you will enjoy all that Fort Worth has to offer. Renowned for its

warm hospitality that is Texas, western heritage, and museums and culture, Fort Worth has something for all to explore and enjoy.

First Lady Anita Perry joins me in sending our best wishes for a memorable conference. Sincerely, Rick Perry, Governor.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much, Bishop Chamness. Now, we'll have many more opportunities, or at least another formal one, to give our gratitude to the folks of this conference who have welcomed us so warmly, but Bishop Chamness, while you're still here, I'd like for you to come forward and receive our gratitude to you and to the wonderful members of your conference who have given us a warm Texas welcome. Thank you very much.

*(applause)*

#### *Nominations for University Senate*

We turn now to nominations for the University Senate. We think that we're going to have on the screen those persons who have already been nominated by the Council of Bishops. As you consider persons that you would like to nominate, you do not need to nominate these persons whose names you're now seeing. They have been nominated by our rules, by the *Discipline*, disciplinary rules by the Council of Bishops. You may put other persons into nomination, but these persons have already been nominated. And now you'll see an additional list. These persons have also already been nominated. Their names do not need to be put into nomination by you. And now the floor is open for nominations to the University Senate. I see a card with a question. If you'll come to mic. 2, please. Oh, OK, got it. Right now I'm assuming any yellow card is a nomination. Is that correct? Put them down. OK, let me ask it this way. Do any of you have questions of procedure? All right, then you may lift your cards for a

nomination and I'll recognize the person here. If you'll come to mic. 2, please.

GLORIA HOLT (North Alabama): I would like to nominate Charlene Black, laywoman, South Georgia Annual Conference.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Charlene Black has been nominated, laywoman, South Georgia Conference. And could we bring the lights up so that I can see a little better and perhaps, hopefully, you can too? Yes, here. If you'll come to mic. 2, please.

MUKAZ RUFUM (North West Katanga): Pastor Mukaz Rufum, Southwest Katanga Conference.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat that, one more time, please?.

RUFUM: Pastor Mukaz Rufum, Southwest Conference of Katanga.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK, this would be in the category of a CEO of a . . . of an institution. And would you repeat the name please. Your nomination, if you'll repeat your nomination.

TRANSLATOR: Director of the Methodist Church of Katanga.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: And would the translator repeat the name, please, also?

TRANSLATOR: Dr. Kasap'Owan, Director of The United Methodist Church of Katanga.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. In the back, if you'll go to mic. 7, please.

DOROTHY WATSON TATEM (Eastern Pennsylvania): Thank you, Bishop Middleton. I nominate the Rev. Dr. Charles (Chuck) Yrigoyen. Dr. Yrigoyen is the former secretary, general secretary, of archives and history. He is presently the director of United Methodist studies.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK, that's enough, I think. Thank you very much.

TATEM: Oh, thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you.

TATEM: Thank you, Bishop Middleton, thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Yes, you in the middle there. If you'll go to mic. 6. Why don't you come forward, if you would?

FRANK ALEGRIA (Texas): I'd like to lift up the name of Dr. Maxie Dunnam, great pastoral leader, leader of Asbury Seminary.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Six, why don't you come forward, if you would?

ALEGRIA: I would like to lift up the name of Dr. Maxie Dunnam, great pastoral leader, leader of Asbury Seminary. Dr. Maxie Dunnam.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Yes, here, if you will come to mic. 2 please.

NATALIYA CHERNOVA (Northwest Russia Provisional): [*in Russian*]

BISHOP MIDDLETON: If we could have the translation, please.

CHERNOVA [simultaneous translation]: I would move to nominate Sergei Nikolaev, Central Russia.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: And is this . . . is this in the category of lay?

CHERNOVA: Clergy.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Clergy. OK. Thank you. And would you spell that, please?

CHERNOVA: N-I-K-O-L-A-E-V.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. If you will go to mic. 2, please.

LAZARUS FILIYA ILIYA (Nigeria): I would like to nominate—

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat that one more time, please?

FILYA: I would like to nominate the Rev. Ayuba Ndule, Provost, Banya Theology College.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Would you repeat that, and spell it, please?.

FILYA: Rev. Ayuba Ndule. Ayuba is A-B-U . . . A . . . sorry.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: That's quite all right. We're asking a lot of you, for those of us who aren't speaking your language.

FILYA: A . . . U . . . A-Y-U-B-A. Ndule is N . . . D . . . A . . .

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Let me suggest another way to do this. If you will stay at the mic., the page will come to you, and we'll work so that we have the spelling correctly. Thank you so much for your patience. And now, at the back, please come to mic. 11.

ASA WHITAKER (Arkansas): Thank you Bishop. I'd like to nominate Dr. Rebecca Miles.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. And again, if you would wait there until a page comes so that we're sure we have that document correctly. Yes. If you'll come to mic. 2, please.

CHARLES S G BOAYUE (Detroit): Bishop, I'd like to request that a nomination that came from North Katanga be repeated and translated correctly. I think the translator misidentified the role of the nominee from North Katanga.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. If we could have that happen now . . . if the nominator for the person from North Katanga would come forward, please, and repeat that, . . . so that we're sure we have the right person, and again, if you will stay at the mic. until the page comes to have that—she has it, OK.

MUKAZ RUFUM (North West Katanga): [*interpreted*]

BISHOP MIDDLETON: If you'll pause now, so that we can hear it.

RUFUM (simultaneous translation): I have already corrected it. I am Pastor Mukaz Rufum from the North West Katanga.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Thank you. Now we need the name of your nominee.

RUFUM: Pastor Kasap'Owan.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Are there any other nominations? Other nom—? Yes? I recognize you, if you will come to mic. 4, please.

BETTY C. WHITEHURST (Virginia): I believe the translator also mistranslated the position of the nominee from West Katanga as head of the university, not the church. I believe she said church, and it is head of university.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Yes, I see a card back here, if you will come to mic. 8, please.

JOÃO DAMIAO ELIAS (Mozambique): [*interpreted*]

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Will you repeat your name one more time? Name again, please.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: We need the translation, please.

ELIAS [simultaneous translation]: I propose Dr. Eduardo Namboretti.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK. Dr. Eduardo Nameretti.

ELIAS [simultaneous translation]: Namboretti.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Lamboretti. Thank you. And if you'll stay there so we get that name correctly. Mic. 10, please, if you'll go to that mic. in the back.

ARTHUR D. JONES (North Texas): I move that we close nominations.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Then . . . now, we need nothing more. Is that a nomination that you're proposing in the back?

JONES: Bishop, I moved that we close nominations.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Yes, I understand that, but that is . . . we can not receive that nomina—that motion—until all nominations have been made. So, if there are none, then I declare: nominations are closed. Thank you. Now, those per-

sons who have been—if we can come to order, please. Thank you. Those persons who have been nominated must present a 100-word statement, no more than 100 words—it will be cut off at the one hundredth word—to the offices of the *DCA* by 5 P.M. today, in order that that might be printed in tomorrow's *DCA*. The elections for these positions will be held on Monday, April 28. You will then vote on two persons who are CEOs of an institution, and two other persons. Thank you.

#### *Judicial Council Floor Nominations*

I think we're ready now to move to nominations for the Judicial Council. And we have asked that those already nominated be placed on the monitors. These nominations have come from the Council of Bishops by disciplinary rule. So we will let you look at these, these persons do not have to be renominated.

*(pause)*

The floor is now open for nominations for the Judicial Council. Let's go to this yellow card in between mics. 3 and the number that I can't see because someone's standing there. But if you'll come to the mic. please.

IRMA CLARK (Northern Illinois): Bishop, I would like to nominate Jack Ryder.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat the name and also note whether this is clergy or lay?

CLARK: I would like to nominate Jack Ryder, layman.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Jack Ryder has been nominated. Mic.—excuse me, you sir, to mic. 2.

GRUMMETTI NAPOLEON ADAMU (Nigeria): Bishop, I nominate—

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Will you repeat your name, please? Thank you.

ADAMU: I nominate Barrister Haniya H. Gwandum.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you spell that please?

ADAMU: H-A-N-I-Y-A. Haniya. H-A-N-I-Y-A. H. Gwandum is G-W-A-N-D-U-M. Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: And is this lay or clergy?

ADAMU: Lay.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Haniya Gwandum has been nominated. I am going to go to the far back and from where I am standing, well, the person who stood, if you'll go to mic. 11, please.

JANE T. FINLEY (North Georgia): I wish to nominate Mary Daffin, laity. That's Mary Daffin, laity.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you spell the last name, please, and be sure you stay there 'til the page can come?

FINLEY: D-A-F-F-I-N.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. I'll go now to the waving hand near mic. 10, please. No, not you, the other waving hand—in the back, in the back, far back, yes, you sir, you sir, yes.

NORMAN H. COLEMAN III (West Ohio): This is mic 12. Thank you. I would like to nominate Gloria Brooks, clergy.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat that please?

COLEMAN: Gloria Brooks, clergy.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. And now we'll go to you, sir, here at mic 2.

PAT MEADOWS (North Alabama): I nominate the Rev. Keith D. Boyette, clergyperson, Virginia Conference.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat that please? And stay there while we get that name.

MEADOWS: I nominate the Rev. Keith D. Boyette, Virginia Conference.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much and I am going to turn to our general secretary for an

announcement because this is very important that we have the information we need up here.

FITZGERALD REIST: I would ask that all of you, when you fill out your sheet that the page gives you, identify yourself and the position for which you are nominating the person, not just their name, but the position, so we don't have confusion of what role people are in and designate their status as clergy and lay—or lay. That will help us immensely in the office and avoid errors that otherwise might be created. I mean at this stage, we are nominating for University Senate.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: No, no.

REIST: Oh, I mean, I'm sorry, for Judicial Council, but I have some names from University Senate that don't have anything on it other the name, doesn't designate who made the nomination and so forth, and that makes it very difficult for us to keep these appropriately sorted and make sure we don't make mistakes.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: So make sure you note "JC" on this one—Judicial Council.

*(pause)*

There's a proposal here that we vote to change our rules for these nominations and that would be that we give . . . we would change the . . . suspend our rules in order to allow persons to line up at the mic. so that I am not having to call.

*applause*

If you would support that and it looks like you would, would you lift a hand, please? That requires two-thirds, and I think we have far more than that [Hand vote, supported]. So let me just invite those of you who have nominations to now go to a mic. and I'll go in order through the mics. If your nominee has already been nominated, obviously you would then return to your seat. So I am going to begin at mic. 6.

BLENDA E. SMITH (Wyoming): I nominate Robert Kohler—K-O-H-L-E-R—clergy, Robert Kohler.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: All right, if you'll stay where you are, please, and thank you very much. I am now going to go to mic. 2.

JEFF LUST (New Mexico): I'd like to nominate Daniel Ivey-Soto, layperson, New Mexico.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat that, please?

LUST: Nominate Daniel Ivey-Soto, lay, New Mexico.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. And now to mic. 4.

RANDY COOPER (Memphis): I wish to nominate Solomon Christian, layperson.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you repeat that, please?

COOPER: Solomon Christian, layperson.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Now I'm told that I don't need to repeat this but I will, one more time. Stay where you are until you're sure a page has gotten this name. And to the pages, you take the name from the person at the mic. only after they have actually placed that name in nomination. So we'll go now to mic. 7.

BONIFACE KABONGO ILUNGA (North Katanga): I'd like to nominate—

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Please repeat your name. Thank you.

ILUMBA: I would like to nominate Dr. Mande Mutombo.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK. Is that Randy Mutumbo?

ILUMBA: Mande Mutombo.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Nande Mutombo. Thank you very much. Mic. 10? Mic. 10, mic. 10. Is there a person there? No. OK. Mic. 10, I . . . whatever that number is back there.

HARRIETT MCCABE (Northern Illinois): 12.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: 12. Mic. 12, please.

MCCABE: Mic. 12.

JANET L. ROTHFUSS (Western New York): Thank you, Bishop. My name is Janet Rothfuss from Western New York Conference, and I—

BISHOP MIDDLETON: You'll repeat your name, please.

ROTHFUSS: Yes, I will. It's Janet Rothfuss, Western New York Conference, lay delegate. And it's with pleasure that I would like to nominate Rev. Larry Baird. That's B-A-I-R-D.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: If you'll repeat that.

ROTHFUSS: Rev. Larry Baird.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you.

ROTHFUSS: Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. And mic. 2.

KARL BAUMGARDNER (Northwest Texas): I nominate Ron Enns, judge from the North—

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK, that's good enough.

BAUMGARDNER: —Northwest, he's also from the Northwest Texas Annual Conference.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Wonderful. If you'll repeat that, his name one more time.

BAUMGARDNER: Ron Enns. E-N-N-S.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Now, I see no other persons at mic.? Ah, 8.

BENEDITA P. NHAMBIU (Mozambique South): OK. Benedita Nhambiu, (unintelligible) Southern Mozambique Conference.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Repeat your name, please.

NHAMBIU: Benedita Nhambiu, (unintelligible) Southern Mozambique Conference. [simultaneous translation].

BISHOP MIDDLETON: If you'll pause just a moment, we'll have the translator for us, others of us.

NHAMBIU [translation]: Conference of Southern Mozambique.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you. Your nomination.

NHAMBIU: I propose Dr. Juliã Onauele, layperson for the Judicial Council.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Would you spell that, please; and maybe we'll have the translator do that?

NHAMBIU: J-U-L-I-Ã O-N-A-U-E-L-E.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much. Now I see, I see no other persons at mics. And so, may I assume there are no other nominations? And so I declare that nominations are closed.

By the end of the day today, that is by 5 P.M., we must have in the offices of the *DCA* a biographical statement from each person. Again, not to exceed 100 words. This must contain your conference and your status as lay or clergy. No persons can be considered for this Judicial Council or for the University Senate if we do not receive these biographical statements by 5 P.M. today. By our rules, these must be published for 48 hours prior to the election; and the election will be . . . will take place on Monday, April 28. Thank you for your cooperation on that. Yes. We have a card?

JOY A. BARRETT (Detroit): My question is, the individuals nominated by the Council of Bishops, are they required to submit the 100—? Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: That is correct. Yes. All nominations—thank you for that clarification—all nominees must submit a biographical statement. Yes. Mic. 5, please.

WILLIAMS (SCOTT) CAMPBELL (New England): Bishop, is it possible to have both the University Senate list from the bishops and the Judicial Council list from the bishops put up for a longer period of time so that we can copy them?

BISHOP MIDDLETON: They will be in tomorrow's *DCA*.

CAMPBELL: But there are some of us that would like to have them today, if possible, if they can just be put on the screens for a minute or two.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK, I think we can do that. Now, we're gonna be moving on to another matter, so—(background voice). Actually, we probably could've shown them in the time it's taking us to figure out a process here. But the list will be available in the secretary's office; and if as we leave today we can put them up, we'll try to do that. Thank you, because it is important that we have all these persons in our mind; but note that tomorrow all the names—those from the Council of Bishops and those that have been lifted from the floor—will appear in the *DCA*, giving you 48 hours to study the qualifications of all these persons for these important positions.

OK, I'll recognize the person in the back, please, if you'll move to mic. 11.

#### *Open Meeting Rule Discussed*

FELICISIMO CAO (California-Nevada): Bishop, I have a question before we go to the Legislative Committee meetings later. Will you allow me to raise a parliamentary question?

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Go ahead.

CAO: In the Rules of Orders that we approved yesterday, in line 909 in the last sentence, let me read it: "Consistent with the spirit of Paragraph 721 in the *Book of Discipline*, meetings of General Conference committees and subcommittees shall be open." Last night, as I was a delegate to the conference Legislative Committee, conference's Legislative Committee, I was ruled out of order when I made a motion to allow visitors to participate in the discussion of the subcommittees but no voice; I mean, but no vote, because realizing that if not, if not, some or most of the Central Conference delegates re-

ceive their *Daily Christian Advocates* only on the first day of the General Conference. And so it would be helpful for the visitors to be allowed in the subcommittee hearings or discussion. So my question is: Are not the visitors and observers allowed to hear the discussion of the subcommittees in the legislative committees?

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Let me try to respond to your question, and that is to tell you that our rules allow persons to be observers—both in the plenary of the legislative committees and in the subcommittees. They are allowed to be visitors, not to have voice.

CAO: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Period—unless the committee gives them permission to do so; but that must be a committee decision. Does that answer your question?

CAO: So it depends on the committee's decision, Bishop?

BISHOP MIDDLETON: The committee has that right to invite persons, but only should they choose to do so.

CAO: Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Otherwise, they can be there as observers. OK, we want to move now to the Interjurisdictional Episcopacy Committee elections. And I want to turn to our general secretary for a motion.

#### *Additions to Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy Nominees*

REIST: Nominations for the Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy are listed on pp. 1774, one thousand seven hundred seventy-four, and 1775, one thousand seven hundred seventy-five, with addition of nominees printed in today's *DCA*, p. 1870, as corrections. Bishop, I move this to suspend the rules so that the names added in today's *DCA* may be included in the list of nominations.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: That is before you, it requires a two . . . yes there's a . . . it requires a two-thirds vote. If you would suspend the rules in order to include those who are listed, would you lift a hand? Let me explain what we're doing here and give you a chance to find these two places. You might want to hold both in your . . . in your hands. By our rules, the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy is comprised of persons who are nominated by their conferences and those persons are listed on pp. 1774 and 1775 of your *DCA*. There was a late submission of other names. And now if you'll turn in your book to p. no. 1870, and you'll see in the gray box, on bullet point one and two, the additions that were submitted by their annual conferences. And so now we have our complete list of nominations for this committee. And so what I'm asking you to do is to suspend the rules in order to receive those so that we can have this election. And now we'll turn to . . . to the persons in the back. Are you both on the same issue? OK, if you'll come to mic. 11 please.

KEVIN GOODWIN (Peninsula-Delaware): I need to make a correction to our correction on p. 1870.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: OK, in order to do that, we will need to suspend the rules because this is a printed document. So, if you will suspend the rules in order to receive this correction to their correction, would you lift a hand? Any opposed? Then that is done and you may now offer your correction to the correction.

GOODWIN: On 1870—

BISHOP MIDDLETON: P. 1870, and we're looking now at the first bullet point.

GOODWIN: This would be the first bullet point, Bishop. The person listed is Rev. Sandra Steiner Ball. She is our clergy nominee.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Thank you very much.

GOODWIN: And that would leave me as our lay nominee as previously printed.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Exactly. And so the only correction is the status of that person who's been nominated. It is in order because that's the position that needs to be filled: that is a clergy position. Thank you very much.

GOODWIN: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: All right, now I'm going to return to the motion to suspend the rules in order to take this action. On . . . to receive this report and be able to . . . to move forward in this election, you will need to suspend the rules. So, if you will do that would you lift a hand? Any opposed, same sign. [Motion passes, hand vote] And now I think we're all together. And so now what is before you are the nominations as amended to the Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy. Are you ready to vote? I'm going to try this by hand ballot—hand voting. If you will elect these persons to the committee—Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy—would you lift a hand? Any opposed, same sign. Then it is done. Thank you very much. [passed with hand vote]

*Introduction of Affiliated, Affiliated Autonomous, & Concordat Officials*

And now we need to turn to the next item for our business today and that is the introduction of those who are from Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated United Church, and Concordat Church delegations. And I want to turn to Bishop Oden, the Ecumenical Officer of the Council of Bishops, to come forward to lead us through these introductions of our colleagues.

BISHOP WILLIAM B. ODEN: Thank you, Bishop Middleton. It is always a high moment at General Conference when the Affiliated Autonomous, the Affiliated United, and

the Concordat delegates are introduced and presented. We are increasingly aware of the significance of these churches to our connection, to the importance of them. And this year we have one of our largest groups of delegates in this category and I think one reason is we just finish a Council of Bishops consultation with CIEMAL, which is the Council for—of Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean. There was a very meaningful consultation in which there was honest exchange about the significance of connection.

So for this introduction, since we do have such a large group, I'd like to ask Bishop Minerva Carcaño, who is the chairperson of the General Conference Study Committee on the Relationship between The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean, to join me here, along with Bishop Suda Devadhar, the bishop of New Jersey, who is also the secretary of the Relational Concerns Committee of our Council of Bishops and who has just returned representing us in the White House, honoring and greeting the Pope. So we welcome both of these episcopal leaders here.

And I want to begin by saying that the Autonomous churches are in several categories but the Affiliated Autonomous churches all have their roots in United Methodism and their predecessor churches. The Concordat churches are churches which we have exchange of delegates, voting delegates, at the highest legislative bodies of the church. And the United churches also have Methodist DNA in their union. So, I want to begin by asking these delegates to stand in their place when called upon, and then be seated, and at the end of the introductions and the presentations, we will ask you all to stand, that the whole General Conference might greet you.

First, the oldest Concordat church we have in our denomination is with the Methodist Church of Great

Britain. And I'd like to present David Bradwell, Christine Elliott, Jennifer A. Impey, and Peter G. Sulston. The Church of the Caribbean and the Americans—

*(applause)*

—also a Concordat church, are Geraldine Maison Halls and Otto Ogden Wade. And then I would move to the Church of Puerto Rico, which is also a . . . a church that's Concordat.

*(applause)*

It—we have 60 of these, so you may want to hold your applause 'til we get all finished and we'll give them a rousing welcome.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: And, let me also ask that others of you please remain seated, so that as our colleagues stand we can spot them in the auditorium. Thank you.

BISHOP ODEN: Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: So, if you're not being introduced, would you please remain seated where you are?

BISHOP ODEN: Thank you.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: If you are not being introduced, please remain seated.

BISHOP ODEN: The Concordat Church of Puerto Rico: Rafael Moreno-Rivas and Victor R. Ortiz. The Evangelical United Church—Methodist Church of Ecuador: Salomon Cabezas and Rodolfo Lemos. The Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica: Rolan Abarca and Luis F. Palomo. The Argentine Evangelical Methodist Church: Bishop Nelly Ritchie and Miriam Martos. We will now ask Bishop Carcaño to continue our introductions.

BISHOP MINERVA G. CARCAÑO: It's my privilege to help us welcome our brothers and sisters from the following churches: From the Dominican Evangelical Church, Bishop Alejandro Figueroa and Juan S. Román Dominguez. From the

Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, Bishop Carlos Poma Apaza and Sabino Anaguaya Poma. From the Evangelical Methodist Church of Panama, Bishop Pablo Morales Vega and Lupita Norma Salon Wilson. From the Methodist Church in Brazil, Bishop Stanley Da Silva Moraes, Joana D'Arc Meireles, Ana Claudia Lyra Fernandes Porfirio, and Andressa Ramos. From the Methodist Church in Cuba, Bishop Ricardo Pereira Diaz and Maritza Proenza Ortega. From the Methodist Church in Uruguay, the Rev. Oscar Luis Bolioli, the president of the Methodist Church in Uruguay, and Jose Luis Mochetti. From the Methodist Church of Chile, Bishop Aravena Bravo Neftali and Mario Martinez Soto. From the Methodist Church of Peru, Bishop Jorge Bravo-Caballero and Rebeca Soledad Luza Salazar. And from the Methodist Church of Mexico, Bishop Moises G. Valderrama and Ernesto P. Contreras.

**BISHOP SUDARSHANA DEVADHAR** (Greater New Jersey): From the Evangelical Methodist Church of the Philippines, Bishop Nathanael P. Lazaro and Mr. Lingkod F. Maducdoc. From the Korean Methodist Church, Rev. Won Jae Lee, Rev. Kyoung Ha Shin, and Mrs. Mary Um. From the Methodist Church in India, Mr. Roozvelt Arvindbhai Christian, Mrs. Malathi James Raj and Rev. Hanuck Bhola Ram. From the Methodist Church of Indonesia, Bishop Humala Dolok-saribu and Mrs. Bonur Simangunsong. From the Methodist Church of Singapore, Rev. Dr. Ho-Soon Kang and Mr. Kim Teck Kim Seah. From the Methodist Church of the Union of Myanmar, Bishop Zothan Mawia and Mr. Hla Win. From the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, Rev. Ng Betty and Mr. Fung Sau Chung. From the Methodist Church in the Republic of China, Mr. Cho King Yu and Bishop Kuey Chien Hua. From the Methodist Church of Hong Kong, Bishop LO Lung Kwong and Mr. NG Sze Yuen. From the United

Church of Christ in Japan, Rev. Mizuo Ito and Rev. Hiroko Ueda. From the United Church of Christ in Philippines, Mrs. Yeemy R. Kalam-pag and Bishop Elieizer Malihan Pascua.

**BISHOP ODEN:** Please stand and give these delegates a rousing welcome.

*(applause)*

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** Thank you very much. Let me recognize the . . . our brother here. Go to mic 5, please.

**WE CHANG** (New England): Bishop, just a little correction. From Korean Methodist Church, we also had a bishop Kyong Ha Sin, which is the president of Council of Bishops. He was not introduced as the bishop.

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** Thank you very much. Thank you for that. Yes, mic.—to your, yes, 7. Mic, I'm sorry, mic. 4, please.

**CLARKE CAMPBELL-EVANS** (Florida): Bishop, I had a question related to the nominees to the University Senate and the Judicial Council and wondered if that question was in order now.

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** Why don't you try it?

**CAMPBELL-EVANS:** In listing the nominees to both these bodies in the *DCA* tomorrow, I wondered whether they will be listed as to the source of the nomination, meaning were they put into nomination by the Council of Bishops or were they nominated from the floor? Will that be—

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** That will be done. Yes.

**CAMPBELL-EVANS:** Thank you very much.

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** Thank you very much. Thank you. Yes, in the back. To—I actually it was not you, sir . . . or ma'am. I'm sorry. I recognize the person in—looks like purple or something like that. If you would come.

**JUNE D. MCCULLOUGH** (Greater New Jersey): Bishop, we have, in back of us, some representatives from Malaysia who were not introduced.

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** What we'll do is do that at another time. Thank you very much for bringing that to our attention. We will take care of that and do that at another time. And now if we can move on, what I'm going to do is shift things just slightly and turn to our general secretary. I understand we have a judicial ruling and then he also has another item to put before you—an announcement—at least one—and then we'll have our report on the disease of malaria. Thank you.

*Judicial Council Decision  
No. 1090 Read*

**REIST:** Thank you, Bishop. I have received from the Judicial Council Decision No. 1090, IN RE: Request from the 2008 General Conference for a Declaratory Decision as to the Constitutionality of Various Petitions Requesting Mandatory Membership Requirements for Selected Groups.

Digest. The proposed petitions referred to the Judicial Council seek to mandate membership of the General Conference and/or boards and agencies. The petitions related either to disabled persons, youth on all boards, Central Conference members on boards, youth or young adults as General Conference delegates, or youth from Central Conferences as delegates to General Conference. All these petitions, if adopted, would guarantee a preferred status and are therefore unconstitutional.

Statement of Facts. The 2008 General Conference requested a declaratory decision of the Judicial Council as to the constitutionality of petitions related to mandating membership of General Conference and/or boards and agencies (Petition numbers 81299-GA-705, 81524-GA-705, 81300-GA-705.5, 81517-

CO-13-1-c, 81518-CO-13.1-3, 81522-CO-502.1). Each petition seeks to mandate membership of the General Conference and/or board and agencies related either to disabled persons, youth on all boards, Central Conference members on boards, youth or young adults as General Conference delegates, or youth from Central Conferences as delegates to General Conference.

Jurisdiction. The Judicial Council has jurisdiction under paragraph 2609.2 of the *2004 Book of Discipline*.

Analysis and Rationale. Decisions 594 and 601 address the matter of disciplinary requirements for membership in general boards and agencies in The United Methodist Church. In those decisions, we held “any legislation which would guarantee a preferred status not extended to others” was unconstitutional. The petitions if adopted would guarantee a preferred status and are therefore unconstitutional.

Decision 601 states that disciplinary provisions which “recommend” or ask that “special attention” be given to membership of certain categories of persons on general boards are constitutional. See paragraph 705.3i of the *2004 Discipline* for example.

Decision. The proposed petitions referred to the Judicial Council seek to mandate membership of the General Conference and/or boards and agencies. The petitions related either to disabled persons, youth on all boards, Central Conference members on boards, youth or young adults as General Conference delegates, or youth from Central Conferences as delegates to General Conference. All these petitions, if adopted, would guarantee a preferred status and are therefore unconstitutional.

April 25, 2008. Shamwange P. Kyungu was absent. C. Rex Bevins, the first clergy alternate, participated in this decision.

This is a true copy of Decision

1090 issued by the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church on Thursday, April 25, 2008. Keith D. Boyette, Secretary.

*(pause)*

*Seating of Reserve Delegates*

I have two announcements to share with you. One is permission for reserves to be seated. Heads of delegations, in particular, pay attention to this. When I was giving the orientation, I mentioned that delegates should not be seated for ten minutes as reserves. And it was interpreted as not being seated unless they were in for a whole session. They may be seated for a periods of time in any session. We just don’t want them running in and out every five minutes with a new person being seated. So please use discretion, but delegates may be seated for portions of a morning or afternoon or evening session.

I would also like to announce that all meetings of the General Conference are to be open unless they are called in closed session. In that regard, if a subcommittee is meeting, observers should be allowed in the room to hear and observe the subcommittee meeting. Subcommittee meetings should not be closed by having a bar so extended that observers may not hear or see the interactions that are taking place in the subcommittee. That effectively makes them closed meetings.

I offer those two announcements to you for your understanding and action.

BISHOP MIDDLETON: Before we recess, I want to call again on Bishop Devadhar to make the introductions of those persons from Malaysia and to also note, as he comes to the—to the podium, if there are others among us who were not introduced by our oversight, would you please give those names to Bishop Oden or to the secretary of General Conference so that those introductions can be made? Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

BISHOP SUDARSHANA DEVADHAR: We are delighted that we have representatives from the Church of Malaysia; and on behalf of the council, we are sorry we have missed those names in the beginning. Our representatives from the Methodist Church in Malaysia are Mrs. Judy Yapchill, Rev. Choomng Hong, and Rev. Deverad Huno. Will you kindly greet them?

*(applause)*

BISHOP MIDDLETON: I thank you for the spirit in which we’ve gathered this morning as we together have engaged in holy conferencing. I pray for you, that that will be the spirit in which you engage in the legislative committees following our adjournment this morning. God is good. Clearly, God is good.

I will now call on Bishop Tom Bickerton to bring a report on our work to stamp out deadly diseases, specifically that of malaria.

*(drumming)*

Following his report, which apparently is already beginning—

*(laughter)*

—we will be adjourned.

*Nothing But Nets Presentation*

BISHOP THOMAS J. BICKERTON: Good morning, church.

ALL: Good morning.

BISHOP BICKERTON: I’m Thomas Bickerton, resident bishop of the Pittsburgh Area. Today is World Malaria Day, and there is no better time for us to reflect upon something that has become near and dear to our hearts—the Nothing But Nets anti-malarial campaign.

It’s been absolutely amazing to watch an idea grow into a movement that has not only provided life for the children of Africa but energized the people of The United Methodist Church. The Nothing But Nets campaign was created by *Sports Illus-*

trated writer Rick Reilly, who asked fans to donate just ten dollars to buy an insecticide-treated bed net to fight malaria. Soon, our denomination was a part of a team that included *Sports Illustrated*, the NBA, the WNBA, the United Nations Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and others. And United Methodists everywhere were showing their skills and their creativity. We were making a difference.

I've been so proud to be a part of this campaign, and I've been overwhelmed by the generosity that you and all United Methodists have shown. Let's take a moment and look back at what we've achieved together. Talk about a highlight reel!

*(video presentation)*

*(applause)*

**BISHOP BICKERTON:** These are wonderful stories, but that video was wrong. I am pleased to announce to you today that we have now raised over \$20 million for bed nets.

*(applause)*

Everywhere United Methodists have answered the call to save children's lives by supporting Nothing But Nets. But how do we take the next step? And we need to take the next step to prevent malaria and the ongoing threat of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. The Global Health Initiative is our next step in dealing with the issues related to the diseases of poverty. If we're going to combat the root causes of poverty that kill millions of people, we're going to need the power of partnerships. Two days ago, while you were opening this session of General Conference, I was in New York City. I had the opportunity of participating in an event at the United Nations with our key partners to discuss the next stage of our collaborative efforts. Ted Turner, Rick Reilly, the commissioners of the NBA and major league soccer, the head of UNICEF and the Global

Fund, the company that manufactures insecticide-treated bed nets—all together to discuss one clear reality: none of us can solve the root causes of poverty on our own, but together we can solve some of the world's most major problems.

*(applause)*

And The United Methodist Church is one of the key partners in the discussion. The world is looking for our leadership. Today, on World Malaria Day, I am very excited to announce to you that the United Nations Foundation, in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has agreed to provide The United Methodist Church with a grant of \$5 million in support of the Global Health Initiative.

*(applause)*

With the affirmation of this General Conference, we hope to use this \$5 million to support a fundraising and educational campaign to help prevent deaths related to malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis. The goal is to raise \$100 million over the next several years for malaria programs in Africa and the Global AIDS Fund. Through the Global Health Initiative, friends, we *can* level the playing field and enable all of God's children to be healthy, whole, and happy.

I was so pleased today that Bishop Machado preached to us. He talked to us about words becoming actions. He was right. I have a daughter. Elizabeth is 24 years old. She's alive and energetic and spunky. She is my joy. Two months ago, on Elizabeth's 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was sitting in the Northeast Jurisdictional College of Bishops meeting. I was sitting there reminiscing about my 24 year old. I was thinking about Barbie dolls, and taking her to Disney World, and the time when she jumped out of her swing set ill advisedly and broke her arm. I remembered carrying her to the hospital. As I was sitting there reminiscing about

my 24 year old, one of my colleague's phone rang and he was very silent. When he hung up, he said, "We need to pray. Bishop Nhiwatiwa's daughter, Marble, has just died of malaria." On my daughter's 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, a colleague lost his.

When I saw Bishop Nhiwatiwa and his wife earlier this week, I went to them and asked for forgiveness. Forgiveness because for 24 years I had spent more time thinking about Disney World and Barbie dolls and a broken arm and I had forgotten to remember that across our world there are killer diseases that take the hopes and dreams of mothers and fathers and put them in a grave when their children die from malaria.

On this World Malaria Day at General Conference, will we be so consumed with our business that we will forget the children who die today from that killer disease? Today, it seems to me, on this World Malaria Day, that it's altogether appropriate for us to pay tribute to Marble Nhiwatiwa. Today, on this Malaria Day, it seems to me to be altogether appropriate that we give every child in Africa an opportunity to know that they can live. It's all in the power of a simple piece of paper. \$10, it represents your lunch today—a lunch that you could eat—or it represents a life that you can save. On this World Malaria Day, we remember \$20 million given in less than two years. Today, on this World Malaria Day, we remember Youth 2007, where 6,000 United Methodist youth in a matter of 30 seconds rolling up their \$10 bills and throwing it at me on a stage—in 30 seconds 6,000 United Methodist youth raised \$16,000. I wonder what could the General Conference of The United Methodist Church do on World Malaria Day? On this day, World Malaria Day, there is only one thing to say: Buy a net, save a life. Thank you.

*(music and applause)*

**BISHOP MIDDLETON:** We are now in recess. You're to go to your

legislative committees in 20 minutes and I suggest you pass that table on the way out.

*(music)*

**Saturday Morning,  
April 26, 2008**

*(applause)*

*(music)*

*(applause)*

BISHOP NKULU NTANDA NTAMBO: Let us turn to worship. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

HELEN D. BELL (West Virginia): Our Old Testament reading comes from Isaiah, the 42<sup>nd</sup> chapter, the first 9 verses. Hear the word of the Lord.

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness. I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.”

My brothers and sisters, this is the word of God for the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

*(music)*

H. EDDIE FOX (Holston): I would ask that you remain standing for the reading of the Gospel from John 3:1-15.

“Now there was a man, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, you must be born from above. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen. Yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent into the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

May God add God’s blessing to the reading of this. It is the word from the living God.

MARK MILLER: Thanks be to God.

*(music)*

BISHOP WILLIAM W. HUTCHINSON: Let us pray. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in you, you who are our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

*(prayer)*

*Bishop Hutchinson’s Sermon*

Well, there she stood, directly in front of me. Her eyes were sparkling. Her face was festooned with a brilliant smile, and she was bouncing on the tips of her toes as we spoke; and she eagerly let her excitement be known. She was dressed in her finest white dress, and she was joined by some 200 other eager souls in their snowy-white dresses and in their starched white shirts. They had gathered for the baptism service that was about to take place in the courtyard of one of Havana, Cuba’s, largest Methodist churches.

Some years ago, a few of us from the United States had gathered in Havana with Methodist leaders from the Americas and the Caribbean in order to celebrate the exploding church in this area of the world. We had gone to this particular church building, which is pastored by the bishop of Cuba, Bishop Pereira, in order to participate in this mass baptism. The fact that it was allowed to be in the churchyard or the courtyard of the church was a milestone within itself because the government had no desire to promote life in Christ in any way, and public displays of that were suspect. And so the request that had been made to allow the baptisms to take place in a city park so that the witness of the faith could be made to more people had been downsized a little bit to the

courtyard of the church; but we were happy just to be able to do it out of doors so that others of this great, teeming city could see the living testimony to the regenerating grace of Jesus Christ.

The courtyard was surrounded by hundreds of onlookers from the city streets; and a very lively Christian band was perched up in the balcony of this church, and they were playing energetic music. And all persons knew that something special was about to take place. A large, above-ground pool had been brought in from a business and set up on the grounds for immersion baptisms, and several other stations were there for those who desired and asked to be sprinkled in their baptism or who had chosen the baptismal form of pouring. All of these had been set up. And when the preacher began to exhort the people, the candidates, their eyes began to dance with eagerness. And the more the preacher exhorted, the more the people became excited until they were literally jumping and dancing in place, just straining against the restraints that were upon them, straining from the baptismal waters.

I watched the young and the middle-aged and the elderly prepare themselves. The elderly woman who stood directly in front of me was literally ecstatic. She danced and she held up her hands in prayer and she prayed aloud. And when the word was given, they all moved to the various stations to receive their baptisms. Never in my life had I seen more enthusiasm. Never have I heard more ecstaticism. And never have I felt more energized than in that moment. It was a life-changing experience for all of us.

One colleague commented, "This is how the rituals of the church should *always* be observed. We should *always* be out in the open air so that the world can see and believe and experience the church of Jesus Christ and what it is all about." Mr. Wesley would undoubtedly say that such visual participation is yet one

more means of grace by which many, many are won into the Kingdom.

Well, we can't take our assembly here in Fort Worth to the outside this morning for all to see and experience what we are doing here; but at least we can make our witness boldly in front of one another. It's *safe* that way, you know.

(laughter)

Under the canopy of nightfall, a man of great stature and great wealth in Jerusalem made his way to the place where Jesus was staying and sought counsel for his soul. "I know you're from God," the man said. The man was known to us as Nicodemus. "I know you are from God," he said, "because you could not do the things that you do if God was not moving in you." And Jesus responded, "You are absolutely right. You're absolutely right. If you are not born from above, it is not possible to see what I'm talking about, which is God's kingdom." And then ensued that now familiar conversation between Jesus and this great Jewish leader about being born again. Nicodemus asked, "How can this happen? How can a person be born again?" And this "being born again from above" is a new concept. And Jesus says to him, "Unless one, Nicodemus, is born of water and the Spirit, that one cannot enter the kingdom of God. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." Or in Eugene Peterson's expanded imagery, when you look at a baby, it's just that—a body that you can look at and touch; but the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch. It is formed by the Spirit and becomes a living spirit.

In other words, Jesus is saying that we must be born from above, out of this world, so to speak. We have to be inhabited by that Spirit, by the living God bringing life to our otherwise plodding souls and

lifting us from the ashes of life around us into the splendor of life in the living God. It's that blowing of the wind of the Spirit of God that sets the hearts to pounding, that sets the feet to dancing, that sets the eyes to sparkling, and the hands to reaching skyward like those beautiful Cuban Christians before one drop of baptismal water had ever been applied to them. I guess they had gotten the proverbial cart before the horse, in some way. I would dare say that God had already poured out birth from above on them, and now they are secondly seeking the affirmation and the continuation and the completion through the waters of baptism as the sign of confirmation of this spiritual blessing of new birth that had come to them.

But most of the time, we go about this process in the reverse order, which is proper. We United Methodists are baptized with water as infants, or even as reluctant teenage confirmands we may be baptized. And it is often years later before we ever engage, encounter, or even entertain the notion that there is *more*, that there is something which we are *missing*. We hear about this something more in some Bible study we attend, or it is found in some Emmaus or Cursillo weekend. It is heard about or experienced in a revival at our friend's church; and we—like Nicodemus—start asking the question, "What is this about a second birth that has to do with the Spirit of God and that will usher me into a vital, living relationship with God through Jesus Christ? It ushers me right into the kingdom of God itself. I've had the water applied; and I thought that was all and now, Preacher, you're saying there's *more*?" Yes . . . there . . . is . . . *more*!

And that more is the connecting link to the very heart and the very spirit of Jesus the Christ. It was in 1786 that John Wesley wrote out of the depths of his heart and out of his own rebirth these great words of concern. We heard them quoted

from the youth a couple of days ago. John Wesley wrote,

“I do not fear that the people called Methodists shall ever cease to exist, either in Europe or in America. I only fear that they shall exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion but not the power thereof. And that, undoubtedly, will be the case unless they hold fast to the doctrine, discipline, and spirit with which they first set out.”

That comes from Wesley’s thoughts about Methodism, written in the *Arminian* magazine.

So let me pose this pointed question to you personally, and to us, collectively: Have we, as a church, been baptized into form, but not yet into power? Have we been born from above, as well as from below? Have we been baptized with water and the Spirit? To use two phrases that are spoken frequently by one of our district superintendents in Louisiana: Have we moved yet from the “My, my, my!” state of Baptism to the “Yes, indeed!” state of Baptism?

My maternal grandparents, and my wife, Kay’s, maternal grandparents, were all members of The Nazarene Church. The Nazarenes, as you will remember the history, grew out of the Methodists, and were formed around the turn of the last century as a part of the Holiness Movement. The Methodists were going just a little too far afield from the scriptural teachings and from the forms of pious living, so the founders of the Nazarenes felt. So they pulled aside and away and to their own house.

They did strange things, our grandparents. I mean, they did strange things, like stopping in the middle of the day and getting down on their knees in the middle of the room, or wherever they were, for prayer, because it was prayer time. They did strange things, like they did not wear makeup or costly apparel. They did strange things, like attending church almost all the time, it seemed like.

My mother used to tell, with the makeup story, that when she went home as a young woman after she had left home and gotten out into the world herself, she went home as an adult and she had gone to the manicurist and had fingernail polish on her fingernails for the first time. My grandfather quietly observed to her—he called her Irishman—he said, “Irishman, I see you mashed your fingers.” Well, with me and our sons, it was a little bit more updated to today. It was, “Oh, Mark. I see that your ear has grown a golden stud since you’ve been gone.”

You see, church for these people was a major activity. Scripture reading was a daily routine. Prayer was, indeed, the key to heaven, and Baptism from above was the second blessing that all desired. But as the next generation, our parents, became a little more affluent and more in tune with the world, then sophistication took us to The Methodist Church. They weren’t quite so strange as had been our grandparents. A nice, quiet family Baptism would do, and if we talked about that second blessing, it was more in hushed tones than in enthusiastic tones. We didn’t want to be quite as bizarre as our grandparents. I’ll always remember sitting outside an Oklahoma church on a very hot July Sunday, waiting for Kay’s grandfather to come out. We had been over to The United Methodist Church that morning, Kay and I, for “proper worship,”

*(laughter)*

and we had gotten out at the appropriate and respectable time *(laughter)* of 12 o’clock.

*(laughter)*

And here we were, over in front of the Nazarene church and they were still worshipping. And we waited, and we waited, and it was hot, sticky, summertime Oklahoma heat. And finally, finally Granddaddy Bressy came out. And when he got to the

car, we said to him, “Granddaddy Bressy, what were you doing in there so long?” And he said, “Well, we were praying a man through.”

Praying a man through? Wha’? Did you ever? I mean, I hadn’t heard that in a long time. And what that meant was that the people inside that building were on their knees in prayer for some brother who wanted to know Jesus and accept him into his life, but didn’t quite have the conviction of the Spirit to do so. If he had been over at The United Methodist Church, we would have likely said, “Well, maybe we could take a moment to apply a little water here,

*(laughter)*

but we don’t have time to pray you through.

*(laughter)*

I mean, after all, it’s 12 noon,

*(laughter)*

and we’re closing up shop for the day. So come to my office this week, and we’ll talk about it and reason it through.

*(applause and laughter)*

Now let’s all stand for the benediction”

*(applause and laughter)*

John was only 10 years old. He had been invited by a friend to attend their spring revival over at their church, and he was so excited about going. But I tell you, I was nervous. And so I sat down with our oldest son, John, and I filled him in on what he might expect. I told him about the singing that was going to take place over there. I told him about the convicting preaching that I knew was also going to happen, and then I told him about the altar call.

“Now, John, at the end of the service they are going to give you an invitation to come forward, repent of

your sin, accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. That's going to happen. And, John, no matter what you feel at the time that they say that to you, I don't want you to move from where you are. You and I'll talk about it when you come home. You stay in your pew; don't go forward."

I mean, after all, what was I supposed to do? I mean, I was the United Methodist preacher at the church down the street, and we have our own way of doing things, right? I mean, I could not have a converted, saved, Spirit-led ten-year-old on my hands. I mean, he might embarrass me. He might even take up the practice of the people in that church that he was visiting, and he might have done something radical like say "Amen" in the middle of the church service. Follow Jesus, yes, but with careful attention to decorum and dignity. I mean, isn't it amazing how we don't want Jesus and the Holy Spirit loose among us? We just don't want it to happen. They might embarrass us.

I'll always remember my first Sunday to preach at my last appointment as a pastor of a local church. It wasn't my last appointment because of this first Sunday that I preached there, but I (*laughter*) I do remember the first Sunday. I think I made a socio-religious *faux pas* right at the beginning. I mean, I embarrassed myself. At the close of that first sermon, I invited people to come down to the front and kneel at the Communion rail, and pray for the Spirit of God to bless us from above and to pour blessings on our new beginnings of a ministry together. I think in that 8:30 service maybe one lone person braved the aisle to come forward as we sang the closing hymn.

Well, I'm a slow learner. I made the same invitation at the second service. Maybe five people braved the walk to the front. And I thought, "Well, Bill, you messed up. I mean, you've already messed on your very first Sunday. Prayer at the Communion rail is not the practice of this church family. Either that, or all of

their parents told them, "When the preacher gives the call to come forward, don't move."

Well, today, today I'm asking you to move. I'm asking you to move or maybe I ought to put it this way, a little more clearly, I'm asking you to allow yourself to be moved. I'm praying that God's Holy Spirit will move you to the baptismal waters here this morning, and that by whatever motion you choose to do for yourself, as that water is sprinkled on you, bring it unto yourself, apply it to yourself, in some way. Renew your baptismal covenant. At the same time, I urge you to utter a silent, or even an audible—heaven help us here—even an audible prayer that implores, "Come upon us, Holy Spirit. Come upon us, Holy Spirit. Baptize me anew, along with our entire assembly gathered here today. Be born again in me this very day, and usher me into that birth from above that makes me a totally new, renewed, child of God and a fully washed daughter or son of yours." It's an invitation to all of us. No one is excluded, and no one is beyond need.

Let me offer a little secular invitation that appeared in the *Baton Rouge Advocate* and is an advertisement for—shall I say it aloud?—for a casino in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The advertisement reads: "Slot yankers, trust fund babies, peanut vendors, tortured artists, baby boomers, Gen-Xers, party people, pizza guys, plastic or paperers, prime ministers, socialites, hippies, traditionalists, burger flippers, desk jockeys, disc jockeys, jockeys, laptop lovers, and anyone else who may have been missed in this invitation, welcome!"

(*music*)

Welcome! Welcome! Welcome! Shall we gather at this river? Come, let us wade in these waters. Come on down to the river to pray. Come on down, come on down. My, my, my—yes, indeed! Water and the

Spirit. Water and the Spirit. Water and the Spirit. Amen and amen.

(*applause and music*)

This is the body of Christ. Through the sacrament of Baptism, God's Spirit has been poured out upon water: water poured over us and immersing us, water that flows freely for all who will receive it, water from the streams of God's saving power and justice, water that brings hope to all who thirst for righteousness, and water that refreshes life that nurtures growth and offers new birth.

(*music*)

MARCIA MCFEE: Amen. Today we come to the waters to renew our commitments in each other's presence, to Christ who has raised us, the Spirit who has birthed us, and the Creator who is making all things new.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: And so I ask you, will you turn away from the powers of sin and death?

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin.

MARCIA MCFEE: Will you let the Spirit use you as prophets to the powers that be?

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: We accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Will you proclaim the good news and live as disciples of Jesus Christ, his body?

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, put our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as our Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.

MC FEE: Will you be living witnesses to the gospel, individually and together, wherever you are and in all that you do?

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: We will remain faithful members of Christ's holy church, and serve as Christ's representatives in the world.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Will you receive and profess the Christian faith as it is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments?

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: We will learn and teach the faith of the whole church as we put our trust in God the Father almighty, in Jesus Christ his only Son, and in the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

MC FEE: I invite you to make your responses silently with signs.

BISHOP LINDA LEE: The Spirit of the Lord is with us!

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

BISHOP LEE: Almighty God, the life you birthed in us by baptism into Jesus Christ will never die. Your justice never fails. Your mercy is everlasting.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Your healing river flows. Your Spirit blows where you will. We cannot stop you, God.

BISHOP LEE: But sometimes we try. We try to block the flow; we redirect the winds of the Spirit. Or we walk so far away from the life-giving stream that we do not perceive it and we forget its power. We parch ourselves.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: We are dry and thirsty, O God. Come, refresh us.

BISHOP LEE: Come upon us, Holy Spirit.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Come upon us, Holy Spirit.

BISHOP LEE: Come upon these waters.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Come upon these waters.

BISHOP LEE: Let these waters be to us drops of your mercy.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Let these waters remind us of your righteousness and justice.

BISHOP LEE: Let these waters renew us in the resurrection power of Jesus.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Let these waters make us long for your coming reign.

BISHOP LEE: Most holy God, Abba, Father.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Glory to you.

BISHOP LEE: Jesus Christ, Savior, Lord.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Glory to you.

BISHOP LEE: Spirit of fire, spirit over the waters, spirit of holiness.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Glory to you.

BISHOP LEE: Eternal God, one in three and three in one.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: All glory is yours, now and forever.

BOTH: Amen.

MC FEE: As the confirmands from this conference gift us with water rained down, remember your baptism and rejoice.

(music)

(applause)

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: You know they're running a Race for the Cure outside.

(applause)

And we're running a race—I mean we are running a race. We're running a race for the cure in here as well.

(applause)

And so may the great Spirit rain down on you, all this day and all the

days to come until you have moved from "my, my, my," to "yes, indeed, yes indeed," water and the spirit. Amen and amen.

(music)

(applause)

BISHOP NKULU NTANDA NTAMBO: This has been a great day. *Salud!* Love you! Howdy!

ALL: Howdy!

BISHOP NTAMBO: Howdy!

ALL: Howdy!

BISHOP NTAMBO (*brief remark interpreted, then in English*): I'm telling you, today is a new day. And we have a new system of leading. I got this on. (*shows item*) I got power!

(laughter)

BISHOP NTAMBO: You need to ask the good questions. Otherwise, I will hit! I am telling you, it was a wonderful worship today. We say thank you to (*unintelligible*) again, please.

(applause)

BISHOP NTAMBO: And let's go now to business. We now turn to Youngsook Kang for a report from the Committee of Agenda and Calendar. Please.

YOUNGSOOK C. KANG (Rocky Mountain): Thank you, Bishop Ntambo, and the Council, delegates and friends, good morning and (*phrase interpreted*). It is my privilege to introduce the members of the Committee on Calendar and Agenda this morning. We are a committee responsible for guiding the order of business for the General Conference. And I'd like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for each and every committee member's work and commitment. And may I introduce each member by their name: David Wilson, vice-chair, Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference; Andreas Elfving, secre-

tary, Finland-Swedish; Luka Bitrus, Nigeria; Edna Gatmen, Northwest Philippines; Ouk-Yean Jueng, Northern Illinois; Mary Alice Massey, Florida; Delores Oden, Baltimore-Washington—here she is! Beverly Silas, Southwest Texas; and Susan Brumbaugh, our coordinator of the calendar. And I'm Youngsook Kang, Rocky Mountain Conference. And now I turn it over to David Wilson, vice-chair, for our report for the day.

(*applause*)

DAVID M. WILSON (Oklahoma Indian Missionary): Good morning, Bishop, delegates, and friends. As our agenda committee continues, we will be today receiving an explanation of the Consent calendars, which you will find in today's *DCA* from Susan Brumbaugh. John Brawn will later tell us how much work the committees completed just yesterday. For the report from the Committee on Presiding Bishops, Harriet McCabe will announce who tomorrow's presiding bishops will be. Then we will hear the planned orders of the day. In the first part of the morning's plenary session, the Town and Country Ministries Task Force will present the Rural Life Celebration. Then in the second part of our morning session, we will hear the following presentations: the Central Conference Pension Initiative, the Task Force to Study the Episcopacy, and the Study Commission on the Relationship between The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous Methodist Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. After lunch we will work in our legislative committees for the rest of the day. And as for tomorrow's agenda, we will begin our morning with choral music, worship service, and plenary. Tomorrow we will begin hearing from the legislative committees and voting on calendar items. Tomorrow's order of the day for the morning include the recognition of retiring bishops; the presentation of the new Episcopal

Leadership Team; Strengthening the Black Church Initiative; and a celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction. Tomorrow we'll be ready to consider calendar items printed in today's *DCA*, so for the second half of the morning, we will meet as a full body instead of going to legislative committees. Tomorrow afternoon until 4:30, we will work in our committees, and tomorrow evening we will enjoy and participate in the area night activities. Bishop, I move the adoption of our agenda for today and tomorrow.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Thank you. So we need to, I'm calling for to show hands for support of the report. Show your hand, please. All in favor? Thank you. (*motion passed by show of hands*) Do we have any opposition? Opposed? Oh. Thank you. Yes, I see a yellow card. And would you please move to mic. 9?

GINGER JONES HOLLAND (Mississippi): Bishop, a point of privilege. If we could respectfully ask the Conference Committee for the next General Conference to consider not having business on the Sabbath.

BISHOP NTAMBO: I think you follow. But you will be referred to the committee please. Thank you, ma'am. We thank you very much.

Susan Brumbaugh. Thank you Susan.

#### *Explanation of Consent Calendars*

SUSAN BRUMBAUGH: I am Susan Brumbaugh, coordinator of the calendar. Good morning, friends. Today I will be explaining how our consent calendars work. In today's *DCA*, if you will get it out, please turn to p. 1983—that's 1983, at the back of today's *DCA*. Our legislative committees have been busy, and we have four consent calendars printed.

For those of you who are new to this process, or for those of us who have forgotten, please allow me to explain how consent calendars work. Calendar items are automatically

placed on a consent calendar when they have 10 or fewer votes against the prevailing position of the committee. There are four types of consent calendars. Consent Calendar A contains items involving disciplinary changes for which the Legislative Committee recommendation is to adopt. Items on Consent Calendar A will make changes to the *Book of Discipline*. Consent Calendar B contains items involving non-disciplinary changes for which the legislative recommendation is to adopt. Items on Consent Calendar B will make changes to the *Book of Resolutions* or other areas. Consent Calendar C contains any item for which the committee recommendation is to reject. These items will proceed no further. Consent Calendar D contains any item for which the committee recommendation is to refer. These items will be referred to some other United Methodist organization or agency. All four types of consent calendars are printed in today's *DCA*. The page numbers should be appearing on the screen soon. Consent Calendar A begins on page 1983 and continues on the following page. Consent Calendar B appears on p. 1984. Consent Calendar C appears on p. 1985. And Consent Calendar D appears on p. 1986. All of the remaining items to be considered individually appear on the pages that follow in today's *DCA*.

Please note that items with a minority report cannot be placed on any consent calendar. Items with financial implications or items dealing with the constitution also cannot be placed on consent calendars A or B, those the committee is recommending to adopt. Such items can be placed on consent calendars C or D, because there would be no financial or constitutional implications.

We have a process for removing individual items from the consent calendar. Any 20 delegates may have a consent calendar item removed by signing and submitting a Consent Calendar Removal Request that can be found in—by 3:00 P.M. of the day

the calendar item first appears in the *DCA*. It has to be turned in by 3 P.M. the same day it is printed. The form can be picked up and submitted to room 103B. That form is found in and can be returned to room 103B. Reserve delegates may sign requests to remove items from the consent calendar only while seated as voting delegates. And, finally, note that historically less than 2 percent of all items removed from the consent calendar are changed in any way during the plenary session. Thank you for your hard work, and now John Brawn will provide more information about this progress that you have made in the—your legislative committees.

JOHN BRAWN (legislative activity coordinator): Good morning. That worked—good morning. I've been working for the secretary of the General Conference, supporting legislative activity, since 1983 while preparing for the Baltimore General Conference. It gives me great pleasure to announce that never before, in my experience, have we had 46 calendar items printed in the *DCA* on the second morning after the opening of General Conference.

(applause)

There's another reason to be pleased with our progress. This 2008 General Conference has fewer total petitions to action than any previous General Conference that I have attended. You will be called to adopt, refer, or reject 1,544 petitions between now and the fall of the final gavel. You may be thinking that that's a lot to do, and you are absolutely right, but take a couple seconds in silent thanks that your workload doesn't compare to the 18,600 petitions that were handled by the 1984 General Conference.

I'd like to roll the video, please. Oh, I see: the lights have to move. I'll get this figured out. This is the wrong video.

(laughter)

I'm looking for the silent video that I can talk on top of that came on a DVD this morning to the truck.

(laughter)

There we go. So how far along are we right now? I'm showing you this dashboard and I'll show it to you each day to let you see how much work you've accomplished and how much is left to do. The chart will always be in the same format and it contains a lot of information. So please let me explain it to you. Each of the top 13 bars represents the work done by a legislative committee. The two-letter committee code of each committee is shown on the left side. The numbers across the bottom represent the percent completion: zero on the left and 100 percent on the right. The bottom bar represents the total work for the entire General Conference.

Let's zoom in for a minute to the bar for the Discipleship Legislative Committee. The red part of the bar, about 89 percent of the total, represents the petitions that have not been voted on yet in the Legislative Committee. It's possible that some of these were, in fact, voted on last night. But as of 1 A.M. the conference and legislative management system, which we call CALMS, did not contain any information about the committee vote. The cream-colored part of the bar, about 6 percent of the total, represents petitions for which a vote in the Legislative Committee has been registered in CALMS. And that's the software that tracks it for us. The green-colored part of the bar, about 5 percent of the total, represents the petitions for which the committee recommendation has been entered into CALMS; it has been proofread, and signed off by your elected committee leaders. And it has been released to the coordinator of the calendar for publication in the *DCA*. These are the petitions for which your Legislative Committee has no further responsibility, save

to present them to this body if they are not on a consent calendar.

As you know, the petitions are given calendar item numbers. And the calendar items must be published in the *DCA* 24 hours prior to any action on them in this plenary session. As of this morning, there are no calendar items that have been printed for more than 24 hours and there have been no votes in this plenary session on calendar items. After you take on some calendar items, you will see white bars appear on this left side of the dashboard. The white bars will represent the percentage points of petitions that are contained in calendar items that have been voted on by this plenary session. If this has made sense to you so far, then you will have figured out that our goal is to get this dashboard changed from mostly red to completely white.

You have made a good start, but let us not become complacent with our early progress and find ourselves working late into the night either this weekend or next.

I need to highlight one urgent legislative matter. Our deadline for moving all calendar items with financial implications through the plenary session is 5 P.M. on Monday. This must be done to allow GCFA to include them in the budget presentation, which is currently scheduled for Wednesday of next week. To be able to vote on these items with financial implications before 5 P.M. Monday, they must appear in tomorrow's *DCA*. The deadline for submission into tomorrow's *DCA* is 5 P.M. this afternoon. Your committee leaders and recorders will need some time to manage the paperwork and the data entry for these petitions. So I would estimate that you must complete your work on all of those financial items by 4:30 P.M. today. You will begin your legislative committee work today at 2 P.M. Can you see the problem here? You must complete your work on all items with financial implications in your legislative committees in the first

two and one-half hours of your time together today.

Some people may feel that the General Conference is like a giant roller coaster. And the financial implications deadline might look like a pretty steep hill to climb, but I'm expecting a smooth ride through the rest of the legislative process, and I'm looking forward to working with you over the next seven days. I ask that you please remain at work until the General Conference comes to a complete and full stop. *(laughter)* Thank you.

*(applause)*

BISHOP NTAMBO: Thank you, John. Now we have a report from Harriet McCabe regarding the Presiding Officer Committee. Harriet, please.

HARRIET MCCABE: Thank you, Bishop. I am Harriet McCabe, chair of the Committee on Presiding Officers, and I am happy to report to you that at tomorrow morning's plenary, we will be led by Bishop Leo Soriano. Thank you.

BISHOP NTAMBO: So, thank you, Harriet. Right now we are moving to our first order of the daily, of the day, sorry, with the General Conference rural life celebration, and I would like to call upon *(unintelligible)*.

MCFEE: Living the word of God, town and country churches are seeds of hope in every place.

*(music)*

On your table you should have been, you should have been given a packet, a seed packet, this is seeds of hope. Find it and let's begin to shake it during this song. Visitors, I think you got one when you came in. This is a celebration today of town and country churches.

MARK MILLER: Let us sing together. We are the seeds sown in weakness.

*(music)*

*(applause)*

EDWARD A. KAIL (Iowa): Welcome to a time of celebration and invitation.

MOLLIE STEWART: A time of celebration of the legacy of town and country churches.

KAIL: A time to celebrate those congregations in rural areas where the population is 200 or fewer per square mile, up to those small citizen towns of 50,000 and less. Some 25,000 town and country churches, one for each of the butterflies on the banners surrounding this arena.

STEWART: A time of invitation to view town and country churches as assets, to dream of energized, faithful, effective congregations in every place, to make disciples for the transformation of the world, to yearn for effective lay and clergy leadership for the renewal of effective ministry to communities in every possible place.

A time of invitation to envision thousands of United Methodist disciples serving in town and country settings motivated by the love of God to take up the cross of self-denial and be freed for joyful obedience, committed to making disciples and making a difference in their communities, so as to rekindle the historic fires of holiness of heart and life. If we can dream in faith.

KAIL: It can happen.

STEWART: Let's continue this time of celebration and invitation by seeing who is connected to town and country ministries. Listen carefully. You may be surprised. Shake your seed packets high if you now attend a town and country church.

*(shaking sound)*

KAIL: Shake your seed packet high if you

grew up in a town and country church.

*(shaking sound)*

STEWART: Shake your seed packet high if you live in a house with some construction of wood.

*(shaking sound)*

Or if you have ever eaten food . . .

*(shaking sound)*

or worn clothing, probably grown, raised or made by people who praise God in a town and country church.

*(shaking sound)*

KAIL: Shake your seed packet high if you've ever driven the countryside and seen one of these.

*(shaking sound)*

STEWART: Jeremy Traxler, director of Duke Divinity School's thriving rural communities program, did some reading about Nazareth. It didn't take him long, because we don't know much at all about Nazareth in Jesus' day. Nazareth is barely, if ever, mentioned in the 1<sup>st</sup>-century document outside of the Scripture. The little we do know is largely speculative and wholly unremarkable. Apparently, scholars suggest that Nazareth was a small community of anywhere between 500 and 2,000 people, the size of many of these over 2,000 churches that we are celebrating here today. Even *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* describes Nazareth as "an insignificant agricultural village." Of course, it would probably say the same thing about Talucah, Morgan County, Alabama, where I grew up, a one way in, you're either coming to see us or you're lost.

*(laughter)*

KAIL: If Nazareth was insignificant, what about Farnhamville, Iowa, three miles from the farm where I grew up and you got to have business at the grain elevator or you don't go there. Jesus came out of Nazareth. It was in Nazareth that Jesus was raised. It was in Nazareth that he likely attended synagogue and recited Torah and learned the words of Scripture. It was in Nazareth, the Scripture says, Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in divine and human favor. Ms. Lois Wood reminds us, "All the rest of his life, Jesus would carry the name of his home community with him. On the lips of crowds, demons, and angels, he would be called Jesus of Nazareth."

STEWART: There is a sense in which the greatest gift the world has ever received, Jesus, was a gift of a rural community. So many of us have been recipients of the gifts and nurture of a town and country church. So many of us would not be who we are or called to do what we have been gifted to do, without these churches.

MCFEE: I am Marcia McFee, a United Methodist professor of worship. At a very young age, I was singing, dancing, playing the piano and organ in worship, encouraged and loved by the folks at First United Methodist Church on Main Street in Adrian, Missouri. I am in ministry because of the people of that little church. I am Marcia of Adrian.

JAMES R. KING JR.: I am James King, a bishop in The United Methodist Church, assigned to the Louisville Area. Sixty years ago, I was born in a small town: Ashland, Alabama. My parents, Robert and Ruby, prayed for my birth, and soon thereafter, I was baptized in a Christian fellowship known as Pleasant Grove Methodist Church. I am here because my life has been shaped by a host of disciples of Jesus Christ who sowed seeds of love and correc-

tion into my life. I am James of Ashland.

LILLY JONES: A statement from Dr. Jocelyn Elders: "I am Dr. Jocelyn Elders, a member of Hunter United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. The support from my rural church and the scholarship I received from United Methodist Women enabled me to go and get a college education, and that support sustained me and was appreciated during my confirmation for U.S. Surgeon General. I am Jocelyn of Little Rock."

FREDERICK JONES: And from Chester Jones. That's Chester swearing in Dr. Elders. "I'm Chester Jones. I'm now a district superintendent. I grew up on a farm in rural southwest Arkansas. They gave me a passion for rural ministry, which has been an asset to my success as a pastor and as staff and general secretary of United Methodist agencies. I am Chester of Arkansas."

WILSON: I am David Wilson, conference superintendent of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. I'm here today because of a pastor in my small home church, the late Rev. Lee Chebko, who was a pastor who recognized God's call upon my life long before I did. I'm here because of three women in my church: Myrtle, Narcissa, and Annie May, who are now gone, who prayed for me, nurtured me, supported me, and gave me encouraging words all my life. I am here because of those persons. I am David of Muscogee.

BISHOP MINERVA G. CARCAÑO: I am Minerva Carcaño, a bishop of the church; and, my brothers and my sisters, my life was rescued from poverty by El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church of that small south Texas town of Edinburg. It was through that very loving and supportive church that I learned that God loved even me; and, yes, indeed, all I could do was turn and surrender my life to serving Christ Jesus and those he loves. I'm Minerva from Edinburg.

JESSE CARSWELL: This statement from racing-car legend Richard Petty and his wife, Linda: "We are Richard and Linda Petty, members of Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church in Randleman, North Carolina. As young persons, we both were influenced by wonderful Sunday school teachers and church leaders at Mt. Lebanon and Level Cross United Methodist churches, who taught us about Jesus Christ and also how to love our church and be good servants in ministry, especially now through our Victory Junction Gang Camp for children with serious illness. We are Richard and Linda of Randleman."

*(applause)*

BISHOP KENNETH CARDER: And I am Kenneth from Jonesborough. Our granddaughter Megan enthusiastically joined her grandmother in planting flowers and sowing seeds in anticipation of summer harvest of beauty. The soil was carefully prepared, the plants gently placed in the fertile ground, and seeds were selectively and strategically dropped into the black earth. When her grandmother went into the house to get a bucket of water, the three-year-old exercised her creative exuberance. She reached into the bag containing zinnia seeds. Reminiscent of Jesus' parable of the extravagant sower, Megan joyfully broke out of the confines of the cultivated space and began scattering zinnia seeds everywhere,

*(laughter)*

indiscriminately over the lawn, under the trees, and even on the paved driveway.

*(laughter)*

Time passed, the rain fell, the sun grew brighter and shined longer, warming the earth and drawing forth the beauty buried in the soil, pregnant with potential life. Zinnias began to appear in the most unlikely

places—in the long grass under the oak tree, under the boxwoods, and even in the cracks in the paved driveway. Now, many of Megan's seeds didn't survive the summer, but we had zinnias in places nobody else in the neighborhood had zinnias.

*(laughter)*

Well, Methodism is the result of extravagant, exuberant sowing by our forebears as the early Methodists traveled across the British Isles, scattering seeds of the gospel and rooting people in a way of living that increased love of God and neighbor. Those sowers of the gospel and cultivators of the Methodist way moved across the frontier of America and traversed continents, scattering gospel seeds, planting communities of support and accountability, building schools and orphanages and hospitals and centers of discipleship and mission. Now on multiple continents, seeds continue to grow as signs of God's new creation. I am the product of one of those seeds that fell in a little rural community beside a railroad track in the hills of eastern Tennessee.

In that neighborhood of farmers and mill workers, a little Methodist church took root. In that small frame church, the gospel was sown in me. There I learned for the first time for me that God is like a shepherd who enfolds lambs in arms of love. I learned it from Mrs. Mahoney, who greeted a shy ten-year-old with a hug on my first day to attend that church. There I learned the meaning of Christian community. There I knelt at the altar and consciously chose to be a follower of Jesus. There I was baptized, received my first Communion, held my first church office, spoke in public before a crowd for the first time, and had my first paid job—I was the custodian who swept the floors, stoked the furnace, and mowed the lawn, which included a cemetery, before weed eaters.

*(laughter)*

There on that circuit of three congregations, I learned what it means to be a connectional church. There I was called into ordained ministry. From there I was sent forth at the age of 19 to be a student pastor of an even smaller congregation located beside another railroad track and a river. Those 22 people functioned like a Methodist class meeting and considered it their special mission to nurture young preachers. Both of those faithful small churches in Appalachia have now closed, but the seeds they sowed are still being scattered, and they are still growing.

We are the heirs of exuberant, extravagant sowing of gospel seeds by countless small, rural congregations across the world. Those rural congregations, however, are—and are among our greatest assets for evangelical and missional renewal among the people called Methodists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One rural sociologist, who is a Methodist, has said that the most critical socioeconomic and missional challenges confronting the world today exist in rural communities. And here's the good news: We United Methodists have mission stations in most of those rural communities, especially in the U.S. That is an asset!

But those potential mission stations are in jeopardy of withering and dying. Forces within and outside the church are choking the life from the fragile plants. Among the internal forces is the loss of evangelical and missional identity by many of those congregations. Rather than seeing the church as a mission station and themselves as missionaries and evangelists, too many see the church as a family chapel and themselves as merely mutual comforters or perhaps hospice volunteers for a dying institution. Rather than understanding that they are gospel seeds made to blossom as a zinnia is made to bloom, they are satisfied with remaining a seed that never germinates.

Among the external forces choking the life from potential flourishing centers of evangelical zeal and missional engagement are the following: demoralizing rhetoric that devalues small-membership congregations and holds up numerical size as the primary sign of faithful ministry;

*(applause)*

pastors who fail to bloom where they are planted and expect the system to plant them in fertile soil (*applause*); appointment practices and pastoral attitudes that consider rural and small membership congregations as stepping stones in career advancement, rather than as gardens to be planted and cultivated toward an abundant harvest;

*(applause)*

salary structures that reduce ministry to a commodity deployed according to the market forces rather than in accordance with missional imperatives;

*(applause)*

a hierarchical, vertical understanding of connectionalism that promotes survival of the economically fittest rather than horizontal connection that fosters mutuality and interconnectedness between us all;

*(applause)*

marginalized small congregations by omitting their voice from denominational structures such as Connectional Table.

*(applause)*

We, however, are once again calling planters and growers among the people called Methodist to a life of extravagant and joyful sowing, planting, and nurturing—nurturing the seeds of the gospel. Such extrav-

agant and joyful engagement with the good news requires a recovery and a re-appropriation of many of the relevant practices in our Wesleyan heritage. Among the possibilities are the following: 1) identifying our congregations, large and small, as mission stations devoted to God's holistic salvation of human hearts, communities, nations, and the entire cosmos; affirming and resourcing small groups, whether they be small congregations or covenant groups within larger congregations, as primary components of ecclesial and discipleship formation, helping many of our small congregations to see themselves as class meetings devoted to mutual support and mutual accountability; nurturing horizontal connectionalism by linking rural and suburban and urban congregations; developing a new version of the traditional class leader and circuit rider, whereby small congregations are led by indigenous pastoral leaders but with the mentorship, the sacramental leadership, and the support of ordained clergy; including representation of rural communities and churches in the structures and decision-making arenas of the denomination;

*(applause)*

calling forth, training, and deploying and supporting pastors with a life-long commitment to ministry in rural settings;

*(applause)*

and developing compensation strategies that counter the current market-driven deployment and affirmation of clergy based on cultural definitions of success.

*(applause)*

The parable of the sower in the synoptic Gospels is really about

God's extravagant sowing of grace—God's grace, God's power and presence to transform even—especially—the barren places. And the Bible declares that when God sets out to sow new seeds and nurture a new creation, God chooses the most unexpected people and calls them to scatter seeds of grace in the most unpromising places:

*(applause)*

Among the slaves in Egypt, who became a light to the nations; in a shepherd boy, David, the poet-king of Israel's golden era; in a lowly peasant maiden from a rural village, who became the most blessed among women and gave birth to the Messiah, who was born in a farmer's barn among farm animals, lived as an immigrant in Egypt, grew up in rural Nazareth, from which nothing good was expected to come, was executed as a criminal, sealed lifeless in a dark tomb.

But from that dark, sunless tomb came God's most extravagant and lavish sowing of good news. Bursting forth from that place of barrenness and death was the firstborn of a whole new creation. Lavishly, extravagantly, generously, joyfully, the good news of a new world scattered across the earth. Those resurrection seeds landed in fertile and barren places, in all kinds of terrain and soil, among diverse people, and in varied forms and structures. But sprouts continue to show up in unexpected places, like zinnias blooming in asphalt cracks and among weed thickets.

May this General Conference sow and nurture the seeds of the new creation in places like the stable that housed Jesus' birth, the town that nurtured him, and the garden in which he was raised, the towns and villages across the global landscape.

KAIL: It is God's love for Nazareth and for those rural communities that Nazareth is a symbol of, that we celebrate today. We celebrate because we believe that these communities still have great gifts to give to the world and to the church. We celebrate because God's love is born again in each of us and we can become seeds of hope in every place. For some people, Nazareth and communities like it are just exits on the highway, undeveloped land, the boondocks, pretty pastorals on the way to somewhere else.

STEWART: But God loves Nazareth.

KAIL: And we love it too.

STEWART: As it will be and as it is.

*(music)*

KAIL: Already at work helping to ensure that seeds are sown on as a fertile a soil as possible are the ministries of the Rural Chaplains Association.

STEWART: United Methodist World Fellowship

KAIL: The Hinton Rural Life Center

STEWART: United Methodist Appalachian Ministries Network

KAIL: Cooperative Parish Ministries all across the land

STEWART: McCurdy School

KAIL: The UMCOR Sager Brown Depot

STEWART: Henderson Settlement

KAIL: Red Bird Mission

STEWART: The Benton Center

KAIL: SPARV—the Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence through the European Board and the African Task Force

STEWART: Jurisdictional Association Networks including Northeast, North Central, Southeast, South Central, and Western

KAIL: Native American Ministries

STEWART: Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

KAIL: Black Methodists for Church Renewal

STEWART: Hispanic/Latino National Comprehensive Plan

KAIL: Communities of Shalom

STEWART: Community Developers Program.

*(drumming and clapping)*

*(applause)*

STEWART: Let's hear about just some of the current work in rural ministries that we are celebrating today.

CHARLES E. HICKS (West Virginia): Providing opportunities for people of all ages to develop an understanding and relationship with God—that's the mission of Calvary United Methodist Church in Ripley, West Virginia. Hello, General Conference, my name is Charles Hicks. As pastor at Calvary Church, I have seen our mission statement become much more than words. While ours is a relatively small congregation with average attendance at worship of around 260, Calvary offers opportunities designed to enhance a relationship with Jesus Christ in order to change ourselves, our community and the world. Every worship experience at Calvary ends with the reminder that it is now that our worship through service begins. This attitude of service extends through every group in the church. From our smallest children who take get well cards to mail to shut-ins every Sunday, to our third and fourth graders who raise money year around for Heifer International, to our younger youths who send care packages to soldiers overseas and make sure that Alzheimer's patients get regular visits. Everyone—everyone—is encouraged to be disciples for Jesus Christ out in the world.

While all of the groups in our church are constantly raising money for mission projects, around the conference and the world, we have become much more than that to a Christian community near Managua, Nicaragua. For ten years now, members of Calvary have helped nurture a Moravian church in Sandino, Nicaragua, including the founding of a health clinic there. Over the years many of our youth, including my own son, who have visited this little church, have been influenced to follow careers in serving professions because of the life-enriching experience of helping people in need. Although we're a small church, our Sunday school is the third largest in the West Virginia Annual Conference,

*(applause)*

because of the dedicated laity that are willing to give generously of themselves. And that willingness, I believe, comes from hearts that have been warmed by the love of God and nurtured by a community of believers who know that God expects them to share that love with others. People planting seeds of hope in every place.

MCREE: When I say "Halle! halle!" you say "Hallelujah!" Halle! halle!

ALL: Hallelujah!

*Rural Faith-based Community Development*

RONALD A. (ALAN) RICE JR. (Western North Carolina): Good morning, I am Alan Rice, director of Community Development and Rural Ministries of the Western North Carolina Conference.

*(applause)*

Good morning. One of our strategies is RFDCDC, which is a rural faith-based community development group. Our mission is to assist the well-being of those in small and/or

rural churches, communities, and institutional ministries. We are the fourth CDC that's been started. Three others have started a library, brought sewer to their community, built a six-bedroom home for the developmentally delayed, a hundred units of senior housing at \$11 million, and these are only some of the projects that have been happening in the rural ministry area. Another one was to start an ethnic minority housing initiative for Appalachia. RFD's current projects include working with 15 small churches in the Marion District to help them in leadership for clergy and laity. Others include economic development projects in Anson County in North Carolina and in McDowell County, West Virginia. Other projects on the drawing boards include work for the Wesley Community Services project in Portsmouth, Virginia. And on the weekends, on Sunday, I am the pastor of Crossfire, a biker church for blue-collar, hard-living, hard-working, now hardcore United Methodists.

*(applause)*

The project that I most want to highlight for you though, is the project which is a recovery for Hurricane Katrina—K-Katrina, excuse me—for Gulfside Assembly in Mississippi. This includes Sea Song, which will be a \$100 million project for seniors. It also includes purchasing 100 acres inland where affordable housing and mixed-use ministry will be happening. We are not supported by funding directly from the conference, but rather through grants and through consulting fees. It's just one way that the disciplinary paragraph 632.5 which says, and I quote, "there shall be a director of parish and community development in each annual conference," and this is being lived out and planted in seeds of hope.

*(applause)*

MCFEE: Halle! halle!

ALL: Hallelujah!

*Red Bird Ministries*

RUTH A. WIERTZEMA (Red Bird Missionary): I am Ruth A. Wiertzema, director of Connectional Ministries, Red Bird Missionary Conference. Twenty-five thousand places of hope . . . 25,000 places of hope. You saw that represented a few minutes ago in the butterflies. Those butterflies were made by people connected to small mission churches and the senior centers of Henderson Settlement and Red Bird Mission in the Red Bird Missionary Conference, who spent the last three months cutting out these butterflies for this General Conference to realize that there are God's presence in 25,000 places through the town and country ministries. Among these 25,000 places are also mission churches that you have planted and are being nurtured, and in turn, they are stationed in the rural mountains of southeastern Kentucky. And these churches, in turn, are planting seeds of hope in the coalfields. How important is it for us to have our presence in every place? Our United Methodist Church's presence in every place? And these churches have one goal that you will see in this clip.

*(video)*

MCFEE: Halle! halle!

ALL: Hallelujah!

*Hubbard, MN, Ministries*

ALAN H. BOLTE (Minnesota): I am Alan Bolte, district superintendent of the Northwest, soon to be North Star, District in the Minnesota Annual Conference. I am here to share a story of one of my churches. Hubbard United Methodist Church is located on the Hubbard prairie, just south of Park Rapids, in the heart of the famous lake country of Minnesota. The hymn sing leader starts off each Sunday morning with "It's a won-

derful day on the Hubbard prairie," even if the temperature outside is 32 below zero or it's a gorgeous 65 and sunny. But there wasn't always joy in Hubbardville.

*(laughter)*

Sixteen years ago, Hubbard United Methodist was struggling to find its joy in ministry. They were averaging about 55 in worship, but they had thoughts of closing its doors, rather than welcoming those who walked through them. It struggled to look outside the window and open their doors. There was a process of prayer and trial and error, always seeking to discern God's will in using their time and energy and gifts. After a few efforts to move into mission mode, and much failure in their efforts, by God's grace, they asked the question, "Where does our energy and ministry interface?" They discovered the best use of their energy was in ministry that energized.

After much discernment, conversation and prayer, they decided to focus on an age group that no other church in 20 miles or so was reaching out to, those who were 55-plus.

This change meant that this small church began pushing the walls out on Sunday morning, during their summer, moving their summer attendance to well over 200-plus on most Sundays.

This small congregation with a big God and big dreams started working on a building process that eventually moved them across the parking lot into a new large worship and fellowship space. They turned around—the turnaround began when, having open hearts and open doors, of literally moving outside the doors on Sunday morning to greet people as they were walking to the church for worship.

The pastor said, "One Sunday morning I was standing outside the church with a longtime member of the congregation when he turned and said to me, 'I don't recognize all the

people coming on Sunday anymore.'" The turning point had come. Since that Sunday morning, there have been many turning points for Hubbard UMC, and they have met each one with a sense of spiritual vitality and well-being. They have found themselves being carried on the wind of the spirit and always landing on their feet. They have been able to feed those who are spiritually tired, feed them with energy, faith, and hope and love. Hubbard United Methodist Church is on the move with its window wide open—with the people at the doors waiting to greet all who come, an energy that blows off the roof. Not bad for 55-plus.

MCFEE: Halle! Halle!

ALL: Hallelujah!

*Hinton Rural Life Center*

CLAY SMITH (Western North Carolina): I am Clay Smith at the Hinton Rural Life Center in western North Carolina.

*(applause)*

The Hinton—thank you. The Hinton Center is an agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction and works across the United Methodist Connection to develop resources and lead training and consultation with smaller membership congregations to help them to develop more effective ministries, to help them grow, and to help them reach out to their communities. Hinton Center has also worked for many years in the area of rural affordable housing, and has developed a model program in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Section. Last year, seven families, including four single-parent families, began working together to build their houses on adjoining lots at Wesley Meadows, which is Hinton's mutual self-help housing subdivision. All the families work together on all the houses. The rule is that nobody moves in until everybody moves in. This program builds community as well as homes. The next

six families have already begun construction on their houses, and Hinton is currently recruiting eight families for group three. The first group of seven moved in last month. Each year, hundreds of Volunteers in Mission come from across the country to partner with Hinton Center in this ministry. Several years ago when methamphetamine drug use threatened to destroy our small mountain community, Hinton Center called together community leaders to design a response. The resulting Coalition for Drug-Free Clay County works across the community and in the schools to educate young people and their parents about substance abuse.

Hinton Rural Life Center has many things to share with you. We can be a model for churches or cooperative ministries or districts in developing affordable housing programs, opening up the possibility of home ownership to many families that otherwise would not be able to meet the down payment or income requirements for the conventional mortgage. We can also share with you a response to community drug abuse, and we would love to share Hinton Center's conference center, overlooking a 9,000-acre lake, and its ministry of hospitality and spiritual renewal, with hermitage houses, retreat lodges, and an ecological-style vegetable garden in southwestern North Carolina. We invite you to come and visit your United Methodist Rural Mission, Hinton Center, planting seeds of hope in every place.

MCFEE: Halle! Halle!

ALL: Hallelujah!

*Appalachian Ministry Network*

SHARON LEATHERMAN:  
Good morning. I am Sharon Leatherman, executive coordinator for the United Methodist Appalachian Ministry Network that is represented by 23 annual conferences. Seventy-five percent of the 8500-plus United Methodist churches in the Appalachia region are located in town and country set-

tings. Many are strong, vibrant churches committed to making a difference in their communities. They are churches on fire, invigorating communities with hope and planting seeds through ministries of mercy and justice. Churches fill an extended family role as they care for children and youth in community centers, day-care programs, and before- and after-school programs that also stress spiritual formation for children and youth. Providing access to healthcare opens opportunities for local churches to sponsor ministries like The Big Cat, a mobile healthcare facility in east Tennessee, and health-screening clinics serving senior adults, many of whom suffer from hypertension and diabetes. Adequate nutrition is important in caring for their neighbors, especially the very young and elderly. For many, church-based food pantries are a lifeline when finances are tight. Informal economies are created through community gardening, farmers' markets, and cooperative marketing for crafts and packaged products. Safe housing is a need filled by churches and United Methodist agencies within the region, whether it's providing emergency housing or building new homes. Life-changing hope is given to families who have existed in substandard housing. As church leaders learn new skills, they often discover that the seeds of hope within churches and communities are their assets, and that in everyplace can be found seeds of hope for planting, nurturing, and harvesting.

MCFEE: Halle! Halle!

ALL: Hallelujah!

*Community UMC Pagosa Springs,  
CO, Ministries*

DONALD A. FORD: I am Don Ford, pastor of the Community United Methodist Church in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. As United Methodist Christians, we are called to go into the world to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Most of the

time, being Christian involves a change in life or lifestyle. Becoming a Christian is certainly a change of lifestyle that is needed for those who are addicted to a controlled substance and/or alcohol. A change of lifestyle of those with an addiction problem deals with a daily commitment; they need to be held accountable on a daily basis for a change in their life. For many men and women with the addiction or addicting problems, going through a court process will be one of the consequences in the addiction. The traditional court system has proven not—*(unintelligible here due to audio feedback)*

*(laughter)*

as evidenced . . . by . . . a . . . high recidivism rate.

*(laughter)*

Since 1994, however, over 1,600 accountability courts have been established. These courts are based on a reward-sanctioned basis—reward-sanctioned basis. This differs from the traditional court system that is based solely on punishment. The recidivism rate of these accountability courts is considerably and remarkably lower. Some have called these courts “drug courts.”

In Archuleta County, Colorado, we have three accountability courts: drug, alcohol, and a compliance court. I became involved in the establishment of these courts because of my interest in changing people's lives and through my visitation of the men and women in the local county jail. I now serve on the staffing of all three of those courts. While these folks are going through the accountability-court process, they are in need of daily support. Sometimes and most of the time, that includes meals, shelter, clothes—you know, the *essentials* of life.

The slides that you are seeing are the result of some of the folks who have changed their lives because of the love that God has offered them

through the Community United Methodist Church of Pagosa Springs.

To borrow a phrase, on any given Sunday, they make up 10 percent of those worshipping. They sit in pews next to retired doctors, bankers, educators, oil executives. They have begun to change their lives and now attend a church, the church on a regular basis, *not* because they have to, *not* because they are repaying the church, but because they *want* to, and because they are seeking to know why a church would help *them*. They want to know the God that we worship, and why we are doing *faith* works and not just *good* works. They come to worship the God of *hope*, and not the *substance*, a God of no hope. Some have been baptized. Some have joined the church. Some are just still seeking, planting seeds of hope in every place.

MCFEE: *Halle, halle!*

ALL: Hallelujah!

MARVIN TAYLOR: Hello, my name is Marvin Taylor. I'm the senior pastor of the St. Thomas Charge, Huger, South Carolina, of the South Carolina Annual Conference.

*(applause)*

The story of the St. Thomas Charge is a story of growth and vibrant ministry in a rural setting. The St. Thomas Charge is made up of three churches: New Hope, Stewart Chapel, and Zion United Methodist churches in Huger, South Carolina. Since 1997, we have grown from 567 to over 1,200 in membership. We went from having—

*(applause)*

We went from having no ministry in the community to many ways that these churches are sowing seeds of hope all around us. The best way to know the spirit of St. Thomas is to experience it, and so we have brought the choir from St. Thomas Charge to invite you into this spirit

today as you continue to see the image of this vibrant church in ministry, planting seeds of hope in every place.

*(music)*

*(applause)*

EDWARD A. KAIL (Iowa): Hi, my name's Ed Kail, a clergy member of the Iowa Annual Conference. For the past eight years I've served as president of the United Methodist Rural Fellowship and I'm delighted that we can gather for this celebration today.

*(applause)*

You know, during this General Conference, we've already heard several calls to move beyond words to action. Let me suggest just a few practical steps that you can take to nurture seeds of hope into the fruit of ministry.

Do you have your seed packet? Lift it up. Take these seeds home to wherever your home in the world is. Plant them in something—a paper cup, a tin can, anything you've got. Put it in a container to take it with you to your annual conference session as a symbol of your commitment and affirmation of the ministries of folks in rural and town and country areas.

Or as you're driving around wherever your country is if you see a road sign, or a street sign for a United Methodist church (sometimes you really have to look) but whenever you see that sign, if it's in an inner city or a suburb or a rural area, wherever, whisper a prayer that that congregation will be born again in their place, revived in the spirit and mission of Jesus Christ. And commit yourself to that sowing and nurturing of seeds of hope in every place.

Molly is holding up a copy of the action guide for local churches. Born Again in Every Place is the title of the National Comprehensive

Plan for Town and Country Ministry. That plan can be accessed on the web site [www.townandcountryumc.org](http://www.townandcountryumc.org). It's on your seed packet, by the way. Look it up, download your copy, and try it out. Even if you're not in a rural area, try it out as a process tool for revitalization, redevelopment, and rebirth.

Did you notice the vehicles that were part of our celebration parade at the beginning? Those were PETS, personal energy transportation devices. They offer the gift of mobility to people around the world who have lost the use of their legs due to landmines, accidents, polio, or birth defects. Visit [www.giftofmobility.org](http://www.giftofmobility.org) to see how you can provide one of these PET chairs to someone in one of the seventy-some countries around the world where the PET Project is at work.

And then a more immediate action that you can take is to join us for the country fair that will take place from 11:30 to 2:30 P.M. in the Water Garden just south of the convention center. That's that direction. Come for food, refreshment, entertainment, and to visit with some of the representative town and country churches who are present here today.

Now I'm sure that the Spirit of God will guide you into other actions that you can take so that your church in your community, wherever you are, can be born again into a life of vital and fruitful discipleship, nurturing seeds of hope into Christian action in every place. So, now I invite you to stand for the benediction as it's sung by the delegation from the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

*(music)*

BISHOP NTAMBO: Please sit down, please. I am myself a product of local church in the village.

I praise God for that. We want to celebrate this day. And now I'm to say thank you to the team, *(unintelligible)* as well as Bishop Ken Carder for the great work in presentation

they did to us. Shall we say thank you to them, please?

*(applause)*

So far, so good, I can see. You are doing so well, and as a gift I want to give you this time. I want to give you just 20 minutes so to come back at 11 o'clock from your break. God bless you. Thank you.

*(applause)*

People, this is the power. Hey, get over here.

*(music)*

Thank you. Eleven o'clock. You need all to come. This is power.

*(pause)*

#### *Central Conference Pension Initiative*

You know sometime we make time and you people you keep time. We have to go ahead. Please return to your seats so we may continue. Our next order of the day will be a presentation on the Central Conference Pension Initiative. Central Conference Pension Initiative. And I am calling upon Bishop Chamness and Bishop Innis. Time is money, let's go ahead.

**BISHOP BENJAMIN CHAMNESS:** Thank you. As we begin this report on the Central Conference Initiative, we have a video to show you and we hope that you will listen and watch carefully.

*(video)*

**BISHOP JOHN G. INNIS:** Sisters and brothers, my name is Bishop John Innis. I'm the Bishop of Liberia. In January 2007, the Central Conference Pension Initiative began a pilot program in Liberia to provide pension payments to our retired pastors and their spouses. Now they are beginning to have a glimmer of hope for a retirement with dignity.

The churches in Liberia are beginning to understand and to em-

brace the idea to create pension support that would continue throughout their retirement. They have already started making contributions to the pension plan through salary withholding.

Retirement funds are now reaching pensions—persons in 40 days or less. This is amazing, truly wonderful, considering some of the retirees can only be reached on foot by walking six or seven hours. And we have a process in place now to track pension payments from the time they are released to the time they are delivered to our pastors and their surviving spouses.

*(applause)*

We are continuing to evaluate our efforts. Hence, I am pleased to report that we have just successfully completed an audit of this critical process: examining payment practices, meeting with the conference special board, and asking retirees to make sure that those who are so deserving are receiving their payments. This system is working and it is going to continue to work.

People called United Methodists, may God's blessing be upon all of you for recognizing the need and taking the first steps to bring financial support to those who have devoted their lives to serving God through Jesus Christ. Thank you ever so much. May God bless you.

*(applause)*

**BISHOP CHAMNESS:** Thank you, Bishop Innis. Today we have put a face on the pension need in the central conferences. And as we have seen in Liberia, the momentum is taking hold. Money is coming in. We are moving forward. Pastors are being served. A retirement with dignity is indeed a future with hope.

Much gratitude should be shared across the connection. The annual conferences of the United States continue contributing the annual Cokesbury checks that they receive

from the United Methodist Publishing House on an annual basis.

Significant individual contributions are being made. The funding outreach is extending across the connection, and it is well underway even as we meet here.

As have been mentioned, our five-year goal is a minimum of \$20 million, in order to establish a foundation that will fund the central conference pensions. Together we celebrate the successful collaboration of five general agencies that resulted in this initiative and the promise that it holds.

But we need support from throughout the church to make this life-changing effort successful. Quite simply, we need money.

This morning, we distributed a CCPI report in four languages summarizing the progress that we have made since 2004. Open that brochure and you will find a commitment form. Since this initiative emanated from the General Conference, and since the 2004 General Conference authorized a funding effort to support it, we feel that it is entirely appropriate to give the delegates here an opportunity to participate in this very important effort.

We have already raised \$7.8 million in commitment from others.

*(applause)*

And that is a significant start. But as I mentioned, we need to raise a minimum of \$20 million to sustain this effort.

There is considerable flexibility. You may make your commitment over a three- or five-year period and indicate how frequently you want to contribute to fulfill that commitment.

There is an envelope tucked inside the CCPI brochure that you can use to send your CCPI commitment to the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits. I know that you will want to join all of us in this effort.

On behalf of our retired friends in the central conferences, I thank you for your consideration. And now I ask you, let us bow our heads in prayer for those who serve the central conferences.

Thanking the Lord for their personal commitment in a lifetime of ministry. Praying for those retiring in grave need, in desperate circumstances. Thanking God for the agencies and their efforts to establish financial systems and monitoring mechanisms to assure pension funds will reach those in need. Amen.

Supporting these faithful servants of the Lord is a matter of justice. Retirement with dignity assures a future with hope for us all. Thank you.

*(applause)*

BISHOP NTAMBO: I wish all the delegates from *(unintelligible)* part of the world, basically from Africa, should be here.

I want to express my deep appreciation, as well as gratitude, to the General Conference. Imagine someone who's serving his God for 40 years, and he has no hope in his life; but today, you are the ones who are bringing hope to many, to thousands of people who have served Christ, and now they can die peacefully because you people, you are thinking about them.

Thank you for your experience, for your generosity, for your servant hearts. On behalf of my people, I want to say thank you, *more* than thanks. And to whatever you are doing for the Lord, never give up, because there are many ways we can build the Kingdom; and building the kingdom of God in the lost life of someone is so meaningful. May the Lord continue to bless you. Thank you, Bishop Cham[ness], and thank you, [Bishop] Innis, for all you are doing for us. Thank you.

*(applause)*

We now turn to the Task Force to Study the Episcopacy for a report.

Please. Order, please! Hello? Mic.—let me see, 8? Or 5. Thank you.

*Call for General Conference  
Ethics Committee*

RALPH R. ODUOR (New England): Bishop, good morning, and thank you. Sisters and brothers in Christ, I would like to move that the Commission on the General Conference be charged with the responsibility to propose to the 2012 General Conference guidelines for a General Conference Ethics Committee, including that committee's composition, scope, and authority. If I have a second, I would like to speak briefly on this matter.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS:  
Second.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Second?  
OK, please.

ODUOR: I am deeply troubled by reports contained in today's *Daily Christian Advocate*, and in related United Methodist News Service story concerning the possibility that gifts were given to certain delegates in what may have been an attempt to improperly influence their voting stance. There is currently no place in our structure for such possible violations of the covenant to be fairly revealed. It is damaging to the body to have suspicions, charges, and countercharges flying in all directions without a means to address the possible offense. I believe it is essential that there be a venue where such concerns can be raised and acted upon.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express my deep concern to you.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Thank you. We thank you very much for all your comments. We would like to ask you to show hands to refer back to the committee, please. All in favor, show hands.

*[pause]*

Opposed? Thank you very much.  
*[approved by show of hands]*

*Task Force to Study the Episcopacy*

So now we come back to the order today—oh, another yellow? OK. Yes, thank you very much, brother. We are going to follow the order of today. Task Force to Study the Episcopacy by Carolyn Briscoe, Myron McCoy, Rachel Lieder. Thank you very much.

CAROLYN BRISCOE (South Carolina): Thank you very much, Bishop.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Thank you, ma'am.

BRISCOE: We appreciate this opportunity. Delegates, visitors, I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am Carolyn Briscoe, a member of the three-member leadership team for the task force.

How did we get here? The task force was formed as a result of legislation approved at the 2004 General Conference. A petition was submitted by GCFA. In committee, it was amended and amended and amended and amended, until it became very large in its mission and huge in its scope. It is listed in our report, which is found, of course, on p. 1509 in Vol. 2, Section 2, of your *ADCA*. But let me remind you of some of the facets of that report.

It was to include but not be limited to the theological and missional nature of episcopal leadership; the deployment of bishops, including the use of retired bishops; the workload of episcopal offices; the unique needs throughout the church; jurisdictional and central conference boundaries; compensation of bishops, including pensions; rising demand on the episcopal fund, including the operating of episcopal areas; and the possibility of implementing episcopal term limits. You see what I mean about its being impressive in its mission and huge in scope? In addition, a petition calling for a full-time executive officer for the Council of Bishops was referred to the committee.

How were the members of this task force chosen? There was a request sent to the chairs of the jurisdictional committees on episcopacy asking that four names be submitted—two clergy members and two lay members. Those names were forwarded to the Council of Bishops; and from that list of names, the jurisdictional representatives were chosen. With care to be inclusive, the nominating committee of Council of Bishops presented the names of those persons. In addition, GCFA chose three persons from the Episcopal Services Committee, one of whom was to be, and is, a central conference representative. Three bishops were selected by the Council of Bishops, one of whom was to be from the central conferences; and that was done. And for central conference inclusivity, the Council of Bishops selected an at-large member from one of the central conferences.

We had excellent staff support from GCFA—Peggy Sewell, who served as a resource and consultant to us, and Jo Ann McClain, from the office of the Council of Bishops. The only provision for funding that was provided through this legislation was that the jurisdictions would assume the cost of travel for those persons who were jurisdictional representatives. Unfortunately, that didn't get communicated to the jurisdictions in a very timely manner; and so some persons were delayed in being reimbursed for the expenditure of travel. GCFA provided the funding for the onsite meeting cost—the rooms, the meals, etc. It was agreed that we would meet at least two times a year, and we met at least once in each of the jurisdictions.

As I have mentioned, rather than electing officers for the task force, we made a decision to select a three-member leadership team. I am Carolyn Briscoe from the Southeast Jurisdiction, and you will hear from the other two shortly.

Our discussions were long, wide-ranging, thoughtful, lively, some-

times fraught with tension, but never contentious. We had a variety of resource persons, who met with us from time to time to share their expertise and share information with us. We had two conference benefits offices, three seminary professors who had written widely on the episcopacy. We had staff members from several of the boards, including the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, staff members from GCFA, a former general secretary of GBGM and others who contributed their time, only being reimbursed for the travel expense they incurred. We studied the former studies on episcopacy, we studied books written on the episcopacy in The United Methodist Church, and we again had resources outside The United Methodist Church to help us understand the office of the episcopacy in denominations and other faiths. We had some listening groups along the way. Again there was no funding. Do you see our video? Probably not. Again, there was no funding.

Our listening groups, our listening sessions were held with groups on which we had a natural relationship connection, but we think they were pretty wide in scope. The Council of Bishops, the National Association of Conference Lay Leaders, each college of bishops, each jurisdictional committee on the episcopacy—there were representatives on each of those committees, so that was an easy one to do. Some representatives were members of boards and agencies and information and was shared there with feedback requested. And we had one of our representatives served on the Connectional Table so we had that relationship. The commitment to the task on the part of the task force members was impressive.

A diverse group, as I have already mentioned, gathered to tackle a monumental task, initially knowing one or two or three members on the task force; but no one knew everyone on the task force in the beginning. Three and a half years later, we

are family—brothers and sisters in the family of God—who have worked together.

Before Rachel takes you on a walk, before Rachel takes you on a walk through the report, I would for you to have an opportunity to see these impressive members of the task force who worked with us. And I would ask you, where you are, to please stand and remain standing until all the groups have been recognized. Not all of them are here and we regret that.

First of all, the representatives of the jurisdictional committees on episcopacy, starting with North Central Jurisdictional representatives, the Northeast Jurisdictional representatives, South Central, Southeast, and the Western Jurisdictional Representatives. Our three bishops who worked with us are back here somewhere. And our three GCFA representatives, and I don't believe the at-large member who served with us from the central conference is—is present. There're others that I'm going to call by name. Two persons who provided excellent help to us: Dr. Russ Richey of Emory University, our writer; and Lonnie Brooks of the Alaska Missionary Conference, who served as a legislative consultant to us and now Rachel is going to continue this journey we've been on for 3½ years by taking you on a walk through the report.

RACHEL M. LIEDER SIMEON (Alaska): Thank you. It is a unique joy to be up here to do this portion of the report. I have to give credit to Bishop Minor for this statement, which I will hopefully help you understand. When we came to our recommendation time—and all of us struggled with some of what we were about—Bishop Minor told us in German, and I think I've translated it pretty well, that the mountains have groaned and borne a mouse. Now, what we mean by that, is that if you look at the recommendations that the task force came to, they are very similar to the recommendation of the original petition,

with a few additions, and it may be tempting to think that we didn't do much work. The joy I have of being able to work on this particular part of the process and of the report, is I get to walk you through some of the exciting, creative, and new ideas that the committee did struggle and work with.

If you have your *Daily Christian Advocate*, Volume 2, on p. 1509 and 1510, you can see that we drew from the sources that Carolyn was talking about for a fuller understanding of the theology of the episcopacy. There had been two previous studies, many books, some experts that came and talked with us, and that's the portion that we gathered together and agreed on in terms of the theology of the episcopacy.

One of my favorite segments begins on 1511: "Thinking Radically." I like to remember that the root of *radical* is radish, which means "rooted." If you look at the list of topics that the group talked about, I think in that list you may see some seeds for the future—some seeds of new ideas that we might want to look at when we are better able to do so. If you look through that list of all the ways in which this committee tried to be creative and tried to think outside the box, I think you might see some things that might pique your interest and I commend that list to you, not whether or not you agree with it, but particularly because some new ideas were generated.

We were, as Carolyn so clearly stated, we were clearly and completely captivated by the fiscal realities of our denomination at this time in our life. And we struggled with all the fiscal and practical ways in which we can be responsive and responsible to this denomination. If you look on p. 1512, you'll see the findings and the concerns. It's very apt that the central conference pension was right before our report because when we began as a task force, the central conference pension issue was a huge issue for us that because it began to be addressed we

could take off our plate in terms of our addressing it.

The second one under "Findings and Concerns" was concerning the workload of bishops and I would commend to you Appendix 6 to look closer at the workload of bishops. What was unique to us as we looked at that is we tend to think of the workload related to membership in churches, when the bishops were telling us that their workload really was more related to the number of clergy in their area. That was a discovery that we made. We also talked about the continuing need to increase the collaboration between the Council of Bishops, the Connectional Table, and the boards of agencies. It became very clear, as soon as we gathered for number four, that we did have some representation from the central conferences, but the central conferences have such a diverse way of electing and deploying their episcopal leaders that we realized very quickly that we did not have enough people at the table to truly deal with that issue. And you will hear, as Myron McCoy comes, you will hear how we decided to—to encourage you all—us all, the whole church—to do a fuller understanding and a fuller study of episcopal leadership as it relates to the central conferences.

The mountains did groan, folks, for four years and we gave birth to ideas, and we gave birth to concepts. We created new relationships, and we gave birth to some recommendations. I'm going to ask Myron McCoy to come up and lead you through those.

LIEDER SIMEON: I am going to ask Myron McCoy to come up and lead you through those.

MYRON MCCOY: The apostle Paul talks about sometimes folks need milk before having the hard meat, and also the need for some to plant seeds before there is the full growth, and so thus, our recommendations are about planting seeds, about the milk that we as the General Conference might consider as

we look forward into the future with hope.

### *Episcopacy Study Recommendations*

Our first recommendation—and our recommendations can be found on p. 1513 in your *DCA*—the first recommendation is a constitutional proposal to formulate the role and calling of bishops in accordance with the mission language adopted and used by the Council of Bishops. That is in your Petition 80271, "The Mission of The United Methodist Church." It calls for amending paragraph 120.

The second recommendation calls for updating our language regarding the duties of bishops and district superintendents by eliminating paragraph 402 and constructing a revised narrative for what we believe to be a more helpful description of the work of bishops and district superintendents, and that Petition is No. 80277, "Role of Bishops and District Superintendents."

Our third and fourth recommendations are basically referrals to appendices, which we have included with our report: appendices seven and eight. One is calling for broad and deep look into a study of the church and the relationship of bishops in the connection, and the other explores the possibility of jurisdictional elections of bishops at General Conference. These recommendations are being referred to the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table as they study the global nature of the church.

Our fifth recommendation calls for the increased involvement of jurisdictional and central conference committees on episcopacy in the evaluation and review of bishops. This can be found in Petition 81436, entitled "Review and Evaluation of Bishops," and it would require a whole new paragraph in the *Book of Discipline*.

Our recommendation six calls for the substitution of a whole new paragraph 405 in the *Book of Discipline*.

This new paragraph spells out a change in the formula governing the allocation of bishops for the jurisdiction, and if at any time there is a reduction in the number of bishops now serving, we are suggesting that the change take place September 1, four years after the General Conference has made such a determination, so that those changes can be made with conferences doing the hard work and struggle of making those connections something more than force but something that makes sense. That can be found in Petition 81432, entitled “Episcopal Area,” and it’s related to paragraph 905.

Number—our seventh recommendation increases the mandatory retirement age to 68 years for bishops to reflect new rules on Social Security in the United States. This can be found in Petition 81433, “Retirement of Bishops.”

Our eighth recommendation increases the flexibility of the Council of Bishops and individual bishops in working gainfully outside the role of bishop and in responding to new calls within a person’s life. Those petitions are 81434 and 81435, one entitled “Vocational Retirement,” and the other entitled “Assignment of Bishops.”

For our recommendation nine, I would refer you to p. 1515. This asks the General Conference to charge the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the legal department of the General Council of Finance and Administration, and the Council of Bishops with the review and possible amendment of paragraph 362, so as to provide for greater flexibility and trial administration, to permit appropriate delegation of responsibilities and authority to chancellors and district superintendents, and to guarantee peer involvement in reviews and trials. We were looking for ways to allow for flexibility in trial administration to reflect the concerns that bishops shared with us, who expressed that legal matters tended to be the heaviest burdens upon their office.

Our last recommendation, number ten, allows for the dates of General Conference to be more flexible, which calls for General Conference to be held in the months of April and May to increase the possibility for greater youth and young adult participation. This one is also a constitutional amendment. We commend these recommendations and our work to you in the spirit of the theme of this General Conference, a future with hope.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Thank you very much.

(applause)

We really thank you. Well, thank you very much for the card; but let me tell you that this report is for information. Information action item have been referred to legislative committees and will come back for your decision at the appropriate moment.

We proceed now to Bishop Carcaño, please. Thank you. Thank you very much. Let me call for Bishop Carcaño.

OK, let me ask you to state for point of, yeah, point of order. Thank you.

LYN A. POWELL (North Georgia): Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Yes, Bishop. Mic. 11.

POWELL: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP NTAMBO: Again, please, ma’am. Thank you.

POWELL: Bishop, I move that the General Conference respectfully request the Agenda Committee to meet today to amend the General Conference agenda for the remainder of the General Conference so that significantly more time is given to the legislative process—both in the legislative committees and in the plenary sessions devoted to legislative actions. And if I hear a second, may I speak to it?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

(laughter)

BISHOP NTAMBO: Thank you. Thank you, ma’am. It’s a great idea; but, unfortunately, it’s out of order today. We’ll proceed.

*Report on UMC and MCCA  
and CIEMAL*

BISHOP MINERVA G. CARCAÑO: Que la gracia y la paz de nuestro Señor Jesucristo sea sobre todos nosotros. [May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon us.] Greeting from your brothers and sisters from Latin America and the Caribbean. May the peace and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon us on this day. It is a great privilege to come before you to present a glimpse of the report of your Study Committee on the Relationships Between The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The full report is found in the *Daily Christian Advocate*, Vol. 2, Section 2, beginning on p. 1188; and the recommendations will come through the legislative process. But it is indeed our privilege to be able to share a bit about what we have learned, what we have heard, and what we have seen in the dialogue, in the conversation, in the Christian conferencing with our brothers and sisters of Latin America and the Caribbean.

A number of the members of the Study Committee are delegates to this General Conference, so we invite them to come and join us on the platform. You noticed yesterday through introductions that we also have a number of bishops and presidents and delegates from churches of Latin America and the Caribbean, so we would invite those brothers and sisters to also come and join us on the platform on this morning.

Bishop Elías Galvan and I have the privilege of being the voice for this Study Committee on this occasion. As our friends come, let me

share with you that during the four years of study and of reflection, there was a song—there was a song that the Holy Spirit used to touch our hearts as we engaged each other in holy conferencing about mission and ministry that God has given us in common. And so we will begin with that song, and then Bishop Galván will guide us through some history; and then I will come and share reflections out of this study process.

*(music)*

BISHOP ELÍAS G. GALVÁN:  
You know? Did you know that your feet could sing?

*(laughter)*

Sisters and brothers in Brazil taught me that some time ago. And not just that, but any part of your body can sing. So I'm gonna pass it on to you now. Whether it be your arms, your feet. Would you stand if you are comfortable and able? Even this region right here that—

*(laughter)*

All of you can praise God. This song goes like this.

*(music)*

Now, if you know Portuguese, you will know that I don't speak Portuguese. What I'm gonna ask you to do—there's gonna be three languages there. Would you pick the one that you're most uncomfortable with?

*(laughter)*

I pick Portuguese because I'm from the Dominican Republic—Spanish is my native tongue—and I live in New York City—I do speak English quite a bit—so Portuguese is it for me. What is it for you? Let's sing again.

*(music)*

Here comes the first stanza!

*(music)*

Now before we do the next stanza, I want to see if you've learned your lesson from our Brazilian sisters and brothers. So let's see the feet. Let's see the arms. *Ve* means “come.” Come join with all people! Second stanza.

*(laughter)*

*(music)*

*(applause)*

Sisters and brothers, the depth of the historical ties of profound faith relationships between the people called Methodists of Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America, with sisters and brothers of North America and beyond is unparalleled in our nation's history. United Methodists and Methodist churches of the western hemisphere have a unique history and a shared journey of faith rooted in the long years of intimate relationships. The historical roots of Methodist communities in the Latin American and Caribbean region go back to the Caribbean island of Antigua where a congregation of Afro-Caribbean slaves developed in 1760s the first Methodist congregation outside of England or Ireland.

The first Methodist class in Brazil was organized in August 1935—1835—in Rio de Janeiro by the Rev. Fountain E. Pitts, pastor of McKendree Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Pitts was sent by the Board of Missions to conduct a survey of expatriate Americans and Europeans to determine the potential for Methodist work. Pitts ventured on from Rio to Montevideo, Uruguay, where once again he succeeded in forming a small Methodist society, and finally to Buenos Aires. There he met a group of Protestant ministers who advised him of government protocol restricting the exercise of Protestant ministry.

Pitts was more than prepared, arriving with credentials that included letters of introduction from U.S. president Andrew Jackson and Tennessee [sic] senator Henry Clay. He soon gathered a substantial congregation and began laying plans for building the church before his scheduled return to the States. Pitts's initiative in Buenos Aires was followed by the Rev. John Demster who arrived in Buenos Aires in the fall of 1836. Demster's success in developing a ministry with expatriate North American and European communities prompted him to appeal to the Board of Missions for financial assistance in building the structure and for a missionary teacher for an English-language school. In 1840, a missionary couple was assigned, and the school opened that catered to children of American, English, and German families.

The development of schools was to become a key strategy in the introduction of Methodism on the continent. While British Methodism focus on missionary reach in the Caribbean, initiatives in Central and South America were developed by the predecessor bodies of The United Methodist Church: by The Methodist Episcopal Church South in northern Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Paraguay; by The Methodist Episcopal Church in southern Mexico, Chile, Bolivia, Panama, Peru and Costa Rica. The Methodist Episcopal Church and The United Brethren Church opened work in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic; The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church in Ecuador.

Protestant admission in the predominately Roman Catholic Latin American region would eventually benefit from a gradual liberalization of hostile government policies. But evangelization efforts of early Methodist missionaries had to be focused on the distribution of Bibles and Christian literature.

Starting schools and communities without public education presented another opportunity for a Methodist witness. Many church-based educational institutions are today officially recognized and remain highly effective in educating children, youth, and young adults.

The missionary pioneers remembered for their enlightened and often sacrificial leadership in this work include: William Taylor in Chile, Peru, Panama, and Costa Rica, but also known for his missionary efforts in India and Africa; William Butler, first superintendent in Mexico, but also known for his work in India; Francisco Pensotti in the Indian region; Juan Thompson in Argentina; Thomas Wood in Argentina, Peru, and Panama.

As the work in Latin America prospered, connections with structures were developed to accommodate supervision and enable participation in decision making. Visits by North American presiding bishops were replaced by the creation of residential Episcopal areas. Indigenous leadership replaced missionaries in local churches and in the conferences.

In 1924, the first central conference of the entire region convened in Panama City. The Rev. Juan E. Gatanoli was the first Latin American bishop elected by the central conference in 1932. He was assigned to Buenos Aires.

The movement toward autonomy, austere at first in Mexico and Brazil, but for different reasons: in Mexico, due to the rising forces of nationalism that ultimately precluded expatriates from holding positions of religious leadership in the country; in Brazil, because of membership growth and the concept and need of Episcopal supervision who would be resident in the country.

By 1930, the respective general conferences of The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church South had authorized autonomy or independence

from the North American denominations.

By the 1960s, there was a strong tide of self-determination among nations and people rising from captivity to economic and/or political colonialism. Latin American Methodists were among many of the denominational mission areas expressing a desire for a stronger identity and more authority within The Methodist Church's structure to adapt to changing local situations. Petitions for autonomy were brought to 1964 and the 1968 General Conferences by a number of mission conferences in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Bishop Sante Umberto Barbieri of the Buenos Aires area spoke to the request for autonomy coming from Latin America Central Conferences. He cited the need for local decision making. A *Discipline* written in the U.S. for the necessities of the whole world is an impossibility, he said. But he envisioned continuity with a Methodist connection. And I quote, "Our autonomy does not intend to be a mere drifting away from each other so as to become nationalistic or isolated units. We are in the process of forming at the same time in place of a central conference, a regional conference for Latin America. We would like to link this regional conference to a world conference composed mainly of regional conferences belonging to a larger fellowship in pursuit of the final aim—a common to be one flock under the leadership of the one Pastor." End of quote.

But in 1968 General Conference was not ready or willing to provide greater flexibility and possibilities for some level of self-determination. Nor a follow-up conference of world Methodism would produce such a worldwide conference of Methodism comprised of strong regional conferences.

All the conferences choosing autonomy—not just Latin America—between 1964 and 1970 were left without a connectional link to each

other, either within a region or beyond. These churches did not choose to leave the connection. The connection left them.

To address the situation for Latin America Methodism, all the newly-autonomous churches for the churches of Brazil and Mexico met in 1969 in Santiago, Chile, to form an association known as the Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean (CIEMAL).

This council of Methodist churches presents a strong expression of Methodist unity within the region. It initiates pragmatic leadership on behalf of and in direct partnership with all member churches. They include leadership development; training for evangelization and church growth; comprehensive community-based healthcare; special ministries with women, children, and youth; and other activities.

CIEMAL effectively nurtures new church growth throughout the region. Its leaders accompany exciting new manifestations of Methodism under development in Columbia, Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Paraguay.

Included in CIEMAL membership are the Methodist church of the Caribbean and the Americas, the United Churches of Ecuador and the Dominican Republic. The Methodist church of the Caribbean and Americas was birthed from the churches that were established by the Caribbean, in the Caribbean, through the British Methodists.

CIEMAL is in partnership with program agencies of The United Methodist Church, especially the General Board of Global Ministries, and other Methodist church bodies in Europe, Great Britain, and the United Church of Canada. CIEMAL has worked jointly with Methodist associated representing the cause of Hispanic Americans, MARCHA, in providing leadership and developing program resources for the United Methodist Hispanic congregations.

Bishops and persons of CIEMAL, member churches, and the Council of Bishops share occasions for expressing the mutuality of ministry and witness. In 1989, 16 members of the Council of Bishops were hosted by CIEMAL bishops and presidents for a timely and memorable conference on peace in Central America and a week of engagement with the critical political and social situations in Nicaragua. These two parties met for a consultation in Puerto Rico in November 2002, and again here in Fort Worth early this week. And members of Methodist churches north and south have participated in each others' volunteer and mission projects in which friendships are made, critical awareness heightened, and ministries benefitted.

For the past two decades The United Methodist Church has been committed to enhancing the solidarity experience among Methodists in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The program known as "Encounter with Christ" in Latin America and the Caribbean has succeeded in raising more than a million and a half dollars in permanent funds, the interest income from which is now enriching programs and projects of member churches throughout the region. The study committee approved by the 2004 General Conference has carefully reviewed this history and attentively listened to our sisters and brothers from across the region. Participants in the March 2007 consultation expressed a strong desire for making new beginnings and made solid recommendations for creating a vital working relationship. We trust that our joint report faithfully echoes those voices and this General Conference will take the first steps on a new path toward building a strong relationship for the future.

*(applause)*

**BISHOP CARCAÑO:** A common history of the love of God and a commitment to Jesus Christ bind us together—The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous

Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean. Through the womb of U.S. Methodism, churches were birthed that now serve in Mexico, in Central and South America, and in Spanish-speaking countries all over the Caribbean. Methodist churches in much of the Caribbean and some parts of Central America were birthed by English Methodist, and God was present in all of those places before we Methodists ever got there. The birthing of communities of Christian faith throughout Latin America and the Caribbean came through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit as it touched the hearts of men and women from the north and the south who became partners in God's great mission work. This fruit of the Spirit-led efforts of these men and women has been Methodist communities of faith that today faithfully serve throughout this vast region of the world.

The study that the 2004 General Conference commissioned us to do has taught us many things—many things about our past relationships, about our present partnerships, and our future possibilities as United Methodists and as Methodists from Latin America and the Caribbean. We celebrate this great history that binds us together as Methodists, but we also recognize that struggles have been a part of the journey. Those struggles have come in our efforts to be in connection with one another. Our study has shown that while U.S. Methodism has been very generous in supporting ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean, we have not always been able to overcome the influence of the socioeconomic and political realities that we live in.

As citizens of a developed country, it has often been difficult for us U.S. Methodists to know how to relate with integrity to Methodists in countries that are yet developing and some that have enormous economic struggles. Our own relative economic prosperity as a U.S.-based church has sometimes impeded our

ability to understand what it means to be the church living in the midst of great injustice, in the midst of human rights violations, and in the midst of life and death struggles, as is the context of many, many of the Methodist churches of Latin America and the Caribbean. At times, we in the United States have allowed the political climate between the U.S. and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to define and direct our relationships with our Methodist brothers and sisters in the south.

We of the study committee believe that we would do better to remember that Christian faith and witness bind us Methodists as members of the very body of Jesus Christ and as citizens of the reign of God—a reign that knows no borders established by humans and that bows down to no human political structure.

*(applause)*

We must help each other to remember that God is no respecter of national states, for the entire world belongs to God and all who abide in it are God's beloved. As participants in a dominant culture, with power and influence greater than that held by any other country on the face of the earth, we U.S. United Methodists too easily believe that we have all the answers, that we are the ones to resolve the issues before us, and that we must always be the initiators of every plan and every good work.

*(applause)*

Our dominant culture teaches us responsibility and initiative, but what it sometimes fails to teach us is the value of relationship—relationship with those beyond ourselves who may have better answers than we, whose wisdom and creativity could join us in helping to bring resolution to some of the most difficult global issues of our day—

(*applause*)

—and who stand ready to work side by side with us in developing grand plans and doing amazing good works for the honor and glory of God. Contrary to the spirit of our dominant U.S. culture, we believe that United Methodists from around the world can live in a connectional relationship of faith and mission and ministry with our Methodist brothers and sisters of Latin America and the Caribbean. We believe that such a connectional relationship will inspire others to become disciples of Jesus Christ. And we believe that together, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, we can transform the world.

(*applause*)

As we look toward a future with hope, we, your study committee, believe that such a future is indeed intimately and interdependently connected to life together with our sisters and brothers from Latin America and the Caribbean. As we United Methodists strive to be relevant in a global world, our brothers and sisters from the south have much to teach us about life and faith in the world.

Together, together, we can do so much more to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And together we can so much more clearly proclaim that prophetic word of God's justice and peace in a world held hostage by injustice and violence of every kind.

We pray that this General Conference will approve our report and its recommendations. Such an action by you will lead us to redefine and deepen our connectional relationships with our brothers and sisters from Latin America and the Caribbean for the sake of the common mission God has given us. Were you to approve our report and its recommendations, we would move to establish open and transparent communication between our Methodist churches that could heal any brokenness we have created

among our churches, and even more, that would facilitate a sharing of holy power for the making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Your support of the recommendations that we bring before you would engage The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean in a mutual commitment to evangelization and *diakonia*, strengthening Methodist churches and together being a prophetic voice in the midst of social injustice, particularly—particularly—in those injustices caused directly or indirectly by the actions of the U.S. government. Our witness—

(*applause*)

—our witness to the power and sovereignty of Christ Jesus must be joined by a clear moral voice of justice. Together we can give such a witness and be such a moral voice. May the Holy Spirit that has bound us together in birth and in mission now breathe upon us anew and lead us forth into a future with hope. May I invite you to stand and receive the Holy Spirit. May I invite you to stand and commit to walking together into this future with hope with our brothers and our sisters from the Methodist churches of Latin America and the Caribbean.

(*music*)

(*applause*)

**BISHOP NTAMBO:** Thank you very, very much. Thank you very, very much. We all appreciate, and our communion will continue. Do we have another thing?

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** That's all for now.

**BISHOP NTAMBO:** Thank you. We will now move to announcements and the order of the day. Thank you very much. Announcements?

**REIST:** I have sufficient announcements to make up for all of

those times when I *didn't* have announcements.

(*laughter*)

The Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy will meet tonight in Ballroom C at 5:30 P.M. for an organizational and working meeting. Dinner will be provided. This is for those members who were elected on Friday morning. I'll repeat that. The Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy will meet tonight in Ballroom C at 5:30 P.M. for an organizational and working meeting. Dinner will be provided. This is for the members who were elected on Friday morning.

The Superintendency Legislative Committee will meet together this afternoon at 2:30 in Meeting Room 204 A and B. The Superintendency Legislative Committee will meet together this afternoon at 2:30 in Meeting Room 204 A and B. All legislative committees are to convene at 2:30. There was some confusion about that. The meeting time for the legislative committees is 2:30.

#### *Furniture Use in GC Worship*

The worship furniture was made especially for the General Conference from trees at Gulfside Assembly and will return to Gulfside to continue its service there across the years to come. The table in the center of the room is made of cypress, a soft wood. The Commission on the General Conference requests that when writing a check for an offering, that you would complete the check at your seat rather than using the consecrated table as a writing surface.

(*laughter*)

This will also prevent your signature and the dollar amount that you have written on your check—

(*laughter*)

—from being forever inscribed on the surface of the table.

*(laughter and applause)*

The convention center is in the midst of a conversion of building systems to make the building more environmentally friendly. We are working with them to get the temperature regulated throughout the building.

*(cheers and applause)*

And we offer our apologies for the temperature fluctuations while the building works through these issues.

BISHOP NTAMBO: And in Texas.

REIST: You'll notice some fabric hanging down in front of me. This has been brought to us from the delegation from Liberia and is a celebration of the coming of President Ellen Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, to our assembly on Tuesday. If you are interested in any of this fabric, it is available at the Cokesbury store, and I believe it's customary in many places to wear such fabric to show a sign of welcome.

I am asked to share a challenge with you. The Kansas Area delegation and bishop, as the home of basketball's inventor and the NCAA Division I Men's champion Kansas Jayhawks—

*(cheers and applause)*

—are bidding \$420 for Bishop Bickerton's basketball. They are wondering if Memphis, North Carolina, California-Pacific, or another conference wants it *more*. The bidding will benefit Nothing But Nets.

*(applause)*

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women will hold a brief worship service today at 6:00 P.M. in Ballroom B of the convention center. The leader is the Rev. Grace Cajiuat of First UMC, Appleton, Wisconsin. All are invited.

Every annual conference and every church affiliated with us has a

chair of delegation. That chair of delegation is responsible for submitting attendance sheets. It is very important that you submit those attendance sheets. If you do not know who the chair of your delegation is—

*(laughter)*

—please gather and find out, so that we get those reports.

Our opening night offering was \$19,194.10.

*(applause)*

And there's one other announcement to share with you. We opened this session with a gavel that was on the bishop's table. Some time after the opening session, the gavel took a walk.

*(laughter)*

*(applause)*

If you happen to see the gavel walking anywhere, would you please guide it back to this desk. Yesterday, Bishop Middleton was obliged to use this copy of *Robert's Rules of Order* to bring us to order.

*(laughter)*

And our presiding bishop today obviously has a hobby horse to get us there.

*(laughter)*

But if you can help us return that gavel, we would very much appreciate it. We did not bring a box of gavels to the convention center.

*(laughter)*

Bishop, those conclude my announcements.

*(applause)*

BISHOP NTAMBO: Please, for benediction. *(interpreted)* Amen. Et bon appétit tout le monde! [*Bon appétit, everyone!*]

*(applause)*

*(lunch break)*

## Sunday Morning, April 27, 2008

MARCIA MCFEE: I invite you to take your seats for the beginning of worship, my friends. I invite you to find your seats for the beginning of worship.

Our theme this morning is 'Residing Hope: Creating Places to Dwell in Hope.' I invite you to stand for our invocation prayer.

BISHOP SUDARSHANA DEVADHAR: Will you kindly pray with me?

*(prayer)*

*(music)*

*(worship)*

### *Bishop Carcaño's Sermon*

BISHOP MINERVA G. CARCAÑO: Grace and peace in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord and our Savior. Would you pray with me?

*(prayer)*

It was in the region of the Garasenes that Jesus saw him, that man living among the tombs. They say that he was a demoniac, crazy, absolutely crazy beyond the community's ability or desire to include him in their life. And so they banished him to the community's cemetery, a desolate, lonely place of death, for he was beyond hope.

I don't know how Jesus wound up at the local cemetery; but Jesus does have a way of always going to the edge, to those places of deep human suffering, somehow finding those persons whose suffering no one else seems to notice. Jesus startles us by where he goes, and he also startled that poor Garasene demoniac. When he saw Jesus coming, he cried out to

him, 'What have I done that you come to visit me? Please, please don't torment me! Can you not see that I am already tormented by a legion of forces?'

I wonder what tormented that brother who lived among the tombs in Garasene? To simply say that he was afflicted by mental illness is to escape the fact that this is a story of healing filled with symbolism. As serious as mental illness is, there is even more than that to this story. Biblical scholars agree that this brother embodies the suffering of an entire community. He lived in a pagan land under Roman domination. It doesn't take long to realize that he had absorbed unto himself the anxiety of a people under social and economic and political and religious oppression. He lives among the tombs, totally out of control, often hurting himself and desecrating the resting place of the dead through his very presence. His only human contact occurs as persons come to bury or remember their loved ones who have died; and these, these he frightens away. Though living, he is treated as if he were one of the dead. He is tormented in body and in soul and in spirit, and he begs Jesus to not add to his torment.

But Jesus has not come to add to human torment but to free us, to free us from all the lifeless tombs of our lives. He comes to free us from death that we may have life. And so he heals Legion the demoniac of all that torments him, and he gives him life. With one touch of the mercy of Jesus Christ, that Garasene demoniac Legion, our brother, went from being a crazy lost soul living all alone smack in the middle of death to having his mind and his life restored to him. Praise God! Praise God! You would think that those in that community from which Legion had come would also have been praising God, but praises were not the word that spread throughout that community. Instead fear and reproach spread like wildfire.

The community came and gathered among the tombs. Oh, how people love to chase the ambulance!

*(laughter)*

How we love, just love to check out that latest rumor and the latest scandal; and it was scandalous! Jesus had taken the legion of torments and sufferings of the poor Garasene demoniac and sent them into a large herd of swine that was feeding on the hillside. Afflicted and confused, the swine had rushed down the steep bank of the hillside into the belly of the sea and drowned. As the people gathered, they could still hear the echo of the stampeding and the squealing of the swine, the terrible splash of water as they hit the sea, and then the silence—a silence filled with the message that a dramatic change had just come, not only for Legion but for all of them. Life would never be the same. Men and women, young people and children all came to see this dramatic change. Before them sat Legion, no longer naked but clothed and no longer insane but in his right mind. Did those people rejoice and praise God for the wonderful miracle of change and hope that had just occurred? But of course not! Who in their right mind wants change?

*(laughter)*

They had gotten used to Legion, gotten used to ignoring him and mistreating him. They had gotten used to talking badly about him and gotten used to cursing him for being a burden to their conscience and an eyesore in their community. And the herd of swine . . . In sending the legion of torments into them and leading them to their death, did Jesus not know that he had just disrupted the economy of the whole community? This demoniac wasn't worth it! As they say here in my native Texas, 'Heck no, they didn't praise Jesus.'

*(laughter)*

Heck no! They asked him to leave. They asked him to leave.

I am reminded of the response that I so often hear these days when Jesus comes among us and heals the legion of torments and suffering of the immigrants who sojourn in this world. On this day, immigrants all over the globe are suffering, suffering as they seek escape from religious oppression and political oppression and the oppression of poverty. In the area where I serve, a desert swallows up hundreds of men, women, and children every year as they travel from the south to the north to feed and to clothe and to provide shelter for their families. A quick study of the economic realities that force persons from the south to immigrate to the north shows that the United States' wants and desires far exceeding our needs has left our brothers and sisters in the south living in dire poverty.

*(applause)*

And the manner in which the southern border of this country has over the last few years been controlled has led immigrants coming into the U.S. to cross the border in great numbers through the Arizona desert. It's almost sixty miles of desert where the temperatures can reach over a hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime. Often these immigrants run out of water and food in the desert. They become disoriented and lost. Their feet blister and swell until they no longer fit in their shoes. Through the lack of water and exposure to the elements, their internal organs begin to shut down as their brains fry and quit functioning properly; and like the Garasene demoniac, they go mad. And it happens in a matter of a few days, 3 to 4 days. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have died on the southern border of this country because they seek bread and hope.

I am so very proud of United Methodists who have been caring for the immigrant on the border, providing for them a bit of water and a bit of care. Others have been advo-

cating for comprehensive immigration reform. Thanks be to God for all of you! But there are also those among us who write to me as a bishop of the church and say, 'Shame on you! Shame on you for supporting the giving of water to those immigrants in the desert. Don't you dare use a penny of my money for caring for those immigrants. They aren't worth it. And if you do, I'll withhold my offerings. What kind of an American are you that you would support those foreigners in breaking our U.S. laws?'

Oh, my brothers and my sisters, why? Why? Why on earth and why on heaven would we want to leave anyone to die in the desert? The southern desert of this country has become our own Garasene cemetery to which we have banished those whom Jesus would remind us are our brothers and our sisters. These immigrant men, women, young people, and children are beloved of God just as you and I are beloved of God.

*(applause)*

And if you happen to have a conversation with an immigrant brother or an immigrant sister they will tell you that God is their strength and Christ is their faithful companion.

I want to be a responsible citizen in the country where I live, but even more than that—so much more than that—I want to be a faithful citizen of the reign of God,

*(applause)*

that holy reign that has come and is yet coming, that holy reign where Jesus alone is Lord. Jesus is not an American, nor is he a German,

*(applause)*

nor is he a Filipino or a Liberian; he is not even simply a Nazarene, for Jesus is so much more than that. Nor is Jesus—

*(applause)*

nor is Jesus beholden to U.S. immigration policies or the immigration policies of any nation,

*(applause)*

for Jesus, Jesus is so far above all of that. Jesus is the Son of the most high God who comes proclaiming good news to all who are tormented by the sins of this world. Jesus is the Son of the most high God, who comes announcing that the reign of God has arrived; and life, life will never be the same. Thanks be to God!

*(applause)*

There are hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees all over this world suffering a legion of torments on this very day. May God have mercy on them, and may God have mercy on our souls. They are, unfortunately, however, not the only ones who join our poor brother, the Garasene demoniac Legion, living in the death pits of this world. Poverty and the torment, suffering, and unnecessary death it brings affects too many of our brothers and sisters in Africa, in Asia, in Europe, in the Middle East, in Latin America and the Caribbean, and even in North America. A global economic machine that continues to reap the very best of God's good gifts for the few, leaving a great majority of God's children only subsisting or living on the very edge of death, is today shaping, shaping our communities and our lives.

But there is also the element of racism in this global economic scheme that daily takes us closer to death. I cannot preach from this pulpit made from the remains of a tree torn down by Hurricane Katrina and not remember how impossible it has been for the United States to respond to the basic human needs of those persons most affected by Hurricane Katrina in this country.

*(applause)*

I cannot help but believe that the fact that those most severely affected by Hurricane Katrina are in the majority Black has affected our public willingness to respond with the kind of deep compassion that is necessary so that life can be restored in this area, where even after all this time death's great pallor still looms close.

*(applause)*

The poverty in this world and the suffering it causes is an issue of economics gone astray, and it is an issue of racism; but it is also an issue of classism that affects people of all colors and all cultures around the globe. Today the poverty faced by those who, like Legion, though alive are forced to abide among the dead is cruel, complicated, complex, and so very difficult to counter. As United Methodists, we have committed together to overcome poverty in community with the poor.

I'm not sure. I'm not sure that you and I can overcome poverty even in community with the poor. I'm not sure. I'm not sure that we're smart enough. I'm not sure that we're disciplined enough or compassionate enough to overcome poverty. But I do not lose hope; and I pray that you will not lose hope, for there is hope beyond ourselves, namely Jesus the Christ, who is smart enough and disciplined enough and compassionate enough and loving enough and powerful enough to work with us and through us to overcome poverty and the legion of troubles it brings.

*(applause)*

When our Council of Bishops met in Mozambique, Africa, earlier this quadrennium, I saw, I saw that precious hope beyond ourselves. I saw Christ Jesus at work through his disciples. One Sunday, while in Mozambique, we the members of the Council of Bishops were sent forth in teams to visit the United Methodist churches in that wonderful land. I went with a team that was

taken to a small developing community about forty-five minutes away from Maputo, where we were meeting. We arrived and soon realized that we had been sent to a fairly new church start. In fact, the church building only had three walls and a roof that was but a mere blue tarp. The church, the body of Christ, however, was standing tall. Worship was joyful and full, and the witness was strong. These were solid disciples of Christ Jesus. In fact, we were halfway through the service before we realized that the pastor was missing.

*(laughter)*

*(applause)*

The pastor's father had died, and so the congregation had sent him home to attend to his family and to his own grief. The laity had proceeded, for it was Sunday, the Lord's day. But in that wonderful and rich service of worship, the poverty in which our United Methodist brothers and sisters lived did not go unnoticed. It was visible in that community of faith and all around us: a father dead much too young because of poverty; a child, a little child in arms, orphaned because its mother lacked adequate and very basic medical care; a neighborhood without water or electricity or schools. Poverty was obvious and clear to us. But the people, the people called Methodists in that place had a hope beyond themselves.

After worship and before a feast of fish and legumes and ripe bananas eaten under this most gorgeous cashew tree, lay leaders of this community of faith took us to where they had first been formed as the church. It was up the road and deeper into that developing community.

When we got there, there was even less of a building there than where we had worshiped. In fact, all we saw was three walls and a roof of straw. When we looked at our Mozambiquan brothers and sisters

as we stood on that plot of land with that simple straw structure, they were all smiling; and we weren't sure what their smiles meant, so we asked, 'Are you going to sell this property in order to finish your building on your new site?' Upon hearing our question, their smiles fell from their faces; and they looked at each other with a certain befuddlement, and then they ever so gently said to us, 'No, no, we're not going to sell this property.' And then with great passion, they said, 'We're going to build a school right here; and after the children are out of school, we will have a clinic here and over there.' They said as they pointed to this one small water faucet, 'Over there we will provide water for all those who live here. We moved from this place, but we cannot abandon our brothers and our sisters. They need us!'

*(applause)*

We were amazed. We were amazed by what we saw and heard. The poor helping the poor because they have been filled by a hope beyond themselves. Christ Jesus has filled them, changed their lives, and they are indeed praising and thanking God through worship and good works.

Then just two weeks ago, I saw that hope beyond ourselves yet again. Among the awful tombs of poverty and despair, I saw Christ Jesus touching the life of a boy with golden hair and white skin. A telephone call to our conference office beckoned me, beckoned me to see Christ Jesus about his mighty work. 'Could the boy, could the boy come to the bishop's confirmation retreat without a signed permission slip from his mother?' asked the boy's pastor from the other end of the telephone line. This boy had no father, and his pastor and he had just spent the entire day looking for his mother by driving up and down the avenue where all the cheap motels in their city are found; but they did not find her, and so there was no one to sign

his confirmation retreat form. Could he come anyway? When I arrived at that confirmation retreat, I saw him immediately—the boy with golden hair and white skin, the spitting image of brother Legion, with rotten teeth and weathered skin and an untrusting look in his eyes.

During one of the meals that weekend, I sat with him; and he told me about his life. He had lived in poverty all of his life. He had never known his father. His mother's a drug addict. He had been reared by his grandparents; but his grandfather had died some years ago, and he had buried his grandmother just days before, leaving him with no family. I was so moved by this boy's life story that I found myself wanting to take him home, but someone had already done that. Two young people from one of our United Methodist churches—two young people who called themselves this boy's friends—had convinced their family to take him in, for was this not what Jesus would expect of them? What an amazing hope beyond ourselves! Jesus who stirs within us that holy desire to do that which is good, to do that which is good out of love for God and love for others.

I trust in this hope beyond ourselves. I trust in Jesus to help us overcome poverty in community with the poor. But allow me to address one final concern. That concern is fear. I am sure that if it isn't already happening right now as we think about overcoming poverty, that it will happen as soon as we get home. We will become fearful, fearful of the enormity of the task, fearful of becoming overwhelmed by its demands, fearful of losing what we have and being left without, and even fearful of those who are poor around us, fearful of the Legions of the world.

I remember as a child how fearful I would become when our pastor happened to preach a sermon about Legion, that Garasene demoniac who lived among the tombs. It didn't help a bit that my family lived on a

farm called “Cemetery Settlement” because we were right on the edge of the local cemetery.

*(laughter)*

So when I would hear a sermon about Legion, it would be a few nights before I could sleep without fear. And maybe, just maybe, this morning we are feeling a bit of fear; but I would say to you people of The United Methodist Church as I say to myself: Grow up. Grow up.

*(applause)*

Let us grow up and quit hiding behind fear. Let us be mature Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ, trusting in him, but also, also confessing that the greater part of our fear is probably that we may be complicit in the poverty of the world; confessing that The United Methodist Church, particularly many of us who live in the U.S., is wealthy beyond what we need or deserve, and also confessing that we do not always use the resources as God would have us use them. I believe,

*(applause)*

I believe, I believe that growing up and being faithful followers of Christ Jesus along with a good dose of confession will free us from our fears. But even more, I do so believe in that hope beyond ourselves. I believe in Christ Jesus who *will* overcome the poverty of this world, and I just pray that we will be found with him on that day.

*(applause)*

*(music)*

Would you stand for the benediction? People of God go forth in the confidence that we have placed our trust in that hope beyond ourselves, namely Christ Jesus, in whom there is perfect love and amazing power. So go in confidence and go in assurance and go with that grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Go embraced by

the love of God, and go in the communion of the Holy Spirit, God with us, now and always. Go in peace.

*(music)*

*(applause)*

BISHOP LEO A. SORIANO: Let us be seated now. We praise and thank God for the blessing of today’s worship service and also for the challenge, the healing, and hope brought to us by Bishop Minerva.

*(applause)*

Let us now proceed with our business this morning. And I would call on the chair of the Committee on Presiding Officers.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She’s coming. She’s walking over here now.

BISHOP SORIANO: All right, she’s still coming.

*(pause)*

The *(unintelligible)* has arrived. I thought it still walking there in the desert—the border.

*(pause)*

HARRIET MCCABE (Northern Illinois): Thank you, Bishop Soriano. It is my pleasure to announce to you the persons who will be presiding in the chair tomorrow. At the early morning plenary we will be led by Bishop Michael Coyner.

*(applause)*

In the afternoon we will be led by Bishop Warner Brown, and in the evening we will be led by Bishop Sally Dyck. I want to speak a word to all the members of the Committee on Presiding Officers. Because of changes in today’s agenda we will meet at 12:30—Committee on Presiding Officers, 12:30. Thank you.

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you, Sister Harriet, for that announcement. And now I would call on a—

the Committee on Agenda and Calendar, Sister Youngsook Kang.

*(pause)*

YOUNGSOOK C. KANG (Rocky Mountain): Thank you, Bishop Soriano, the Council of Bishops, and delegates and friends. According to the Eastern calendar, today is Easter! So we celebrate this special day with our sisters and brothers of the Eastern Church.

Now hearing and understanding the concerns people have brought to the members of the Agenda Committee yesterday, we are suggesting some changes to today’s calendar. They will allow for more conference business without compromising or sacrificing Legislative Committee time. As noted on the cover of today’s *DCA*, we will hear our planned orders of the day during the 9:20 morning session as follows: recognition of retiring bishops, presentation of new episcopal leadership team, celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dissolution of the central jurisdiction, and strengthening the Black church initiative, followed by a report from the Discipleship Legislative Committee. Rather than our normal 15-minute break at 10:25 or so, we will have a five-minute standing break with a special activity led by the local host committee. Then from 10:30 to 12:00 noon, we will continue considering calendar items when we’ll be hearing from the following committees: Central Conferences, Independent Commissions, and Church and Society. We will have a somewhat shorter lunch break today from 12 noon to 1:30 P.M., and then legislative committees will meet until 4:45 P.M. This evening we will participate in the area night activities. I want you to note that marshals and pages will not be available after 5 P.M., and shuttles will stop running at 11:00 tonight.

As for tomorrow, as usual we will begin with worship following choral music. And as the conference business begins, we will have a Katrina report. Then there will be elections

of the University Senate, Judicial Council, and the trustees of John Street Church. When the election is over, we will resume considering calendar items printed in today—yesterday's and today's *DCA* throughout the day. And other elections will be—nominations for other elections will be printed in tomorrow's cal—*DCA* and then elections will be on Wednesday.

In the afternoon there will be two special celebrations tomorrow, including the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Advance and the Hope for Africa Children's Choir. Bishop Soriano, I move the adoption of the agenda for today and tomorrow.

BISHOP SORIANO: All right, brothers and sisters, it is before you; but before you can vote you have to activate your keypads. You touch any button there.

*(pause)*

Yes, mic. 1, please.

JAMES OTTJES (North Indiana): I would move to amend the calendar as presented simply because our legislative committees have not had enough time to do their business. Bringing it before the plenary before we've even had a chance to meet in Legislative Committee seems to be counterproductive. I would like to move to make the 10:30 to 12:00 time Legislative Committee time, and then let the Calendar Agenda Committee figure out where to bring the rest of it into it.

BISHOP SORIANO: Are you accepting that? Yes.

KANG: The Agenda Committee understands the importance of moving on with the Legislative Committee actions, and yet what is also important is to move ahead with the plenary time so that those items that have been already taken at each legislative committee need to come out—need to be brought to the plenary as well. So it is a balancing act between the Legislative Committee actions and the plenary actions. So

the Agenda Committee heard yesterday concerns from many delegates yesterday; and we bring this proposal to you, trusting that this will keep us in balance between legislative committees and the plenary.

BISHOP SORIANO: Anyone else would like to speak? Then let us vote on this amendment now. Those who would approve it, please press "1," if you would like to say yes; and if you do not like, press "2" for no. You vote when the timer starts. And you begin now. [*Yes, 407; No, 258*]

*(pause)*

The amendment passes. So that becomes the main motion. The agenda is amended, and still before you now. Let us vote on it. If you are prepared to do that, you press "1" for yes; press "2" for no. You may start when the timer appears. All right.

KANG: Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendar B01.

BISHOP SORIANO: Are there any remarks, conversation about this? There are none...yes, yes sir. You may come to mic. 2, please.

CHARLES S G BOAYUE (Detroit): Bishop Soriano, I rise to thank this General Conference for its action four years ago in admitting Cote d'Ivoire into our denomination and on this calendar before us today in granting them full participation in the life and mission of The United Methodist Church. The church in Cote d'Ivoire deserves our praise and thanksgiving for the great witness they are making on behalf of Christ and his church.

*(applause)*

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you, brother Charles. Any other remarks? Then you can proceed to take action. If you are ready and you want to approve this proposal now, you press "1" for yes, press "2" for no. You may start to vote when the timer appears. Now.

*(pause)*

The proposal has passed. Thank you. [*Yes, 726; No, 16*]

BRUMBAUGH: On the facing page, p. 1985, that's p. 1985, appears Consent Calendar C01. That's Consent Calendar C01. Calendar Item 27 has been removed from that calendar. Calendar Item 27 has been removed from Consent Calendar C01 and now appears on p. 2052 for consideration at a later time. Consent Calendar C01 is before you with that single change.

KANG: Bishop, I move the approval of all the action on Consent Calendar C01 except for the one that has been removed, which is Calendar Item 27.

BISHOP SORIANO: This is properly before you now. Are there any remarks? If none, then we are prepared to take action. If you will approve it, press "1" and if you will disapprove it, press "2." You may start to vote when the timer appears. Now.

*(pause)*

You have approved it. Thank you. [*Yes, 749; No, 23*]

BRUMBAUGH: We have one more to do. On p. 1986, that's 1986, you will find Consent Calendar D01, that's Consent Calendar D01. Two items are being removed from this consent calendar pending verification of delegate status. Those two items are Consent Calendar Item 32 and Calendar Item 33. Calendar Item 32 and Calendar Item 33 are being removed from Consent Calendar D01. All other items printed in Consent Calendar D01 are before you.

KANG: Bishop, I move approval of the action on Consent Calendar D01 except for those two items that have been removed.

BISHOP SORIANO: They are properly before you now. Are there any remarks, comments, discussions? I see no hands. Then we are prepared to take action. If you will

vote for it, press “1.” If you are against it, press “2.” You may start to vote when the light appears. Now.

(pause)

You have approved it. [*Yes, 759; No, 23*]

BRUMBAUGH: If the persons who submitted Calendar Items 32 and 33 for removal from the consent calendar, would come to our office in 103B and help us verify that one name that we can't verify, we would appreciate that. So whoever asked for 32 and 33 to be removed, please come see us in 103B.

KANG: Bishop, this concludes the report from the Committee on Agenda and Calendar.

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you very much, Sister Youngsook and Sister Susan. Yes, please go to mic. 11.

#### *Call for Referral To Judicial Council*

ROBERT F. ZILHAVER (Western Pennsylvania): I move on behalf of the General Conference to petition the Judicial Council to make a ruling in the nature of a declaratory decision as to the constitutionality of Petition Nos. 80848–JA–Paragraph 2600, 81107–JA–Paragraph 600, 81315–JA–Paragraph 2607, 80148–JA–Paragraphs 2608.2. In reference to Division 2, Section 2, Article 4.4 of the Constitution, Paragraph 16.7 of the 2004 *Book of Discipline*, and Division 4, Article 2.5 and .6, Paragraphs 5, 6.5, and 56.6 of the 2004 *Book of Discipline*.

BISHOP SORIANO: Is there no way for us to see those numbers on the screen? Well, anyway you're getting those to the pages.

ZILHAVER: I believe that if we would move this, this would ensure that the actions of this body would be constitutional and would save time on the plenary floor later in the week.

BISHOP SORIANO: What are these petitions about?

ZILHAVER: These petitions refer

to the powers and organization and procedures of the Judicial Council.

BISHOP SORIANO: Are there any further discussions? Anybody speaking for or against it? I see no hands, and so let us take action. Those who would favor it, press “1” in your—

(pause)

We are now ready to take action, and let me remind you that such motions would take, only take 1/5 of the whole, of the whole number. We are now in the process of voting; and so those who would approve it, press “1,” and those who are against, press “2.”

I am sorry, sir, but we are in the process of voting right now.

(pause)

All right, the motion passes. [*Yes, 428; No, 300*]

I will call now on Brother John to make a report.

JOHN BRAUN: Good morning. Yesterday I presented our first legislative activity dashboard, and I promised that you would see it again. I will live up to that promise, but first I need your help with something else. If you are a member of the Commission on Central Conference Affairs or if you are a member of the General Administration Legislative Committee, I would ask you right now, where you are, to please stand up. Don't be shy. Just as Moses led the people of Israel out of bondage and suffering and into the Promised Land, the people standing among you have shown us the way out of amending and debating and into *our* promised land. They have completed their legislative committee work.

(applause)

You'd better take your seats. Even *you* are not quite through with the work yet today.

Yesterday we asked you to prioritize your work with financial impli-

cations. This special dashboard shows the status of all petitions with financial implications. Let's look at the bottom line—I understand that's a phrase that financial people love—and we'll start at the right side. There are a very small number of petitions marked with financial implications for which we have no committee vote recorded in columns. These four petitions are shown in red. There are eleven petitions shown in tan for which the legislative committee has voted its recommendation but which failed to meet the *DCA* deadline and are not found in this morning's *DCA*.

The largest bar is green and it represents the eighty-five petitions that are printed in the *DCA* and are waiting your action today or tomorrow. Just a few minutes ago you voted to accept Consent Calendars A1 through D1. When you did that, you voted on the thirty-five petitions with financial implications. These are shown in white.

(laughter)

As a plenary body you have already voted on one quarter of those petitions over which the voting must be complete by tomorrow afternoon at 5 P.M. And in your legislative committees you have managed to get nearly ninety percent of all those petitions with financial implications printed in the *DCA* before the deadline. On behalf of the secretary's staff, I give you our sincere thanks for such a strong accomplishment against such a difficult task. There is really very little left to do in legislative committees in the area of petitions with financial implications, but please be sure to get that done and get it to the coordinator of the calendar before 5 o'clock today.

Now let's look at how far we've progressed on the normal dashboard that includes all petitions. We started yesterday morning with nearly 5 percent of all of the petitions voted on in legislative committees. This is the dashboard that I showed you yesterday. Now let's look at the

progress that we have made over the last 24 hours. More than 35 percent of all of the petitions have legislative committee votes recorded in columns. Nearly 30 percent are on the calendar, either already published in the *DCA* or ready for publication tomorrow morning. And today you can see the white segment to the left side of the bottom bar. You have already voted on 34 petitions in plenary session. Looking back as far as 20 years, this is a record for the number of petitions voted in plenary session at this point in the General Conference. Well done!

*(applause)*

As you look at the bars for various legislative committees, I'm sure you'll appreciate the challenge before us today and early next week. I leave you with two requests. First, if there is anything that we can do to help you with your work in the legislative committees, please let the staff know. And second, does anyone know somebody in the General Administration Legislative Committee who would be willing to go out and bring the rest of us dinner? Thank you.

*(laughter)*

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you very much, Brother John. Yes? Mic 1, please. Mic. 4. You're nearer mic 4.

*(pause)*

*Call to Share Ministerial Pension  
with Central Conferences*

JOAN E. CARTER-RIMBACH (Baltimore-Washington): Bishop, I'd like to ask a question about the Central Conference Pension Initiative. Is it appropriate at this time?

*(pause)*

BISHOP SORIANO: All right, it's in order.

CARTER-RIMBACH: I would like to ask the Pension Initiative

Committee to evaluate ways in which U.S. clergy can offer portions of our pension to assist in the Central Conference Pension Initiative. And if I can get a second, I'd like to speak to it.

BISHOP SORIANO: All right, you may proceed.

CARTER-RIMBACH: In summarizing the Central Conference Pension Initiative, on the last page of the report booklet the first sentence says, and I quote: "The task before us is daunting." Unquote. But Bishop, I know that we are resurrection people, people that have a hope beyond ourselves that was just preached, amen. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. If each U.S. clergy—and I understand there's about 28,000 of us—if each U.S. clergy had the opportunity to give a gift of at least \$1,000 from our pension plan, this would just be a drop in the bucket but it would be a sign of hope to our sisters and brothers in the central conferences and a sign of our commitment to our connectionalism. We are one of them and they are one of us. And we want to—we want to make—we want to do more than affirm that, we want to take action on that. Let us do what is good. Thank you.

*(applause)*

BISHOP SORIANO: This matter has already been addressed in the Committee of the Pensions. But I would like to ask now this body if you would allow Bishop Chamness, who chairs this committee, to speak at this moment. Just a show of hands, would you allow Bishop Chamness. Yes, Bishop. [*hand vote, allowed*]

BISHOP BENJAMIN CHAMNESS: Are we live? Hello. Now, I greatly appreciate the sentiment of this motion, however I need to inform the body that the committee has already looked into this matter. There were many bishops who wanted to do the same

thing. Unfortunately the IRS tax laws prevent us from designating any portion of our pension toward this or other causes. There are other ways in which you may designate a portion of your salary and have it withheld if you do that in conjunction with your salary-paying unit. But to take it from our pension, unfortunately, is beyond our capacity to do.

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you very much. Now we can proceed to our Order of the Day. I would now call on Bishop Palmer to recognize our retiring bishops.

*(pause)*

*Presentation of Retiring Bishops*

BISHOP GREGORY VAUGHN PALMER: Thank you, Bishop Soriano, and good morning to the delegates of the General Conference. It's my great privilege to invite you to join me in recognizing those bishops of the church who are going to be retiring this year. And as I call their names, I would invite them to stand. I think most of them, if not all of them, should be seated somewhere over one of my shoulders. The following bishops will be retiring in the very near future: Benjamin Chamness—and as they stand if they would remain standing—Sharon Brown Christopher, Violet Fisher, Joseph C. Humper, William W. Hutchinson, Benjamin A. Justo, João Somane Machado, Joel (Jose) N. Martinez, J. Lawrence McCleskey, Jane Allen Middleton, Susan Murch Morrison, Øystein Olsen, Beverly Shamana, Solito K. Toquero. Would you join me in expressing your appreciation to these bishops of the church?

*(applause)*

We thank them for their untiring service throughout their ministries and especially in these years, as they've moved toward retirement, for the ways in which they've given themselves through episcopal min-

istry. Any number of them have been accompanied on that journey by spouses and a number of the spouses of these several bishops are with us, mostly sitting in the spouses' section. And if you are a spouse of one of these bishops that we've just recognized, would you stand so that we might love on you a little bit?

(applause)

Thank you, Bishop Soriano.

*Presentation of New COB  
Leadership Team*

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you very much. And now I will call on Bishop Lyght to present to us the new Episcopal Leadership Team.

BISHOP ERNEST S. LYGHT: Bishop Soriano and General Conference delegates and guests, it is my distinct pleasure and honor to present to you to recognize the new Council of Bishops Episcopal Leadership Team. The new president, Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer—I ask that they would come and stand here with me—the president-designate, Bishop Larry Goodpaster; secretary, Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr.; ecumenical officer, Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader; executive secretary, Bishop Donald Ott. These persons represent our new leadership team. We ask of you your support for them and your daily prayers. Why don't you greet all of them?

(applause)

BISHOP SORIANO: We are behind schedule, our brethren and sisters, so we'll proceed immediately and I will call on Erin Hawkins to have a presentation.

(pause)

*Central Jurisdiction;  
Beginning and End*

ERIN HAWKINS: Good morning. Waiting for my script to come up. Plan B:

(laughter)

For some, the events surrounding the creation of the Central Jurisdiction are but a memory, a less-than-favorable point in the history of the people called Methodists, who chose to exclude members of the body of Christ because of the blackness of their skin, but without memory there can be no conscience. And conscience is key to determining the course of the future.

So this morning, we recognize the importance of gathering together to remember the Central Jurisdiction, an ironic entity in which African Americans were segregated into a racially defined jurisdiction that overlapped the five geographical jurisdictions as a condition of reuniting The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church South and The Methodist Protestant Church. The Central Jurisdiction was born out of hatred in 1939 and formally retired into memory in 1968. And we also remember the story of Joseph, who upon laying his eyes on his brothers who sold him into slavery offered them words of mercy. "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result."

(pause)

BISHOP SORIANO: Are there no sounds for the speakers?

HAWKINS: Well, we were trying to get the sound. It looks like no sound. OK. All right.

W. ASTOR KIRK: Good morning, my name is W. Astor Kirk. From 1960 to 1966, I served as one member of a five-person committee, commonly known as the Committee of Five. It was commissioned to seek the dissolution of the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction organization. As has been noted, the Central Jurisdiction was created in 1939 by Methodist Whites who would not agree to a union of The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist

Episcopal Church South, and The Methodist Protestant Church unless the African American members of The Methodist Episcopal Church were segregated.

For Methodist Blacks, the creation of the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction organization was a humiliating disappointment. While never believing that the Central Jurisdiction organization was destined to have eternal life, many resourceful men and women used the organization as an instrument for empowering Methodist Blacks.

Some have asked why did I feel committed to dissolving the Central Jurisdiction organization. I addressed that issue in the publication from the General Commission on Religion and Race, the Central Jurisdiction Recovery Project, which I understand copies are still available. But more recently, I addressed the issue in an autobiography which Magic Valley Publishers just released April 21<sup>st</sup>. The book is entitled *One Life, Three Professional Careers, My Civil Rights Story*. In the book I explain that in the 1960s I had a deep conviction that Methodists should seek, and I quote, "a fellowship in which all Methodists may enjoy the responsibility, the privilege, and the opportunity of making their contributions to our church's ministries of preaching, teaching, witnessing, and serving solely on the basis of their ability, their competence, their depth of understanding of the Christian faith, and of our Methodist heritage." The racially segregated Central Jurisdiction organization was totally incompatible with the kind of Christian fellowship that I believed Methodist Blacks should have. Thank you.

(applause)

ANGELLA CURRENT-FELDER: I am a fourth-generation Methodist. I am the daughter of The United Methodist Church's first female African American bishop,

*(applause)*

Leontine Turpeau Current Kelly and the daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Gloster Bryant Current of the New York Annual Conference. My name is Angella Current-Felder. My mother, Bishop Kelly, has often declared, "Racism has no business in the church of Jesus Christ."

*(applause)*

Without the Central Jurisdiction's being, we could not fully understand the steps needed to fully become United Methodists. The merger of The Evangelical United Brethren and The United Methodist Church in 1968, which eliminated the principle of mandatory segregation in the church known as the Central Jurisdiction, was an essential step which paved the way for The United Methodist Church today to continue battling its demons of privilege, prejudice, and racism. Without the memory of the Central Jurisdiction, we cannot know that it is possible to overcome a legacy of hatred and exclusion and move toward unity in Christ Jesus.

*(applause)*

HAWKINS: As we remember the Central Jurisdiction, we are also challenged to confront the reality that some of the concerns raised by African Americans during the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction, are concerns raised by African Americans and other people of color even today. Equity and compensation between comparable clergy of color and White clergy has not yet been realized. Annual conference nominations committees still disproportionately recommend lay and clergy leaders of color to serve in ministries related to ethnic and social concerns. The itineracy system continues to be a source of much institutional racism within the church. Even after forty years of integration, people of color are but one group still seeking full inclusion in the life of the church. In

honoring the Central Jurisdiction, we acknowledge the advances we have made and the challenges we still face as a church. We are grateful for the memories of those who sacrificed and survived the Central Jurisdiction who are willing to share their story and to be the memory that will urge us to seek the direction leading us to total community in Christ. Will all of those who lived, served, or were active in the dismantling of the Central Jurisdiction and the integration of the church, please stand?

*(applause)*

We honor you today for your life, your witness, and your stand as an ambassador of justice and reconciliation in the church.

*(music)*

*(applause)*

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you. Yes, yes please. Mic. 6.

MELE MAKA (California-Pacific): Bishop, I have a request that we replay the video with the sound so we can hear the story behind the pictures.

*(applause)*

BISHOP SORIANO: All right, I, I will try to test this conference now. Are you willing to approve that or no? Just, just a hand, a raise of hands, those who are willing, please raise your hands. [*hand vote, approved*] I think you have approved it. And so it has it play, continue with sound this time.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They may not be ready to do that.

BISHOP SORIANO: If they are not ready to do that, maybe later. When they are ready, then they will tell us. So you can proceed right now. Let us listen to a report on the Strengthening the Black Church Initiative by Bishop Keaton.

*(pause)*

BISHOP JONATHAN D. KEATON: Good morning, General Conference.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning.

BISHOP KEATON: I am Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton, resident bishop of the Michigan Area of The United Methodist Church.

*(applause)*

I stand before you as chair of our denomination's Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Initiative. Joining me on stage are two laity, Mrs. Cheryl Stevenson, National Coordinator of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and Dr. Carolyn Johnson, vice-chairperson of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and the Rev. Dr. Dorothy Watson Tatem, chair of the Evaluation Committee of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a program designed to assist United Methodist churches with predominantly Black congregations, congregants, to become more effective in mission and ministry. It does this by linking successful congregation resource centers with partner congregations that are in search of new ideas and revitalization. It is an initiative of our denomination empowered by the resurrected Christ challenging the belief that The United Methodist Church is dying. Now I want you to say a word with me, the word "transformational." Say that with me: "transformation." Now let's look at a short video of how this transformational model of ministry called Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is changing lives.

*(video presentation)*

*(applause)*

*(music)*

*(applause)*

REV. DOROTHY WATSON TATEM (Eastern Pennsylvania): Indeed my brothers and sisters, strengthening the Black church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is taking revitalization from the pew to the pavement. And lives are being transformed and changed in the name of Jesus, the risen Christ. Will you say “transformational” with me?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Transformational!

TATEM: Oh, let us do that again!

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Transformational!

TATEM: I am the Rev. Dr. Dorothy Watson Tatem, clergy delegate of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference and Chair of the Evaluation Committee for Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We are so excited about what God has done through this ministry called Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And we want you to take it with you. We want you to take with you the experience of the excitement and the commitment that you saw on this DVD. This is only one example of how the initiative has collaborated with our United Methodist general agencies.

This morning you were given a copy of *God Delivers Me*. *God Delivers Me* is a book that celebrates the successes of churches that have served as models for the initiative, and the successes of churches that have been revitalized and transformed by the initiative. The text, *God Delivers Me*, is a collaboration between the United Methodist Publishing House and Strengthening the Black Church. This is only one example of how Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has modeled how to effectively collaborate with general agencies. We thank God for the Rev. Dr. Fred Allen of the United Methodist Publishing House who helped to shape this book project to completion. *God Delivers Me* shows that Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a model for our entire denomination.

CHERYL STEVENSON: Good Morning General Conference. I am Cheryl Stevenson, National Coordinator for Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Say “transformational” with me.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Transformational!

STEVENSON: As I travel across the country on behalf of the initiative, I have personally seen congregations that have been turned around as a result of the partnerships that take place between our congregation resource centers and the partner churches that attend events wanting to be transformed to more effectively serve their communities. Over the years, 30 congregation resource centers have developed over 100 learning units sharing ideas and training tools with partner churches in rural, urban, and suburban areas across the five jurisdictions. Several non-partner churches have utilized this gift of a transformational learning model ministry to enhance ministries in their communities. There are approximately 2400 Black churches in the United States. Strengthening the Black Church has close to 100 partner churches enrolled in the initiative. Numerous partner churches have attended more than one training experience as they continue to focus on developing or enhancing their ministry plans. Our Faith Partners Initiative has reached Black churches in annual conferences where they are the only Black church.

There are many examples, but I want to lift up one example, a transformation from a partner church that has attended four training events. On the morning of September 29, 2005, God revealed a vision of starting a children’s academy for live transformation through Rev. Jessie Keeton of Memorial United Methodist Church in High Point, North Carolina. In January of 2006, a strategic planning team began praying, fasting, and planning and believing with God all things are possible. In the summer of 2006, Memorial held

their first music and arts camp. In the fall of the same year Memorial wanted to expand the vision and form a non-profit 501(c)(3). It was at this time that the Rev. Dr. Lilly Jones of the Western North Carolina Conference shared with Rev. Keeton what was happening at the St. Thomas Charge—a congregation resource center in Huger, South Carolina, that was in the process of building a recreational ministry in the rural areas of South Carolina. Through a covenant relationship with Rev. Marvin Taylor, Rev. Keeton utilized the 501(c)(3) handbook from St. Thomas Charge along with expertise from her community and congregation to begin writing their mission and by-laws. In July of 2007, Memorial received their official 501(c)(3) status for the Children’s Academy of Life Transformation, Incorporated. On November 1, Memorial received a \$130,000 community grant for the 21st Century Children’s Learning Center, an after-school tutorial program.

Can you say “transformational” with me?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Transformational.

(applause)

CAROLYN JOHNSON (North Indiana): Good Morning General Conference. I am Carolyn Johnson, a lay delegate from North Indiana Conference and I’m very honored - (inaudible)

(applause)

very honored to be vice-chair for the Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Sometime before I finish I am going to ask you to say what word?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Transformational.

JOHNSON: Right! And when I ask you to say it, I don’t want you to say it necessarily to prove that you have a high volume in your voice—we

can do that electronically—but what I want you to do is what only you can do, is to think about the time when you are clearly different now than you may have been in your past.

The bridging of past and future is the meaning of transformation; and so that when you say it and we move it from theme to task, it's not an exercise but indeed a way of calling, in very meaningful ways, what we hope to do. So as we look and make that bridge between what we've done in the initiative and what we hope to do, much of that, of course, is centered on transformation—both as theme and as task. So we hope that we have a very clear vision for 2009 and 2012 that would center on reaching as many churches as possible to continue to receive training, support, nurture, empowerment.

Oftentimes as we've talked during this General Conference, and as you've seen on the video the use of the word *force*, the use of the word—when we speak about movements—is to really re-live again the essence of what all movements are and what all general forces are. The ability to do things that are very creative, the ability to have social innovation for human beings to relate to each other in ways they haven't related previously, and the ability to have popular empowerment—not empowerment limited to one or two—but for the entire populace. And so we're looking at a model that's not just limited to an African American population, but it is indeed a gift for the entire church.

We will continue to partner with our general agencies, our seminaries, to provide awareness and resources and training available throughout the United Methodist connection as launched with the General Board of Discipleship as a home base, and working—continuing to work—with the Division on Young People's ministry to strengthen ministries to young people.

So now I'm going to ask you to say 'nuclear physicist' with me.

Well, you know I don't really mean that. Say 'transformational.'

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS:  
Transformational.

JOHNSON: Thank you. So as we continue this process of transforming The United Methodist Church—as though we could do that alone—we are all about this business of transformation. Our theme, as it is, is, of course, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. So what would this initiative look like as we move forward? Of course, it means new training in areas of worship, of leadership, of faith formation, of community outreach, of visionary planning, and of administration. But it also means that we have to study and explore models and programs that strengthen the participation, in very genuine ways, of youth and young adults in the work and life of both partner congregations and our congregation resource centers. It means making the connection and understanding what does it mean to be African, to be African American, and what are those connections and those commonalities? How do we strengthen the relationship throughout the entire African Diaspora—whether that be lodged and situated in North America, in the Caribbean, in Europe, or in the continent of Africa? We hope, then, to also advocate and support new church development across the denomination. So when we say "transformational," it really is about anchoring the work that we have to do in a great intersection of what we had at this conference with where we hope to go.

This morning you've talked about the residency of hope. We are very clear that the residency of hope is not marked by a street address. It's not marked by a mailbox. It's not marked by a zip code. Instead it's located in the belief, in the theology and practice that Christ is indeed our center for hope, for healing, and wholeness. We hope that what this will mean for our future is very meaningful differences in the utiliza-

tion of creative and innovative strategies that enable us to build on success, the ability to connect in very true and meaningful ways the connection so that it is collaborative and accessible to all its members, and by that way utilizing a method of transformation that truly delivers on the promise. And, finally, to have a very results-focused mechanism for measuring the impact of our work—that's the ultimate evaluation. So, transformation is theme and task, transformation is prayer and possibility, transformation is the residency of hope in all our lives. Thank you.

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you, Bishop Keaton and your team. Yes, yes sir. You may go to mic. 9.

JAY BRIM (Southwest Texas): Bishop—Bishop, I voted earlier for the amendment to today's agenda and I now wish to move to reconsider that vote. If I get a second, I'll speak to it.

BISHOP SORIANO: All right.

BRIM: Bishop, I think many of us heard the amendment that was made for today's agenda with some relief, thinking that this would give us some more time in our committee meetings and we were not fully aware of the implications of moving the items that were set for today's legislative agenda. And I've now been told by a member of the agenda committee on our delegation that it included a number of items that must meet that 5 o'clock deadline tomorrow afternoon. Based on that concern I would say to the body, I think we need to reconsider that action and allow the agenda to be played out this morning so that those items can move to the Connectional Table and GCFA for review. And I would hope that we could get a further explanation from the stage of those items for the benefit of the body.

(pause)

BISHOP SORIANO: All right. Are any other remarks against this—

this motion to reconsider? All right. Yes?

DIXIE K. BREWSTER (Kansas West): We are in the wonderful committee of Church and Society No. 2 and we have 170 petitions to look at and we need time.

BISHOP SORIANO: All right. I would request the secretary of the General Conference to say a word about this matter.

FITZGERALD REIST: Thank you, Bishop. We, on your action earlier, began the process of trying to contact translators to be in the rooms, but I have to tell you at this point that I do not know if we will have adequate numbers of interpreters to be there at 10:30. We are working on it. Many are in the way—on the way in. There is also concern about whether we have our recorders in the room to work with you. So with it—there may be some delay before you are able to begin effectively to use this time as we try to reassemble the resources that are needed.

BISHOP SORIANO: Thank you. Anybody else who would like to speak to this matter? Then we are ready to take a vote on this reconsideration. If you are ready to do that, and if you would like to reconsider, you press “1” and if you would disapprove that you press “2.” And you may start to vote when the lights appear. Now. [*Yes, 542; No, 264*]

(*pause*)

It is reconsidered. You simply need a majority for this matter. I may since it is reconsidered, what is your pleasure at this time? It is before you now as amended. Yes. Brother Charles, how do you do one?

CHARLES S G BOAYUE (Detroit): Bishop Soriano, I request that somebody from the Agenda and Calendar Committee or the secretary of General Conference advise the General Conference on whether those who have been requested to now come and assist the legislative com-

mittees can be turned around effectively and what this will mean as we choose a direction now. Is it better now, based on the resources you are seeking to align with people moving, that we go ahead and sustain the earlier decision or not?

BISHOP SORIANO: All right, that is in order. Anybody now from the agenda committee who could respond to that?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The coordinator of the calendar?

BISHOP SORIANO: The coordinator of the calendar, yes.

SUSAN BRUMBAUGH: Unless Youngsook wants to speak, we’re trying to get people moved but we don’t know whether we can make that happen. But the people we need to hold the plenary are here now so we can make the plenary happen now. We don’t know how long it will take us to make the Legislative Committees happen. The other point we want to make is that the original proposed agenda that was printed this morning did not remove Legislative Committee time. It simply moved the morning session to the afternoon and combined them. You have as much Legislative Committee time as was originally planned by the program committee. All we did was add a plenary session and reduce the lunch and dinner breaks. So, I hope that helps.

BISHOP SORIANO: Yes, mic 3.

CHERYL JEFFERSON BELL (Kansas West): I wonder if it would be helpful for the conference secretary to meet with the chairs of the Legislative Committee to determine how many resources you need. Because the local church has completed meeting in committee.

BISHOP SORIANO: Secretary, can you respond to that?

REIST: I would be happy to do so. The issue, of course, is timing and if I might suggest that we come back into plenary if you would, forgive me—I’m not trying to tell you what to do, but I’m giving you the best guidance that I can at this

point—if we come back into plenary for a period of time we can assess what resources we have available for legislative sessions, but I simply cannot answer the question of the resources available *at this time* because I simply don’t know. And I’m willing to meet with the committee chairs to assess the need.

BISHOP SORIANO: All right. Yes, yes sir, you, please go to mic 6.

(*pause*)

What is before us now is the agenda as amended.

(*pause*)

Please, mic., please. There is no sound. Maybe it’s best for you to transfer.

SAMUEL (DUNCAN) D. MCMILLAN IV (North Carolina): Would it be in order to make a substitute motion to readopt the original agenda?

BISHOP SORIANO: That is in order, sir. Yes, yes.

MCMILLAN: All right, oh, then I make the motion to adopt the original agenda.

BISHOP SORIANO: Any second to that? All right, it’s before you now. Any further debate? Yes, yes sir. Go to mic 11.

L. JAMES (JIM) BANKSTON (Texas): I’d like to speak in favor of that motion. We have—

BISHOP SORIANO: Yes, to adopt the former agenda?

BANKSTON: Yes.

BISHOP SORIANO: Yes.

BANKSTON: The original agenda that was printed for us today.

BISHOP SORIANO: Yes.

BANKSTON: Yes. We have items that we have to complete, both approving committee reports here and perfecting Legislative Committee reports within our legislative committees—both items have to be done, many today. And it seems, given the