

Town Hall Meeting, April 17, 2007

Remarks by The Rev. Larry Hollon, General Secretary of United Methodist Communications

LARRY HOLLON:

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

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

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

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

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

It will address issues of access to health care and advocacy, with an emphasis on developing health systems that meet the needs of all people. The broken health care system in the United States directly affects the uninsured in the U.S. and it affects the delivery of health services beyond the borders of the United States. The recruitment of professionals from the developing world and the foreign assistance provided to strengthen national health care systems are directly related to the delivery of health care in the United States. The United Methodist Church has expressed its desire for health care for all, and this initiative is predicated upon redressing policies that negatively affect the health and well-being of people globally.

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

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

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

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

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

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