

## Taking the Message Home

As a member of the annual conference, you will probably be giving a report to your congregation or church council about what happened there. Use this worksheet for taking and organizing notes during annual conference regarding key ideas, discussion, votes and so forth as they relate to these topics.

### Vision Pathways

Important routes for fulfilling God's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. These pathways are being emphasized throughout the denomination.

**Teach the Wesleyan way of reaching and making disciples of Jesus Christ**

**Strengthen clergy and lay leadership**

**Transform existing congregations**

**Develop new congregations**

**End racism as we authentically expand racial/ethnic ministry**

**Eliminate poverty in community with the poor**

**Reach and transform the lives of the new generation of children**

### Three Simple Rules

The General Rules have guided the Methodist movement since its beginnings. They provide the structure that distinguishes the Wesleyan way of reaching and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Do no harm**

**Do good**

**Stay in love with God**

### Signs of Hope

Where do you see hope in your annual conference?

### Areas of Focus

The general agencies are collaborating together in these specific arenas to support the mission of the church.

1. Developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world
2. Creating new places for new people by starting congregations and renewing existing ones
3. Engaging in ministry with the poor
4. Stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally

# A HOPEFUL FUTURE

**Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World**

## A Word from the Council of Bishops

Your Council of Bishops is united in its commitment to lead the church in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We invite you as clergy and lay leaders of The United Methodist Church to join with us in reclaiming the methods that enabled the Methodist movement to transform both individual lives and society.

The Episcopal Address is the Council of Bishops' prayer for The United Methodist Church and for the world. As this prayer was being shaped by the entire Council, ideas began to emerge about how its message could be extended beyond the walls of the Fort Worth Convention Center.

Anticipating that many delegations are looking for ways to incorporate ideas introduced in the address into their upcoming annual conference sessions, this leaflet has been prepared. We recognize that annual conference themes and agendas are already set, so the suggestions are things that can be done within the scheduled time for General Conference reports, as displays, in handouts, as part of worship, and during those bits of time that sometimes become available in the midst of reports, discussion and voting.

As is evident at this General Conference, our general agencies have entered a new era of collaboration. They have already produced a variety of resources that support the church's mission through the vision pathways, areas of focus, and other ministries. You can expect to see more of these resources as the quadrennium continues.

We recognize that while our general agencies have an important role in supporting the mission of the church, the vast majority of our human, material, and financial resources are located at the local church and annual conference level. As the *Book of Discipline* says, "local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs." We pray that as you return to your places of ministry our Wesleyan DNA will be encoded in your soul and expressed in your words and actions that you might do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God.

*+ Gregory V. Palmer*

President, Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

## Taking the Hope Home

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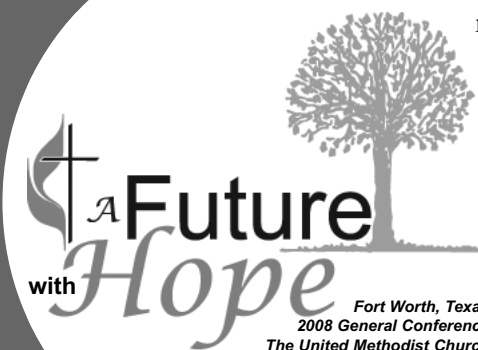
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## Key Resources

The following books were referenced during the Episcopal Address. They can be ordered through Cokesbury and will be available at Cokesbury bookstores at Annual Conference.

• *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Bishop Robert Schnase. Published by Abingdon Press. ISBN:978068764540. *Focus on the Five Practices: A Congregation Wide Initiative* will be available in August and includes a leadership manual, video, worship media and small-group resources.

• *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living* by Bishop Rueben P. Job. Published by Abingdon Press. ISBN: 9780687649662. A five-segment video, "Three Simple Rules: An Interview with Rueben P. Job," is also available and suitable for small-group study. ISBN:9780687654741.

United Methodist Communications is providing complete coverage of General Conference events. News coverage including print stories, press releases, video and audio clips, and photos can be accessed at [www.GC2008.umc.org](http://www.GC2008.umc.org).

A DVD with highlights from the presentations of Thursday, April 24, as well as delegates' responses to those presentations is available for a price of \$50. Refer to item number GC08-01. It can be ordered at [www.umcom.org/store](http://www.umcom.org/store) or by calling 1-888-346-3862.

All delegates have received a copy of *A Year with John Wesley* published by Discipleship Resources and available through Cokesbury. ISBN:9780881775501.

Resources from "The United Methodist Way: A Convocation of Extended Cabinets" are available at [www.gbod.org/extendedcabinet](http://www.gbod.org/extendedcabinet).

## Information to Transformation

Research has shown that in order for information to become committed to memory, it is helpful for a speaker to pause every six to eight minutes and provide an opportunity to process what has been presented. The processing time does not have to be long to be effective. As the opportunities present themselves during annual conference, consider asking people to turn to the person next to them and discuss for 60 seconds one of the following questions.

- How was God's grace evident in what we just heard?
- What made me hopeful about this presentation?
- How does what we just heard embody doing good?
- What will I include in my prayer life as a result of this presentation/discussion/vote?
- What have I experienced today that gives hope to the world?
- How does what we have just heard avoid doing harm?
- What would make this proposal more radical in hospitality?
- How does this discussion/proposal/report demonstrate extravagant generosity?
- Where have I seen risk-taking mission and service evident?

### Three Simple Rules Do No Harm Do Good Stay in Love with God

Each General Conference delegate has received a copy of *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living* by Rueben Job.

You may want to consider providing all members of your annual conference with a "Three Simple Rules" bookmark. This bookmark lists the three rules and includes the prayer printed below, which could be used throughout the annual conference sessions.

The bookmarks come in packages of 25 with a retail price of \$4. Available through Cokesbury. ISBN: 9780687646852

*Teach us today to do no harm, to do good, and assist us so that we may stay in loving relationship with you and our neighbor. Help us today to be an answer to another's prayer so that we may be one of your signs of hope in the world you love.*

### Covenant Cards

The "Three Simple Rules" covenant cards that were signed during the Episcopal Address are available for purchase in packages of one hundred for \$9 plus shipping. You can order them online at [www.umcom.org/store](http://www.umcom.org/store) or by calling 1-888-346-3862. Refer to item GC08-CC.

## 10 Ideas for Annual Conference

These ideas can be incorporated into General Conference reports, displays, breaks, and transitions during the annual conference session.

1. Periodically throughout the conference do "stand-ups" that relate to the General Rules, Seven Vision Pathways, and Areas of Focus. For example, ask everyone to stand up:
  - who has been involved in starting a new church or faith community.
  - who has purchased a net for "Nothing But Nets."
  - who has started a ministry in the last year for community children.
  - who has attended a leadership training event.
  - who has invited someone to church in the last two months.
  - who has been involved in a congregational prayer ministry.
  - who has encouraged someone under the age of 25 to consider ordained ministry.
  - who has been involved in a ministry to eliminate poverty.
2. Post large signs with the Seven Vision Pathways and during breaks invite people to write ways that their congregation is responding to these pathways.
3. Invite people to bring photographs of signs of hope and assemble them into a montage that can be projected as people gather for sessions.
4. During a break, encourage everyone to shake the hand of someone under the age of 35.
5. Give everyone a copy of the handout on page 4 of this leaflet. Periodically pause for a few moments and ask people to make a note in the appropriate space of something they want to report back to their local church.
6. Show segments of the General Conference April 24 highlights DVD (see ordering info on page 2). This could be done as part of the General Conference report or set up as a display.
7. Give each annual conference member a "Three Simple Rules" bookmark (see ordering info on page 2) and start each day at annual conference with the prayer found on the bookmark.
8. Conclude annual conference or the General Conference reporting time by inviting each annual conference member to sign a covenant card (see page 2 for ordering).
9. Encourage those giving annual conference reports to include ways that the General Rules are being lived out.
10. During breaks, project slides of statements, stories, quotes, and statistics from the State of the Church Report. Some are given in the right hand column, many others are available at [www.umc.org/state-ofthechurch](http://www.umc.org/state-ofthechurch).

### State of the Church

**97% of clergy and 96% of laity say God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are extremely important in their Christian journey.**

**80% of clergy and 76% of laity say that private and public prayer is extremely important.**

**57% of laity and 42% of clergy say they are "extremely hopeful" for the future of the denomination.**

**74% of laity and clergy rank caring for children at risk as extremely important.**

**64% of laity and 59% of clergy believe that clergy demonstrate excellence in equipping lay leaders to help with spirituality of the church.**

**35% of United Methodist congregations consistently report growth.**

**75% of clergy and 80% of laity agree strongly that it is extremely important to attract more young adults under the age of 30 to the church.**

From "An Invitation to an Upright, Charitable and Discreet Conversation: State of the Church 2007."