

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

**Wednesday Evening,  
April 23, 2008**

**BISHOP JANICE RIGGLE**

HUIE: Well, it's the property of the house now, I think you have to bring it back. I mean, since this is the rules, I think you have to bring this back. All right, yes, please go ahead and speak to it Sarah.

SARAH STEELE: Well, we've been talking about the inclusive nature of our church and the impact that young adults and youth would have on our church as a whole and I just believe that we need to be as inclusive as possible and friendly.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. Then that amendment's referred to the committee on rules and it'll come back to us tomorrow. All right, thank you.

JANET STEPHENSON: We need copies of all of these amendments.

BISHOP HUIE: Yes, those of you who are making these amendments, they need to be in writing to the secretary. Yes sir, right back here? I think your closest mic. is 9. Just slightly behind you. All right and then I'll ask if there is any substance of debate on this or conversation and check to see if the body is ready to vote. Yes sir, mic. 9.

### *Proposed Parliamentarian*

**BILL SMALLWOOD** (Mississippi): This is Bill Smallwood from Mississippi. I move, on p. 62, I made the deletion of line 945 through 955.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, stay right there. That is properly before us because this is an addition tonight that's coming in here so this is where we want to have some discussion. Is there a second? This is an amendment by deletion. Is there a second? Yes, second. All right, if you could speak to it, sir?

SMALLWOOD: I just believe we've worked all right through the years without parliamentarians, the people who are here know parliamentary law.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you very much. Does someone—this is before us for discussion. That's . . . the amendment is for deletion and a speech in favor of deletion. Does anyone wish to speak against deletion. Yes, right there. If you'll go to mic . . . I think 8 is your closest mic.

**FREDERICK K. BREWINGTON** (New York): Thank you, Bishop. I believe the importance of a parliamentarian can be underscored when we look back to Church and Society Committee last year—excuse me, in 2004. There were a number of amendments, which were purposed in the legislative committee. There became layer upon layer of parliamentary procedure which needed to be untangled, and the ability to do that with the help of parliamentarians who were versed both in *Robert's Rules* and versed in how to deal with levels of amendments made the process one that moved it quickly and finally got the questions to the body. So therefore, this is a speech clearly against.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. All right, so we've had one speech in favor of deletion, one speech against deletion. The—yes, here's a speech in favor of deletion. Yes, sir. Right there, with the green, holding up the green piece of paper. Go to mic. 9, I think, is your closest one.

**MIKE CHILDS** (Mississippi): Thank you, Bishop. One significant thing about this is that it will give a great increase in power to bishops. It's the policy that bishops do not have a vote and we're going to give more power than having a vote to bishops by making them the parliamentarian authorities. So it's more than just a question of whether we have a parliamentarian or not, it's a mat-

ter of how much influence the bishops will have on all that is done.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. Speech in favor of the motion to delete. Here's a red card right here. Yes sir, please. I think mic. 2 or maybe 5. Two's—yeah, go to 5. We'll turn on 5 please.

**ALEX PLUMB** (Detroit): Thank you, Bishop. I think we need to be holistic in how we consider the membership of this body. We are a very diverse group. Many international delegates. Many young delegates. Delegates who aren't well aware of all of the nuances involved in parliamentarian procedures. So, I urge careful reflection in how we want to be inclusive and support an aura of dialogue among one another. The theme of this conference is hope and holy conferencing. So let's, let's try and do this together. Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. We've heard two speeches for, two speeches against. Are we, is there more that needs to be said here? All right, you're ready to vote? We've got a question. Yes, sir.

**DANIEL IVEY-SOTO** (New Mexico): Bishop, in the terms of the form of vote, I'm looking at Rule 39. And looking at lines 45 through, 945 through 959, 55. These lines are actually a proposed amendment to the rules coming from the committee.

BISHOP HUIE: Correct.

IVEY-SOTO: Under Rule 39, a proposed amendment to the rules to be approved requires a 2/3 vote. To flip it the opposite way then, to give effect to the motion that was made on the question before us, if it would receive more than 35 percent, if it would receive, basically—now I'm confusing myself. It's not, it's not a motion to delete what's in here. It's a motion of whether or not we want to approve what is being proposed by the commission, which requires a 2/3 vote.

BISHOP HUIE: His, the, the gentleman's original motion was a motion to delete the proposed new item. And it does not require a 2/3 vote. This is part of the regular body. It came in; they've offered a new rule. He moved to delete what is new. And there've been two speeches for and two speeches against so we're going to vote. It'll be a majority vote. And about should this item be deleted from, I mean the proposal that lines 945 to 955. If you vote to sustain the motion, which is to delete, then, then this goes away. If you vote against his motion, then this item remains.

IVEY-SOTO: And Bishop, I guess where I take exception with that though is that what is proposed in here is not what is, it is what is being proposed.

BISHOP HUIE: Yes, I know.

IVEY-SOTO: To approve it would require a 2/3 vote.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, it is, it's the sense of the, if I may say, the parliamentarians up here, that it does not require, it's a majority vote, and that it is as I have explained it here. So, unless the body wants to challenge the rule of the chair, we're going to move forward because I think we might be ready to vote. Are you ready to vote? No, we got a question over here. Mic. 1.

CAROLYN JOHNSON (North Indiana): Thank you, Bishop. I have a question. And it relates to the last sentence. And it would be helpful if the commission could respond. At the last sentence where it says "at the invitation of the presiding officer." I understand that oftentimes the chair may get in trouble and need some parliamentary help. But, however, if the chair does not invite the parliamentarian to provide advice, was it your thinking that the parliamentarian could do that on their own? Or if the chair did not invite them, then the parliamentarian would basically be mute.

STEPHENSON: We talked about that a lot. And we felt that it is not

the prerogative of the parliamentarian to step in, that the, the parliamentarian would only speak if requested by the chair of the committee.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. I don't see any other hands. Janet, you have a right to speak to this if you choose to do so.

STEPHENSON: The reason this rule is included is because at the Pittsburgh General Conference there was a motion from the floor to put parliamentarians in the legislative committees. So this is the, the origin of, of this material.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. Now, we're approaching the vote. And remember that the motion before us is to delete or strike lines—the proposed lines 945 through 955. So, if you are in favor of the motion then you will vote yes. If you are not in favor of the motion, and therefore would leave this item in, you will vote no. Are you with me? All right, I would please vote yes for the motion to delete, in favor of deletion. Vote no if you want it to remain. Please vote when the timer appears. [Yes, 217; No, 662]

All right, the item remains. The motion to delete is defeated. This item remains in the main body. So, we are now back on the original motion from the committee which, Janet, give us the exact, it starts with p. 60, Item E, am I correct?

STEPHENSON: Yes, Line Item 4.

BISHOP HUIE: And takes us all the way through—

STEPHENSON: To p. 64.

#### *Election of Subcommittee Chairs*

BISHOP HUIE: P. 64. Is there anymore, there's questions back there. All right, would one of you go, right here, the gentleman, if you would ask your question.

It's not on. Mic., I can't read the mic. number.

CLAYTON OLIPHINT (North Texas): No. 10.

BISHOP HUIE: No. 10.

OLIPHINT: Question. The top of p. 63, this represents a change from past practice.

STEPHENSON: Yes.

OLIPHINT: Formerly, the subcommittee chairs were selected by the subcommittees. Is that correct?

STEPHENSON: No, formerly they were appointed by the chair of the committee, of the, of the full committee.

OLIPHINT: I would like to propose an amendment.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, let's hear your amendment.

OLIPHINT: Line 962, subcommittee chairs shall be elected by ballot by the legislative subcommittee, strike plenary, with due consideration then to gender, age, ethnicity, geography, clergy and lay, and young adults. We have, and if could get a second I'll speak to that.

BISHOP HUIE: Is there a second? All right, I hear a second. Could you speak to it, please?

OLIPHINT: Yes, I believe the, the work of the subcommittees is very much like a family. Sometimes families fight, but family work during these first few days of general conference. And I believe that giving the subcommittees the ability to self-determine their leadership will add to the strength of those subcommittees. And I believe it will also help facilitate the plenary sessions—the legislative committee plenary sessions—without necessarily getting bogged in the voting process and without sacrificing sensitivity to diversity.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. That item of course will go back to the rules committee and it'll come back tomorrow and we'll try to handle it early since it's a time-sensitive matter. Thank you. All right. Anything else, are we good here? No? There's a question here. Go to mic. 5 please.

WE HYUN CHANG (New England): Bishop, I have a question

about the process. You just used the language of that the motion is defeated. I'm wondering whether we can change that to the approved or disapproved. We don't, we want to get away with any war-related languages.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, your point is very well taken and I will, I will make every effort to, to use better language here. Well-taken. All right, (*applause*) all right, all right. Let's, all right so once before, are you ready to vote? No, there's still one more in the back. Yes sir, if you would go back there to 10.

DENNY WHITE (Western North Carolina): Thank you, Chair.

BISHOP HUIE: Can you speak a little louder or closer to the mic.?

WHITE: Yes, thank you. With respect to the sentence which Mrs. Stephenson added on 955 that the matter of the parliamentarians would take effect at the next General Conference, I'd like to have a ruling from the chair as to whether it is appropriate for this body to adopt a rule that would be binding upon the 2012 General Conference.

(*pause*)

BISHOP HUIE: All right it would be our understanding that the body could choose to adopt this tonight and then when it comes to 2012 at the General Conference, again they would have this in front of them, but the value that I think from the committee is that it would allow them to make plans, then at 2012 on the opening session its an order of the day to deal with the rules and they would make that decision at that time, but in the meantime the plans would have been made, so it would be my understanding that that is in order, just as all these are which can be changed then by the subsequent General Conference at its own pleasure.

All right, I think the body is ready to vote here. All right, the items before you are p. 60 Item E starting at

line 904 and continuing all the way through p. 65, and you have heard the discussion here, if you are in favor of approving these items that have come to you all of these changes, would you please vote "1" for yes, "2" for no, please vote when the timer appears.

(*pause*)

All right you are sustained, the committee sustained here, and these items are adopted.

OK, here we go to the next one.

JANET STEPHENSON: Bishop, I move Item 9, which would be IX on p. 65, Delegate's Expenses.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, and that continues through p. 67, correct? Is there any substantial change here?

STEPHENSON: No, well you can see the bold in terms of the adjustment.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, is there any discussion? I think, seeing none, we will be prepared to vote, if you would approve these rule change, these changes, proposed changes in Item 9, from pp. middle of 65 to middle of 67, please vote "1" for yes, "2" for no, please vote when the timer appears.

(*pause*)

All right, Item 9 is approved, thank you.

STEPHENSON: Bishop, I move Item 10, that would be an X on pp. 67, Material to be Included in the *Book of Discipline*, and the effective time of material that would take effect that are based on constitutional amendments, that would be from line 1078 through line 1112.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, any discussion here? There's a question, yes sir, mic. 6 I think.

DUNCAN MCMILLAN (North Carolina): North Carolina Conference. I have a.

BISHOP HUIE: Could you repeat your name once more?

MCMILLAN: Duncan McMillan, North Carolina Conference. I have a question. We recently just voted for the approval of section 9. Was that including section 8?

(*pause*)

STEPHENSON: I think I skipped that, I think I overlooked that.

BISHOP HUIE: You think what?

STEPHENSON: I overlooked section 8.

BISHOP HUIE: Now I just thank you so much. I think you are correct. We did not do section 8. We went past that.

STEPHENSON: I just want to get this done. (*laughter*)

BISHOP HUIE: All right. Let's ... this study here. Keep going.

STEPHENSON: Would you like to go back and pick up 8?

BISHOP HUIE: Let's pick up 8.

STEPHENSON: OK. We are going to pick up 8.

BISHOP HUIE: Let's pick up 8. Thank you.

STEPHENSON: Thank you for pointing that out.

BISHOP HUIE: Thank you for your presentation.

STEPHENSON: All right. Some of you are awake. That's good. OK, let's go back to p. 64. Look at Roman numeral eight, which would be eight in the middle of the page. It is proposal involving expenditure of unbudgeted funds beginning on line 1000 and going to 65 to line 1026. I move the adoption.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. This item is before you. Any discussion? I don't see any. So if you would approve item 8, proposal involving expenditure of unbudgeted funds, please vote "1" for yes, "2" for no. Please vote when the light appears. Timer appears and if I do this enough times, I'll get it.

(*pause*)

BISHOP HUIE: All right, Roman numeral eight is approved, and

thanks to the gentleman for calling that to our attention. All right, Janet?

STEPHENSON: I think I moved Item 10, Delegates Expenses on p. 65. Did we adopt that? I don't think we did.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, now we're gonna go back, so she's moving it again, so just keep us in order here. So we're on Item 10 on p. 65, line 1028, and continuing all the way through—where do you wanna stop?

STEPHENSON: To p. 67.

BISHOP HUIE: To p. 67, line 1076.

STEPHENSON: Line 1076. Yeah.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, yes, I see a card. A yellow card for a question. Mic. 6.

KELSEY TAYLOR (South Carolina): Kelsey Taylor, South Carolina Conference. I want to inquire where Section 9 is located because on both p. 65 and on p. 67 are Items 10.

STEPHENSON: The crossovers are kind of confusing. If the "I" on line 1028 has a crossover, which would be—you're right.

(Laughter)

No.

BISHOP HUIE: The secretary—

STEPHENSON: No.

BISHOP HUIE: —back here's telling me it's a typo.

STEPHENSON: No, it is, it is Item 9. The printing is, has been very confusing. And then Item 10 would be on p. 67. OK?

TAYLOR: Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, we're gonna stay—thank you for that—we're gonna work with the line numbers to make sure that we stay in order. So what's before us is on p. 65, lines 1028, through p. 67, lines 1076. And so if you can work with us on that, thank you for calling that to our attention. All right, any discussion on these? All right, if you would approve these changes in

those line numbers, please vote one for yes, two for no. Please vote when the timer appears.

(pause)

[849, yes; ? no] All right, then that, that section passes; and we'll continue here.

Let, let me ask the body if you'll help us here up front. If you would give us your name and conference twice, we're having a little bit of difficulty up here in getting this distinctly. Your chair is actually supposed to repeat your name and conference back; and rather than me repeating when I'm having trouble hearing, as we all are, if you could just say it twice slowly, that's really a . . . kind of move us along a little more quickly and identify you. So just a word to the body. You can help us here. Thank you.

All right, Janet.

STEPHENSON: OK. Hang on. We're just about through the Plan of Order, and then we'll get to the rules. Oh boy! OK. Let's look on p. 67, Roman numeral 10, which would be X, and this is material to be included in the *Book of Discipline*, beginning with line no. 1078 down to p. 68, 1112. This is to help the Correlation and Review Committee as well as the publications and the *Discipline*, so it really is an enabling piece of legislation to help them out.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. All right, any discussion here? Seeing none, I would invite you to please vote if you're in favor. Press "1" for yes, "2" for no. Please vote when the timer appears. [Yes, 855; No, 16] All right, Item 10 is adopted. Thank you.

*DCA Placement on Delegates Desk*

STEPHENSON: OK, let's try to move the last three item in the Plan of Organization together. There's Item, Distribution to the Desks of the Delegates, Item 11, XI, on p., the line would be 1114. The second item

is 12, XII, Distribution of Unofficial Material. And on the next page, p. 70, Reports to Be Mailed Before General Conference. The only changes there would be at the bottom of p. 68, Distribution to the Desks of Delegates, line 1115. It's just a, really an editorial change. After the first day only, the *Daily Christian Advocate* shall be placed on the desks of seated delegates.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They can't hear you.

STEPHENSON: We can't hear, oh, we can't me. With additional copies available for first lay reserve, from each delegation. The way it's worded now, it sort of implies that there's going to be copies available at the desks for delegates who are not seated. So just change that to say, "After the first day, only the *Daily Christian Advocate* shall be placed on the desks of seated delegates, with additional copies available for first clergy and first lay reserve delegates from each delegation. They can obtain copies from *DCA*. They get vouchers and can, can get those—

BISHOP HUIE: All right.

STEPHENSON: —so—

BISHOP HUIE: So you—

STEPHENSON: —that's an editorial correction.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, so you're—

STEPHENSON: All right.

BISHOP HUIE: —adding an editorial correction here, adding the word *available*—

STEPHENSON: So, Bishop, I move Items XI, 11, Distribution to the Desks of Delegates, 12, XII, on p. 69, Distribution of Unofficial Material, and XIII, 13, on p. 70, Reports to be Mailed Before General Conference.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, these are before you. Is there any additional discussion? I see a yellow card. If you'll go to mic 11. Question?

JOE W. KILPATRICK (North Georgia): My name is Joe Kil-

patrick, North Georgia Conference. That's Joe Kilpatrick, laity, North Georgia Conference.

BISHOP HUIE: Thank you.

*Refusing Demeaning Petitions*

KILPATRICK: I wish to move that we add a paragraph at line 1165. This is the section about the distribution of materials before the General Conference. I move that we add a paragraph that says, "The United Methodist Church is engaged in Holy Conferencing, therefore any petition, resolution, or legislative proposal which censures or condemns a named individual or demeans that individual's character or integrity shall be out of order and shall not be printed, considered, or acted upon by the General Conference or by a legislative committee."

BISHOP HUIE: All right. That's a change that within an amendment, which would then go to the Rules Committee if there's a second. Is there a second? All right, I heard a second. And so, Janet—

STEPHENSON: Yes, we've got it.

BISHOP HUIE: —that item then would go to Rules Committee for discussion, and you—

STEPHENSON: Yes.

BISHOP HUIE: —can bring that back to us.

STEPHENSON: Please give a copy to a page to bring to us.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, all these amendments need to be copied up here. All right. All right, is there—I'm sorry?

*(unintelligible)*

Oh, I'm sorry. I should be giving you a, the right to speak. I beg your pardon for not, I saw the card. Yes, sir, could you speak to that please, to why that's important? So the body can hear why you made the amendment.

KILPATRICK: Friends, I've been a delegate to the General Conference since 1988. This is the first time that

I can remember seeing petitions which name and slander fellow United Methodist laity. We have in our *Discipline*, paragraph 2702.3, which provides for procedures for laity who are perceived to have committed chargeable offenses that we listed in that paragraph. Paragraph 2714 provides for the trial of lay member when conferencing and counseling have not been satisfactory. We should not expect a legislative committee to act as a judge and jury while omitting the defendant and the plaintiff; and we should not allow charges to be published in our *Advanced Daily Advocate*, publicly circulated by our General Conference procedures. We should never permit, we would never permit this for clergy—we don't permit it; and we should not allow it for laity. Clearly we need to instruct and direct our legislative committees who are not judge and jury; and we need to stop the distribution, the printing, and the distribution of this type material. Please support this motion. Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. Thank you very much. All right. That'll go to the Rules Committee. Now what's before you are those three Roman numerals: 11, 12, and 13. Is there addition—yes, another question. I was going to the gentleman in the back. If you'll hold steady with me, I'll come over to you. At mic. 11.

. . . Yes, another question? I was going to the gentleman in the back. If you'll hold steady with me, I'll come over to you. At mic. 11. I see you, and I'll come right over there to you in just a moment.

Yes, sir.

GEORGE G. HOWARD (West Ohio): Bishop.

BISHOP HUIE: And again.

*Deadline for Submitting Petitions*

HOWARD: George Howard, laity, West Ohio Conference.

BISHOP HUIE: Thanks.

HOWARD: Line 1156. I move to delete the 180 and retain the original number of 150, and if I have a second, I'll explain why.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, is there a second? Yes.

HOWARD: I chaired the legislative committee for the General Board of Discipleship, legislation and evaluation. The timeline for us to get our work done so that it is presented to this body in a way in which we can understand it, this really backs up that work another 30 or 60 days. It's unhelpful to the boards and agencies that are trying to finish the work of one General Conference and get ready for the next, for us to understand it.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. That is a speech in favor of—it's really a deletion of the proposed change from 180 and a return to the original rule, which was 150 days, so that's a speech in favor of deleting the proposed change. Are there other people who wish to speak to this?

*(pause)*

I don't see anyone, so, Janet, you have an opportunity to speak, and we'll vote.

STEPHENSON: Bishop, this number was changed at the request of the publishing house. The back-up time is unfortunate, but for them to receive the material and then do all the translations and get the material mailed out, it takes an unbelievable amount of time, but that's the reason for the change.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. I think the body is ready to vote. Remember, you are voting on the deletion of the proposed change, so that if you wish to delete the proposed change, which would leave you with the original, you would vote yes. If you are not, then you vote no, and the change remains. All right, please vote yes—"1" for yes, "2" for no, please vote when the timer appears. [*Yes, 366; No, 470*]

*(pause)*

BISHOP HUIE: All right. The proposal to change this back to the original is not sustained, and so the committee's recommendation of 180 days remains.

All right, now, these items are before you, oh, mic. 9, yes sir. Right back there. Thank you. And again. Thank you.

*Proposal for Digital Advance DCA*

BRYAN D. COLLIER (Mississippi): I would like to propose an addition at line 1154.

BISHOP HUIE: 1154.

COLLIER: At the end of that sentence, that reads, "Such reports shall be printed in the same size and style as the *Daily Christian Advocate* and be punched for binding," I would add, "or, at the request of the delegate, be provided a digital copy only." And if I have a second, I'd like to speak to that.

BISHOP HUIE: Is there a second? I see a second. Please speak to it.

COLLIER: The sheer cost of printing and postage of the materials we receive as delegates would be more than enough to pay for digital copies for delegates who request those only. I understand that it would not be a cost savings or effective for us to provide both a print and a digital copy, but a digital copy only would make the material both searchable and would, in the interest of being more green, save much paper and many trees, no doubt.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you very much. Now that item goes to the Rules Committee, and they will come back with a recommendation. All right, thank you, now let's go to—let's see if you are ready to vote on these items that are before us, items starting on p. 68, that would be 11, 12, and 13. Are you ready to vote? If you would approve these items, would you please vote "1" for yes and "2" for no. Please vote when the timer appears. [*Yes, 838; No, 45*]

*(pause)*

BISHOP HUIE: All right, then these have been adopted, and we only have 21 pp. and 40 rules to go! We've been at this about an hour and a half, and what I want to do right now is give us about a two-minute stand-up break, stand up and stretch, and then we'll head into the rules. So, just take a moment to stand up, and then we'll start.

*(pause)*

BISHOP HUIE: If you could please be seated. Now I am going to try something here—I see your hand, but let me get everybody—if you would go to the mic, but just stand there for a moment until we get folks seated. Everybody sit back down. Thank you.

I know it is late; we're going to try. I want to try something here with the body, if you are willing to—if this is acceptable to you. If the Chair perceives that something is noncontroversial, like we've had a number of votes tonight that were very clear—I would like to be able, with your permission, to call for a hand vote. It's taking us about one full minute to vote with the machines (*applause*), and if that is acceptable to the body, if it looks like it's going to be a close vote, well then we will go to the machines. But other than that I am going to ask for a hand vote and I think we can pick the pace up just a little bit.

All right? Now there was a gentleman at mic 4, if you would give him your attention, he had a question.

*(feedback; inaudible)*

OK again, Jim. Thank you.

*Proposed One Vote on Rules of Order*

JAMES A. HARNISH (Florida): Bishop, is there a reason that we can not act on all of the Rules of Order in one action? The whole section to p. 91?

BISHOP HUIE: Does the body want to do that? Are you ready to do that? Well, you wouldn't get any fuss from the Chair. We were just trying to, thinking there might be things more controversial in here. What I want—let me tell you what I want to avoid and that's jumping from rule to rule to rule trying to—I mean, because you'll have a lot of trouble keeping up. But if the body is kind of a mind that it's ready to go you wouldn't have a lot of objection from this presiding officer. All right let's see how—let's see, Jim, if we can do it.

HARNISH: Do you need a motion?

BISHOP HUIE: No, no. I don't need a motion. Let's try it here, Janet. All right let's see where we go, kind of walk them through it, and show them the substantive changes.

STEPHENSON: Boy, this is gonna move the whole shebang.

BISHOP HUIE: Move the—all right you are going to move all of it and we will try to pick the pace up here.

STEPHENSON: OK, get your track shoes on. I will lift up the substantive changes as I see them. Begin on p. 70, at the bottom is the beginning of the section on the Rules of Order. Go past 71, 72, and on 73, let's see what that is, oh Rule 6, OK, p. 73 is OK but on 74 there is a change we really should vote on. Bishop, Rule 6, line 1257, the rules of committee in a meeting decided that we would like to delete at the end of the line in 1257, move to the nearest mic. We would like to delete that. So that would read, on 1257, "A delegate desiring to speak to the conference shall hold up the appropriate placard to be recognized by the bishop presiding unless raising a point of order, etc." OK?

BISHOP HUIE: All right that's a substantive change. OK, let's keep going.

*Concurrence, Non-concurrence Language*

STEPHENSON: All right. Let's see. It's mostly clarifying language

on 75 and on 76. On 77 is also, oh yeah, I would note that you'll see a lot of editorial corrections since the Rules of Order reply to the legislative committees as well as the plenary. We've gone through and changed every place that said the bishop presiding to the presiding officer so that it's clear that the rules are to both. OK, when we hit 77, I think we'll have some trouble maybe. Rule 12, 1334, distracting behavior, this one deals with cell phones ringing in legislative committees, etc. That is a substantive addition. On 78, not much, or 79, or 80. Rule 22, you need to be aware of. Can you see it's 1433—line 1433—this would eliminate the non concurrence/concurrence language that has plagued us for many years. It has been confusing and convoluted, placing delegates in a position of if you want to vote for something you have to vote no and vice versa so when the Legislative Committee chair reports to the plenary, the options open to the plenary is to adopt, reject, or refer. So you'll vote on the option itself; you will not vote on whether or not you agree with what the Legislative Committee did, which is what we've done in the past. So just remember, when it's presented, you will vote on the item, not whether you agree with the Legislative Committee's recommendation.

BISHOP HUIE: All right.

STEPHENSON: OK? I know that is the most confusing thing, but there it is. OK, p. 82, not much; 83, no; 84, once we get past a certain point it kind of rolls. 85 is OK. There are changes on 86 to the way the consent calendar is listed but that's just procedural. It requires also in this section 20 delegates to remove an item from the consent calendar instead of five in the past, and then it's clear sailing to the end, as far as I can tell. I don't know if people have questions or not but most of the changes are clarifying language or editorial, except for those items that I lifted up.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, this report is before you. Oh, and there are lots of cards and hands up here, so let me start here in the front and let's see if we get bogged down. I am going to go back to section by section just to let everybody know we won't do them one at a time but we can group some of these. All right, mic. 2.

*(inaudible)*

And again? Thank you.

*Proposed Legislative Committee Voting Procedure*

PAT MEADOWS (North Alabama Conference): Bishop, I move to amend Rule 15 found on p. 78, beginning at line 1372, by adding a 15.1 legislative committee voting procedure. There are five subparts to that: (1), voting shall be by show of hands; tellers shall be appointed to count the votes if necessary. (2), voting may be by written ballot on request of a delegate on the committee supported by one-third of the delegates present and voting. (3), the chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary elected from each committee shall have the same voting right as any other delegate. In the case of a tie vote, the vote of the chairperson shall determine the outcome. (4), where there is any possibility of confusion, the chair, before calling for the vote, should make sure that the delegates understand the effect of a yes vote and a no vote. And (5), a delegate may at any time request and receive assistance in voting from another delegate on the committee. And if I could have a second, I would like to give my rationale.

BISHOP HUIE: All right is there a second? All right I heard a second.

MEADOWS: I think that the legislative committee voting procedures need to be uniform among the committees as nearly as is possible and I did not see any of those procedures listed in our Rules of Order. Because of the number of delegates whose primary language is not English,

which necessitates the use of interpreters, the chairperson of each committee should take care to make sure all delegates understand the effect of a yes or no vote. Parliamentary procedures can be complicated, especially for those delegates who may be unaccustomed to using such procedures on a regular basis. This is further reason care must be taken to ensure each delegate understands the effect of a yes or no vote. And finally, to allow delegate assistance in voting does not mean that a delegate may relinquish his or her right to vote to another delegate. It simply means that a delegate may informally request assistance in order to better understand how he or she may wish to vote. No delegate should, in effect, become disenfranchised from the voting process because of language translation difficulties or because of complex parliamentary procedures. Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. That's an item, of course, to be referred to the rules committee, and thank you for speaking to that, and we absolutely need that written down as you have it. So, if you will give that to the page—thank you so much. All right is there anything else? Yes, a yellow card right back there. Go to mic. 5, and I see you sir and I will come over there next.

STEPHEN P. TAYLOR (South Carolina): Rule no. 12 on p. 77, line 1335.

BISHOP HUIE: Line 1335. All right.

*Cell Phones on Conference Floor*

TAYLOR: I would like to amend by simply adding the word "audible" to the beginning of that sentence.

BISHOP HUIE: The word "audible." Did I hear it correctly?

TAYLOR: "Audible cell phone use would not be permitted." Yeah.

STEPHENSON: Does "audible" refer to the phone or to the delegate?

*(laughter)*

TAYLOR: I will let the committee work on that, since it is going to be referred to you, but I am here and my daughter is here as a delegate and when we are both in legislative sessions, we can send a text message to see when we are getting out and that is not disturbing to use it as an adult to communicate with each other and keep up with each other.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, was there a second to that?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, got it and since I am going to take that as the speech before the second, if that's all right with the body, but we've heard that, it will go to the committee. All right, thank you. All right, anything else here? The—where was I over here? There was somebody with a card. No? That must have gotten it. Does that mean this body is ready to adopt these rules? All right. Oh wait, way in the back. I probably shouldn't have asked that, right? Let's see what we can do. The gentleman in the back? Right, I see you, go to mic.—I can't see the number on the mic. 12. Thank you.

GREG STOVER (West Ohio): Thank you. I would like to move an amendment on p. 87, line 1587.

BISHOP HUIE: Say the page number again, Greg.

STOVER: P. 87—

BISHOP HUIE: 87.

STOVER: Line 1587.

BISHOP HUIE: All right.

#### *Minority Reports on Consent Calendar*

STOVER: I move that we amend by deleting the 20 delegates and returning to the five. If I have a second I'll speak to that.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. There was a second. Please speak to that. This is an item for discussion now.

STOVER: The rule that is proposed for us is that in terms of minority reports, a minority report

would require either 10 signatures from the legislative section, or one—or, or ten persons, whichever is less.

BISHOP HUIE: There was a second, please speak to that. And this is an item for discussion now.

STOVER: The rule that is proposed for us is that in terms of minority reports, a minority report would require either ten signatures from the legislative section or one or ten persons, whichever is less. It would seem to me that by adopting a number of twenty to lift an item from the consent calendar we have the potential situation in which a minority report could be filed on a consent calendar item.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. Thank you. Do you wish to speak to that, Janet?

STEPHENSON: Not really.

*(laughter)*

STEPHENSON: No.

BISHOP HUIE: No, she doesn't. *(background comments)* All right, if I may call on the secretary of the General Conference to speak to this matter, I think we might have a clarifying comment here.

FITZGERALD REIST: The rules as currently written do not allow minority reports to go on the consent calendar; instead, actions with minority reports attached are by the rules given priority in consideration in the legislative body of the plenary session.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. Does that deal with what you wish to deal with or do you still want to continue your motion to delete the twenty and return to the five? Can you go back to the mic. please? This is intended to really answer that as a question. You may wish to speak again.

STOVER: I think I would like to leave the amendment before the body.

BISHOP HUIE: All right so the amendment is before the body and the amendment is to delete the pro-

posed change, which is twenty, and continue with the way it has been—that it was at the last general conference, which is five. Is there any other discussion we need on this? Janet has the right to speak to this. Do you wish to speak to this, Janet?

STEPHENSON: I defer to the secretary of the General Conference.

BISHOP HUIE: He already spoke, so I'm going to cease deferring. I think the body is ready to vote on this. I am going to try this with a hand vote. We'll see how it goes. If not, we'll do the machine. All right, if you are in favor of the amendment to delete, would you raise your hand. please? Thank you. If you are opposed to the amendment to delete, would you raise your hand? *[hand vote—the amendment does not pass]* Thank you. Then the amendment to delete does not carry and the proposed change remains. Now are you ready to vote on the whole document—all the rules—the 40 rules? I think you are. If you are in favor, then, of the rules as they have been proposed here, would you raise your hand, please? Thank you. If you are opposed, would you raise your hand? Thank you. *(hand vote passes)* That's the fastest I've ever seen the rules adopted. Give yourselves a hand.

*(applause)*

BISHOP HUIE: All right thank you very much. Now we've got a couple of other items here we want to handle. Most of them are brief, I think. So, let me turn now to our secretary to bring the *(discussion in background)* Oh, yellow cards, all right right over here, yes, sir. If you'll go to mic. 9.

*(pause)*

#### *Withdrawal of Caterpillar Petition*

KEN CHALKER (East Ohio): Ken Chalker, East Ohio Annual Conference.

BISHOP HUIE: And again, Ken.

CHALKER: Ken Chalker, East Ohio Conference. Bishop, I have a question for clarification, if I might. I know folks want to be done with a lot of things tonight and...

BISHOP HUIE: Can you get a little bit closer to the mic., Ken?

CHALKER: Yes. I would like a clarification on the rules we just adopted. Specifically the Committee on Reference in relation to the decision, or the announcement by the Board of Church and Society that Petition 80834 was withdrawn. They announced that over a week ago and I'm wondering if the Committee on Reference has made a decision on this because the Board of Church and Society does not have the privilege of withdrawing that motion on divestment without the Conference's approval. So, I would like just a clarification on whether the Committee on Reference actually did that.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, I'm going to call on the petition secretary to respond to that.

GARY GRAVES: During our organizational meeting this morning the Committee on Reference did receive that request—that the decision that the committee has made will be printed in the next copy of the *DCA* as the report comes out. Would you like us to go ahead and tell you what that is, Bishop?

BISHOP HUIE: Do you want to hear that? Is that important to hear tonight? I mean, do you want to hear it in the regular sense. Ken, are you requesting that?

CHALKER: My question is, Bishop, how can the Board of Church and Society announce a week and a half before this body convenes that they've withdrawn a petition that's in the hands of the General Conference?

BISHOP HUIE: All right, he's just going to handle it here.

GRAVES: The timeline in which announcements are made is not within the purview of the Committee on Reference. We do receive the re-

quest and at the first available meeting that request is processed. That is what we did this morning and the action of the committee will be printed.

*Report of General Conference  
Commission*

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. Now I am going to turn here to the report. We've got a couple of other items. I'll try to move you through them as quickly as we can. We want to turn to the report from the Commission on the General Conference. Dr. Gail Murphy-Geiss, the chair of the commission, will lead us through the report. Oh, and I told Janet she could at least introduce her committee by . . . let's give these rules, folks, a round of applause.

*(applause)*

They've all been standing up here. Thank you. Thank you. And here comes the Commission on the General Conference, trading places.

GAIL MURPHY-GEISS: All right. Bishop Huie, delegates, and friends: To open this General Conference today on April 23 is quite an amazing coincidence as you've heard. It was on this exact date in 1968, 40 years ago, in nearby Dallas, that The United Methodist Church was born. Take a look.

*(video plays on screen)*

*(music continues then applause as film ends)*

Look at us now. . . . Hey . . .

*(applause)*

We've come a long way since then, and while we celebrate that past, we're here to plan the future—a future with hope. The Commission on the General Conference has been planning this event since before the Pittsburgh Conference ended in 2004—long before. When we toured this convention center we wore hard

hats. It was not yet finished, but here we are and although you've just arrived, from our position it's almost over. Let me take a minute to ask the commission members to stand and be recognized. Some are amongst you.

*(applause)*

The work was often tedious, the rewards few, but the fellowship was spectacular. I thank you all. Normally we'd hope you wouldn't notice the work of the commission because if we do our job right everything goes smoothly and you take it all for granted. You receive your materials on time, your voting machines work, the coffee is ready when you want a break, the bathroom lines and the women's room in particular are not too long. On and on the details are endless, but this year we're going to ask you to notice what it takes to put on a General Conference, because we suggest that it can be done better. The Commission was charged by the previous General Conference with the task of evaluating the way we do business, with an eye to making improvements. So, we come to you with the results of that work—a few petitions regarding details—but most of it centered in one petition calling for a significant change which we think will lead to equally big improvements. Our main concern is regarding the quality of the meeting. We came to believe that the size of the General Conference, now 992 delegates, is larger than ideal for genuine Christian conferencing. That is, instead of forming holy relationships in a context where everyone can speak—building up the community toward a unified ministry to the world—we noticed more the frantic management of petitions and a lack of real relationship—even the demonizing of one another as we confront unknown faces across wide aisles and deep divides. So we are suggesting a radical change. We bring a petition to reduce the size of the gen-

eral conference from the current upper limit of 1,000 to 600.

We know the risks of such a change, so we also bring petitions encouraging diversities in delegations, which some of the smallest delegations do already, and even suggesting annual conferences institute term limits to make sure the General Conference continues to represent the fullness of our membership. Here's the hard part: It would mean that almost 400 of you wouldn't be here. And we know it's hard to "vote oneself off the island."

(laughter)

But this isn't *Survivor*. The last one here will not be the winner. Either we all win or we all lose. And no matter how the votes go—and we don't think that would be any different—the most important thing is that we see the face of Christ in one another, and through that, we strengthen our church.

Now, 600 might not make for perfect Christian conferencing either, but we think it's moving in the right direction—toward better relationships, richer conversations, and in the end, a holier gathering that Wesley himself might recognize.

There's a secondary benefit as well: the budget. The total projected cost for this General Conference is over \$6 million. I fondly call it "the six-million-dollar meeting." That number is a little beyond my imagination, though, so you might like to think of it this way: We're spending almost \$500 per minute—some of which, we'll be asleep.

In addition, the General Conference has been running at a significant deficit since 1996, and there's no end in sight. To keep meeting like this, we need to increase the budget; and if that's the will of the body, so be it. Instead, the commission suggests a reduction, because we think the great thing about our connectional church is our ability to unite our funds to serve the world, not to

hold big meetings. And we think it would be a better-quality meeting anyway.

Consider some of our own Advance projects. For the cost of this meeting, we could provide a full-year's tuition for over 26,000 girls in the Congo, we could provide materials for over 7,000 refugee homes in Afghanistan, or we could provide over half a million malaria tests throughout Africa.

Now, we know that this meeting enables us to organize around these and hundreds of other projects. The commission simply wants you to be aware of your spending and remind you of Wesley's advice about money: Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can. Although this meeting is the way we organize that giving, while we are here, we're really doing none of the three. Except for a few special offerings, we're mostly spending—spending on ourselves, spending at a deficit.

A little lighter note: Have you heard the joke about the United Methodist who died and went to heaven? Before reaching the pearly gates, he came to a fork in the road, and a sign said "This Way to Heaven" and "This Way to the Heaven Administrative Council Meeting." You can guess the punchline: The United Methodist went to the meeting.

Meetings are great, but they ain't heaven. We *need* to meet. We *love* to meet. It *is* our method. But we need to do it better. We need to truly "meet" each other, which means fewer folks, and at the same time, we could rein in the costs—both so as to better serve the world. For that's what will bring and nurture disciples. People will flock to a denomination where people truly know and love one another, and where the focus is outward on the transformation of the world.

So, on behalf of the commission, it's my pleasure to welcome you to Fort Worth, and to challenge you. We hope you make the most of this

\$6 million meeting. It will be worth every penny if you move us toward a future with hope. Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. Thank you. Thank you very much, and thanks to the committee. Now, these petitions, of course, go to Legislative Committee, so there's no action that's needed tonight on this report. And we thank the whole commission for the work it's done.

I'm going to turn to our secretary now to bring the nomination of the coordinator of the calendar.

*Coordinator of Calendar Elected*

REIST: I nominate . . .

BISHOP HUIE: Well, let's get the mic up so they can hear you.

REIST: I nominate Dr. Susan Brumbaugh as coordinator of the calendar.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, is there any discussion? I'm going to do this with a hand vote, please. If you would elect a Mrs. Susan Brumbaugh as the coordinator of the calendar, would you raise your hand, please. (pause) Thank you. Any opposed? [hand vote, nomination approved]

Thank you, then it is so ordered.

*Adopting of Agenda*

All right, I turn now to the Committee on Agenda and Calendar, and that report will be given by its chairperson, Rev. Youngsook Kang.

YOUNGSOOK C. KANG (Rocky Mountain): Thank you, Bishop Huie, and delegates and friends. Now I draw your attention to today's *DCA*. Please turn to your *DCA*, pp. 1758 through 1760, where you find the proposed agenda for the 2008 General Conference. Again, the proposed agenda is located on pp. 1758 through 1760. Bishop, I now move the adoption of the agenda as printed.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, it's before you. Are you ready to vote? I'm going to do this by hand if this is ac-

ceptable to the body. If you would approve this agenda as it's been printed, would you raise your hand, please. Thank you. Any opposed? [*hand vote, approved*] Thank you, then it is approved.

KANG: Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, and I believe you've got another motion?

KANG: Yes, yes.

BISHOP HUIE: All right.

*Distribution of Materials Other Than DCA*

KANG: Thank you, Bishop Huie. Under the rules of the General Conference that have been just adopted, the *DCA* is the only material that may be distributed to the desks of the delegates after the first day. However, there are other materials in addition to the *DCA*, such as supplemental reports to the orders of the day that need to be distributed. Therefore, on behalf of the Committee on Agenda and Calendar, I move for suspension of the rules to permit the daily distribution of materials related to reports received as orders of the day throughout the remainder of the conference.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you very much. Is there any discussion? If you would approve—I'm going to do this by hand again—if you would approve this motion to allow the distribution of materials for the remainder of the General Conference, would you raise your hand, please. Thank you. Any opposed? [*hand vote, approved*] Thank you, then it's so ordered.

KANG: Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: And thank you, Rev. Kang.

All right, now, we're coming here near the end, but we're not quite there yet. One of the things we want to do is—a question? Yes, please, in the back. I think your closest mic. is 8. Come toward the . . . OK, he's going to 7? That'll be fine.

*Board and Agency Mandatory Membership Referred to Judicial Council*

KEVIN GOODWIN (Peninsula Delaware): 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 various petitions requesting mandatory membership levels for selected classes of people to the General Conference and/or boards or agencies, and staffing requirements of boards and agencies, in light of previous Judicial Council decisions including, but not limited to, 594, 601, 633, and 991. And I have a second, then I will continue.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, is there a second? (*pause*) Oh, I see a second, thank you. I'll tell you what, it would help us up here at the front if you would just read the motion again, because we just, we had a little difficulty catching it all. So if you would read it—I heard the second, and then you can speak to it.

GOODWIN: I will do that, Bishop. And would you like me to then read the petitions in reference or just ignore that part?

BISHOP HUIE: Just read the motion straight, and then we'll try to catch it up here. Sorry, we're going to rearrange these mics.—I mean, the speakers up here tomorrow, but tonight we're having a little difficulty. So, if you'll just read it again, I think we can get it.

GOODWIN: Yes, ma'am. 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 various petitions requesting mandatory membership levels for selected classes of people to the General Conference and/or boards and agencies, and staffing requirements of the boards and agencies, in light of previous Judicial Council decisions including, but not limited to, Judicial Decisions 594, 601, 633, and 991.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you. Now, if you could speak to it, please.

GOODWIN: Yes, ma'am. I want to be clear up front. This request to the Judicial Council does not prevent any committee from the discussing of any of the petitions that are submitted to it. Its purpose is to provide committees with guidance as to what wording might be considered unconstitutional. I feel it is in our best interest to know this before we discuss and adopt new *Book of Discipline* language, than after the General Conference is over, and the proper wording would not be possible. In the decisions I've cited, terms such as "required," "shall," "must" have been ruled unconstitutional. The term "recommended" has been upheld. Less clear, at least to me, are the phrases "at least," "no fewer than," "not less than," which are used in several of the 2008 petitions listed above. I choose to ask—I chose to ask now instead of waiting for the committee to make this recommendation, because it gives the Judicial Council an extra 24 hours to discuss this, and in light of our shorter discussion time at conference, I thought that was critical.

In closing, the request again is to determine if the petitions as submitted would be considered constitutional, still leaving each committee the right and the ability to reword petitions in light of the response we receive back from the Judicial Council. Thank you.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, now, is there a discussion of this? People wishing to speak for or against? It's a request to the Judicial Council, just as a point of clarification for you, it requires, to go to the Judicial Council it would take a one-fifth vote . . .

BISHOP HUIE: People wishing to speak for or against. To request to the Judicial Council, just as a point of clarification for you, it requires to go to Judicial Council, it would take a one-fifth vote of the conference. And you can find that on p. 84, line 1527. It's also in the *Discipline*, but

if you want to check it in the rules. Is there discussion here? Are you ready to . . . ? Does it mean the body is ready? Oh, I see, looks like we got a question back here. Thank you.

JAY BRIM (Southwest Texas): Bishop, I understood the delegate to say that he is speaking to a list of specific petitions that are not, haven't been read to us yet.

BISHOP HUIE: Yes, that's—we were just discussing that up here. I—we need to hear—in order for this go to the Judicial Council, we would have to have entered into this motion the specific list of petitions. And I—if I understand you correctly, you have that list.

GOODWIN: Yes, ma'am.

BISHOP HUIE: All right would you read off the p—how long is the petition list?

GOODWIN: It's only six.

BISHOP HUIE: OK, if you would read the numbers—

GOODWIN: I will read—

BISHOP HUIE: And read them slowly so we can get them up here please.

GOODWIN: And I also have the DCA page number for, as the Judicial Council requested that. The petitions in question include, but are not limited to, 81299GA705, found on p. 976; 18524GA705, also on 976; 81300GA705.5, on 977, 81517CO13-1-C, on p. 438; 81518-CO-13.1-C, again on 438; and the last one, 5122-CO-502.1 on p. 463.

BISHOP HUIE: All right. Thank you. All right, I don't see any people wishing to speak for or against. I think this body wants to vote. All right, so what's before you is his motion to refer all these, and you heard the petition numbers, to the Judicial Council. It takes a one-fifth vote of the body. We do need to use the machines on this so we can—oh, wait, hold on just a moment please. *(pause)* All right. Sir, the gentleman who made the motion, I think your wording included—what was it? Including but not limited to. You can-

not refer unspecified material to the Judicial Council, so those, you would have to withdraw that, that phrase from your motion.

GOODWIN: I am—I'm willing to do that, Bishop.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, so just a point of clarification. Thank you, friends, thank you. All right. Now, we're going to need to vote. We're going to use the machines. If you would want to send that motion to look at all, request to the Judicial Council, then you would vote yes; if not, no. So please vote, press "1" for yes; press "2" for no. Please vote when the timer appears. *(pause)* It needs one-fifth, somebody needs to get a calculator.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It does it for you, Bishop.

*(voting pause)*

*[Yes, 544; No, 331]*

BISHOP HUIE: OK, well then it's a vote to refer. So it is a majority vote and it only needed 20 percent. The miracles of modern technology: it actually did the computation for me. All right, so this matter then is referred to the Judicial Council.

Now, we got one more major item, which is to move into the sensitivity training and then announcements. So I am going to try to move us on here. I think all of us are aware that we want to be sensitive to one another as we gather in community and so Garlinda Burton, Erin Hawkins are going to lead us in a time of training on this issue. If they could come forward right now. You know Garlinda from the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, and you know Erin from the Commission on Religion and Race—here they are, from the Commission on Religion and Race and, friends, we know we've put you on at a late hour but the body is going to try to stay with you as much as we can.

*COSROW and GCRR Promote Diversity and Inclusiveness*

ERIN M. HAWKINS: Good evening. During the 2004 General Conference, several general agencies were appointed to provide delegates with an understanding of how important it is for us to reflect and respect the whole community of God in all its shades, languages, perspectives, and humanity, as we do the work of the church in the coming days. To that end, the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women have designed this time now to help provide such an understanding. To begin to help you to prepare, we offer this short video, a mixture of both the serious and a little bit of humor to help us see the reality, what it will mean for us to be the whole body of Christ in the days ahead.

*(video presentation)*

*(music playing, end of video)*

M. GARLINDA BURTON: Our beloved United Methodist Church has used the words *diversity* and *inclusiveness* so much, for so long, that sometimes we get weary. But the call to inclusion is God's call to us, to be authentic and reliable witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

HAWKINS: Our call to gender justice, to ending racism, to really becoming a worldwide welcoming table is the same as the call to the Romans. To welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you. It comes from the same Christly passion as witnessed in the letter to the Galatians; neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, it comes from the letter to James: Come, let us reason together.

BURTON: The invocation of the Psalms is the same invocation for every decision maker in this room. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way, any sexist way, any racist way,

any English only anti-immigrant way, any national superiority way, any “if you don’t vote the way me and my church vote, we’re gonna walk” way. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me, lead us, dear God, away from that, and toward the way everlasting.

HAWKINS: As we work together in the coming days, we can be obedient to God’s will to help our church become more heroic if we remember our call to true diversity and inclusiveness with regard to race, ethnicity, and culture; gender and nationality; loving our neighbors truly as ourselves. So let us agree to do these things together.

BURTON: Let us first tell the truth about who we are. Each person here comes with an important piece of the Jesus story, and with vital life experiences, theological and biblical understanding, all of these shaped by our gender, our race, our culture, and nationality. And we each bring a desire to live out our salvation in a way that makes the church and the world better.

HAWKINS: Let us listen to each other: We come with a unique identity, and biases too, all of us. So let us remember to listen with God ears and humility. Remember, the person sitting next to you has a perspective that the church needs, a cultural reality that you don’t have. They’ve struggled and have learned to live the ways of Christ in spite of obstacles you can only imagine. Allowing your biases about that person’s race, gender, national alliance, jurisdictional home, education, status, or age cripples you. It blocks you from hearing their God story.

BURTON: Let us remember that we have not yet achieved the diversity that we seek and that we talk about. Racism in The United Methodist Church, just as in the United States of America, remains an unfinished agenda. It requires our earnest commitment as people of faith to seek new global priorities, but not at the price of abandoning the racial ethnic communities in the

United States, which still continue to make a difference in our church.

HAWKINS: Women are 52 percent of the world population, yet make up only 40 percent of the delegates here, and only 28 percent of the central conference delegates. Most of the heads of delegations, 73 percent, are men. We have made great strides, but women’s voices are still not heard in all places across the church. For proof, we need to look no further than our Financial Administration Legislation Committee, a place where our professed values and meet our actions, and where women are less than 25 percent of the delegates.

BURTON: And though our language may reflect the global nature of the church, true inclusion will require more than a few petitions about Central Conference representation. We must be consistent in asking if we have done all the work in engaging our African, European, Filipino, and Latin American sisters and brothers, and bringing them to the table. We are still people who need to lay our shortcomings before God and ask for forgiveness and new eyes to see.

HAWKINS: Let us demonstrate our respect: We ask that you listen attentively, especially when the delegate speaking at the mic. is using a language other than United States English. This is one way of being hospitable in confronting one’s own biases. Take seriously your vote in the perspectives of others. Take seriously in your vote the perspective of the 28-year-old Filipino clergy woman and the 65-year-old Native American layman.

BURTON: Allow those who speak to do so without being interrupted, by you or by others. Often, we dismiss the opinions of those with a notable accent, because it’s easier to say, “Oh, I can’t understand you.” Listening requires being attentive and fully present in the moment.

Remember to listen and to pray for openness, then respond. Be mindful that those who speak En-

glish as a first language have an advantage in these deliberations. So slow it down.

Also, men are often acculturated to over-talk women and younger people. Make sure you don’t. White people, take responsibility for addressing White racism when you see it. It should not be the responsibility only of people of color to speak up.

HAWKINS: Volunteers and members of the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women will be in legislative committees and plenaries to monitor the proceedings for inclusiveness. Not only will we monitor, but we will give real-time reports. Make sure that you are listening to the information that is offered about who is taking part in the discussions and who is being excluded. This is a necessary part of becoming authentic in our work as the whole body of Christ. Remember, we are answering the prophetic call to come and to reason together, each of us a vital, valuable participant in God’s holy work.

BURTON: So now as we close, join us in asking for God’s blessing for what lies ahead. Join us in this prayer, after which Mark will sing a song for us. Please come to me—come *with* me, to God in prayer. Let us bow our heads.

Dear God, who loves us and this world more than ever we could imagine, keep our hearts and minds and decisions focused on you. Keep us focused as we seek to be more faithful in making disciples of Christ, developing new faith communities and reviving old ones, walking with the poor and healing the land. We know you are calling us to new heights in order to glorify you and to transform a hurting world. We know, God, that if we are faithful and if we work together, we cannot fail. Thank you for walking with us and for loving us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS:  
Amen.

BISHOP HUIE: All right, thank you, Erin and Garlinda. Thank you, thank you.

*(music)*

BISHOP HUIE: Amen, and thank you, Mark. I'm going to turn now to our secretary, Gere Reist, for announcements, and then we'll be very near our close.

REIST: Bishop . . .

BISHOP HUIE: All right.

REIST: Bishop Huie, I have no announcements.

BISHOP HUIE: Oh, let's hear applause!

*(applause)*

BISHOP HUIE: Friends, I am going to call on Bishop Grove to come and offer our benediction this evening. And as he's coming forward there, I would like to just express my appreciation to this body for your patience tonight. I think actually we have, you know, we have covered a lot of territory here, but thank you for your patience in working through all of this. I know the night is late. I want to say to you, tomorrow is going to be a good day—a good day—and we appreciate your being here. Bishop Grove.

BISHOP WILLIAM BOYD

GROVE: Let's just quiet ourselves and be still in our souls before God, as our day ends.

*(prayer)*

BISHOP HUIE: Amen. You are in recess until tomorrow morning. Sleep well, my friends, sleep well. Sleep *fast*, too.

### Thursday Morning, April 24, 2008

MARCIA MCFEE: Wait, what—there you go.

BISHOP ROSEMARIE WENNER (Germany): . . . which greeted us this morning with wonderful

music. I would like to invite you to take your seats so that we can open our morning session this day. I hope you have had a short but good rest so that you can start this day with joy. We are together here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. My name is Bishop Rosemarie Wenner; I am from the Germany area, from the Germany Central Conference, and I'm asked to be the presiding officer today. Let us take our seats, let us come and sit down, and I call the conference to order at this second day of General Conference and we will worship our Lord. Let's praise our Lord together.

*(music)*

MCFEE: I invite you to stand for our prayer of invocation this morning.

BISHOP LEO A. SORIANO:  
Prayer [*interpreted*].

*(music)*

MCFEE: Indeed open us, O God, to your possibilities, your word, your surprises, your love, your grace, your spirit in this day, in this church, in our lives.

*(applause and music)*

#### *Episcopal Address*

BISHOP SHARON A. BROWN CHRISTOPHER: I am Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher, and this is the Council of Bishops' prayer for The United Methodist Church and the world. There is a desperation in our times and an urgency about our mission as Christ's body in our world. All around this world there are national leaders for whom power and control and self-interests take priority over the common good of the people. All around this world the disparity between the rich and the poor is growing. All around this world there are wars being fought for the advantage of a few and the annihilation of many. All around this world children are left by the road-

side, victims of human violence and deadly disease. Yes, all around this world there is physical, mental, and spiritual hunger for the bread of life.

People hunger for food, craving even small morsels to nourish and sustain. People hunger for education, longing for knowledge that will empower self and others. People hunger for work and living wages, hunting for an economic viability that will support even a modest way of life. People hunger for freedom from the tyranny of oppression, desiring release from the chains that exploit and deny. People hunger for meaning and purpose that cannot be provided by their material wealth. People hunger for a relationship with God, reaching for that which satisfies and fulfills, the love of God made known in Jesus Christ.

Our brothers and sisters in God's human family hunger for hope. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

*(pause)*

In the midst of the world's hunger pains, we—gathered here and connected around the world—are the church of Jesus Christ, The United Methodist Church, together with Christians with names and histories different from our own, yet bound with us in common mission.

*(pause)*

As the church, we receive God's love known in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and we are filled with hope.

*(pause)*

As we, the church, offer Christ to the world, we offer hope to the world.

In Christ, new life is born out of old dying ways. We Christians set God's table of hope.

*(pause)*

Christ, our Lord, invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin (*music begins*) and seek to live in peace with one another.

The Lord be with you.

ALL: *And also with you.*

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: *We lift them up to the Lord.*

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

ALL: *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: All around this world, there are millions of people whose lives are being transformed as they encounter God made known in Jesus Christ. When they feast on the bread of life in Christian community, they receive hope. Twelve-year-old Kent, born in a cemetery in Manila, has a chance for a brighter future because of the congregation led by Rev. Allan Casuco. The congregation built a church just outside the cemetery walls to be closer to the many poor people who live in its tombs. The congregation provides Kent and other children like him with food, shelter, clothing, and even the opportunity to go to school. Or like Candace Shannon from Fairbanks, Alaska, in the United States, who sought a relationship with Jesus Christ when her life was in upheaval at age 31. Meningitis took her hearing, and she was struggling to find hope. Hope came when she started to get involved with worship services.

*(video)*

John Zirker's life as an addict on the street changed when he encountered the United Methodist faith community, and as a result of *his* transformation, more lives are being transformed in turn.

*(video)*

It is right, and a good and joyful

thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

*(music)*

All around the world there are millions of communities, there are even nations, in which social relationships—human connections—are being reconciled as a result of their encounter with God through Jesus Christ. When they meet Jesus Christ, relationships rent by class, race, political and ideological perspective and action are mended, and justice is restored. When they feast on the bread of life in Christian community, they receive hope.

This reconciling power can be seen in an historic partnership, which has brought Christians and Muslims together focused on saving lives. United Methodist Committee on Relief and Muslim Aid struck up a partnership in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, which has led to a worldwide alliance to deliver aid. The interfaith effort is now working in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Sudan. Through this partnership pairing vast ideological differences and one common mission, the physically and spiritually hungry are fed, and our world is reconciled.

A connection between United Methodists and Presbyterians is bringing God's reconciling power to the south-side neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, here in the United States. The Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community, a new church start, fills a rented cafeteria every Sunday with more than 300 people hungry for its unconventional brand of Christian fellowship. Born in a tattoo shop, the congregation has tripled in size in the past two years, and today includes senior citizens, body-pierced young adults, wealthy suburbanites, former prison inmates, and the community's homeless people. Social relationships reconciled through encounter with Jesus Christ.

There is no more perfect example of a community being made anew than the Transformation Project: Prison Ministry in Colorado, in the United States.

*(video)*

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: Holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ. Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

We, the church, are God's agent in the making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the personal and social transformation of the world. Congregations formed as Christian community are the centers of inviting and receiving those who desire to live in relationship with God, forming them in the depths of God's grace, and sending those on the journey with God into the world to heal, to proclaim, to work for justice, and to invite others to live in personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the context of a community of faith.

During this quadrennium we embodied this process of disciple making and disciple living as we have responded to the natural and unnatural disasters of extreme magnitude. A tsunami in southern Asia, hurricanes along the Gulf Coast of the United States, civil wars in African countries, war in the Middle East, and terrorist attacks around the world. Please raise your hand if you, your congregation, or your annual conference has worked to touch the lives of those who suffered as a result of any of these things.

You see, we are feeding the physically and spiritually hungry and our world is transformed and reconciled as we offer the bread of life. Saint Mark's United Methodist Church in El Paso, Texas, in the United States, is setting the example for all of us in disciple living.

*(video)*

To strengthen and empower congregations, annual conferences are equipping congregations for their disciple-making ministries. Expressing this work, the Council of Bishops has identified what it calls “seven vision pathways” that are essential to our disciple-making mission. They will be introduced to you shortly. And some of you may know four areas of focus are emerging from our conversation and learning about the seven vision pathways. These four areas of focus are powerful avenues in which United Methodists far and wide can express their faith on critical topics, such as how we grow and lead, and how our church can and should address poverty and disease. These areas of focus are not envisioned for the next quadrennium, but as far as the eye can see.

In our mission lies a role for each and every United Methodist. God’s spirit is moving among us. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

*(music)*

In the breaking of the bread, life is transformed. I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. In the breaking of the bread, sin is transformed into forgiveness; grief is transformed into joy; conflict is transformed into peace; fear is transformed into love; despair is transformed into hope. In the pouring of the cup, life is reconciled. Now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace. In his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall that is the hostility between us, so that he

might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two. In the pouring of the cup, broken life is mended; rough places become plain; walls become bridges. All our differences find their connection at Jesus’ table, where we all have a seat and all are invited to feast. In the breaking and pouring of ourselves as bread and wine, the body of Christ, we offer hope to our world.

I invite those of you who are seated next to the bread and cup to stand now and lift those elements high.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take. Eat. This is my body, which is given for you.” When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said, “Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new Covenant, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.”

*(music)*

You may be seated.

In these times in which we find ourselves, times that give great evidence of the hunger of God’s human family, we, the body of Christ, have received the bread of life, for which people hunger. As we share this food with others, we are feeding the hungry. Yet, our United Methodist struggles within are diminishing our capacity to offer hope for the world. Let’s be clear: Membership and participation in The United Methodist Church grew between 1995 and 2005 by 34 percent. Across Africa and Asia, thousands of new people, many of them children and young people, are flocking to the church every day for spiritual nurture. The number of professing members across Africa and Southeast Asia increased more than 200 percent.

*(applause)*

At the same time, however, in the Northern Hemisphere, our church body is faced with membership decline. Between 1995 and 2005, the number of United Methodist professing members across Europe decreased by more than 10 percent. The United States professing membership has slipped from its all-time high of 10.7 million people to less than 8 million. The average U.S. United Methodist is 57 years old, and those under age 18 account for less than 5 percent of church membership.

With the bread of life, we are feeding the hungry; yet our United Methodist struggles within are diminishing our capacity to offer hope for the world. And it is not only a matter of numbers; our United Methodist mind is filled with distraction. While those of us on the edge of the digital world sometimes feel passed by, those of us who are digital feel inundated with volumes of information that overwhelm us and lure us onto many paths not aligned with God’s vision. We often find ourselves attracted to the shiny, glitzy, novel, and new for their own sake, rather than for our mission’s sake, and we are distracted from God’s intention for our lives.

With the bread of life, we are feeding the hungry; yet our United Methodist struggles within are diminishing our capacity to offer hope to the world.

And then there is division. Our United Methodist soul is fractured by it. We are plagued with deep fear and anxiety resulting in symptoms that mimic the reactivity of the world rather than the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*(applause)*

We live in a divided world in which political solutions are applied to relational differences. And likewise, there are ruptures in our

United Methodist relationships. Left or right, conservative or liberal, we treat our baptized Christian brothers and sisters as if they are our enemies. We minimize and distort, judge and even slander those not aligned with our personal ideology. We abase one another as if our own salvation depends on the destruction of our Christian and United Methodist brothers and sisters. In the name of God, we do harm to one another.

We live in a divided world in which our United Methodist categories, like the world's categories, are hardened: Left and right, conservative and liberal, so that we go to war with each other over the nature of God and the role God plays in our lives, over the authority of scripture and over the identity of Jesus in our relationship to him. We fight one another with mighty zeal over the complex social issues of the day. In the name of God, we do harm to one another.

Our United Methodist table is in disarray; we argue over how we set the table, while ignoring the absence of any food on so many tables.

*(applause)*

And, while ignoring the hunger for salvation that permeates our neighborhoods, our fervent pursuit of being right takes priority over right relationship. In the name of God, we do harm to one another.

Our anxiety, with its rupturing of relationships and hardening of categories deafens us to the cry of our neighbor. The spiritual yearning of those in our midst goes unheard and unheeded because of our need to convince them of the right way, based on our carefully calculated formulas of theology. Left or right, and middle, we all are guilty. As a result, we do not listen to, much less hear, the yearnings of our neighbor's hearts. Our own need deafens us to the need of others.

Pray with me.

ALL: Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our

whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will. We have broken your law. We have rebelled against your love. We have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: In silence, let us examine our souls. Let us have the courage to identify our own complicity in the decline, distraction, and division within our church.

*(pause)*

Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is proof of God's love for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

ALL: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: Glory to God.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

*(simultaneous translations)*

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You are forgiven.

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: Turn to the person on your right, and exchange a sign of reconciliation and peace. Say to your neighbor, "In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven."

*(music)*

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: As a young United Methodist leader in Liberia, Richmond Tobii risked his life, seeking to bring the love of Christ to others in the midst of a ruthless civil war in his country. Like so many of Liberia's citizens, Richmond still bears the scars of a war; but he's discovered that offering forgiveness is the only way to heal.

*(video)*

Living out forgiveness, a rich lesson from one who has endured so

much. We Christians, when we practice our faith, pattern our relationships not on the divisive ways of the world but on the way of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace and the harbinger of hope. The secret of fulfilling our mission lies in our own dying to live. The key to our missional engagement lies not in getting our own way; it lies in giving ourselves away. Dying and rising, dying and rising, dying and rising. It is God's rhythm in the world and the heartbeat of our church when we dare to be faithful. Through Jesus Christ, the way of death and resurrection is God's gift to us and to the world.

We offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

BISHOP CHRISTOPHER: The dying and rising way of Jesus, the key to our future in faith, is in our Wesleyan genes. Centered in Jesus' great commandment to love God and neighbor, John Wesley called those around him to focus on relationships. He gave us, in the character of a Methodist, a picture of Christians going on to perfection in love through the forming and sustaining of relationships. Said Mr. Wesley—and I paraphrase—"I encourage you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God that we not be divided among ourselves. Is your heart right as my heart is with yours? I ask no further question. If it be, give me your hand. For the sake of our opinions, let us not destroy the work of God. Do you love and serve God? It is enough."

To Wesley, Christian faith was a connection with God and one another, a connection bound by and in place for the practice of three incredibly simple rules: Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. Wesley called these three rules the general rules of Christian life. They were modeled after the life of our