

# Daily Christian Advocate

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Cleveland, Ohio

Tuesday, May 9, 2000

Vol. 4, No. 7

## Delegates Tackle Sexuality-related Proposals

General Conference delegates rejected a proposal May 8 that would have required all pastors to sign a statement professing that homosexuality is not God's will.

By a vote of 705-210, delegates declined to add to *The Book of Discipline* a stipulation that before pastors could be assigned to any church they had to sign a statement: "I do not believe that homosexuality is God's perfect will for any person. I will not practice it. I will not promote it. I will not allow its promotion to be encouraged under my authority."

They also declined to add disciplinary language that would have made the performance of a same-sex union a chargeable offense even in states where such a ceremony is legal. The denomination already has the official position that same-sex unions shall not be conducted by United Methodist ministers and shall not be held in United Methodist churches. Violating that rule could lead to charges against a minister, according to the denomination's Judicial Council.

In other action, the Faith and Order Legislative Committee approved petitions that recommend retaining *Book of Discipline* language on homosexuality:

- "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all."
- prohibition against holy unions;
- self-avowed practicing homosexuals may not be ordained or appointed.

Results of the first vote were announced Sunday afternoon, after the committee spent five hours listening to statements and testimony from 37 delegates. The vote to request retention of the current language on 65G in the Social Principles was 59-43 with one abstention.

A recommendation to retain the prohibition against holy union language was approved by a vote of 64-37-4. The same language was later added to Paragraph 331, "Responsibilities and Duties of a Pastor," by a 53-44-18 vote.

Attempts to moderate the prohibition on holy unions by changing "shall not" to "should not" failed. A minority report,



*The Rev. Ralph E. Jarboe Jr. and his son Matthew rode horseback from St. Paul, Kan. to raise money for Habitat for Humanity and to celebrate the bicentennial of the United Brethren in Christ Church. They departed Kansas March 18 and arrived May 7 at Cleveland's historic Severance Hall.*

—UMNS Photo by Mike DeBose

led by the Rev. Emery A. Percell, Northern Illinois, will be filed.

Some of the strongest pleas for retaining the current language came from Central Conference delegates, who said their cultures and churches simply cannot accept homosexuality. One of those delegates reported the church's position and influence would be diminished by any moderation of the United Methodist position.

Most delegates supporting retention of the current language cited two biblical sources: the Holiness Code in Leviticus and the letters of Paul. Some asking for change noted cultural biases in those prohibitions.

The Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, Baltimore-Washington Conference, argued for acknowledging the church is not of one mind on the issue. "If there is any doubt," he said, "the first rule for the church of Jesus Christ should be, 'Don't be cruel.'" He also cited the possibility that the United Methodist position may be "supplying a basis, unwittingly, for gay bashing."

The Rev. Leicester R. Longden, West Michigan, defended traditional teaching—the mind of the church—saying it is the collected theology, tradition and ecclesiology, not just the living minds of the church. The mind of the church "has arrived at some settled convictions about standards. There is a settled mind of the church that guides moral norms for sexuality. Prophets [who want change] must always be tested," he said.

Wogaman is filing a minority report for 65G that says: "We acknowledge with humility that the church has been unable to arrive at a common mind on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian faith. Many consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. Others believe it acceptable when practiced in a context of human covenantal faithfulness. The church seeks further understanding through continued prayer, study and pastoral experience. In doing so, the church continues to affirm that God's grace is bestowed on all and that the members of Christ's body are called to be in ministry for and with one another and to the world."

This language is adapted from the churchwide homosexuality study reported to the 1992 General Conference.

Perhaps trying to soften the sting of its votes to some church members and constituents, the committee concurred with an addition to the Social Principles proposed by the Methodist Federation for Social Action: "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends." The vote on this petition was 98-2, with four abstentions.

Other minority reports from committee members will be filed against each major vote, including a proposal to change the sentence in 65G describing homosexuality as "incompatible with Christian teaching" to "incompatible with some Christian teaching."

The committee voted nonconcurrence with approximately 121 petitions on homosexuality issues not in keeping with the major petitions approved.

—Erik Alsgaard, Linda Green, Joretta Purdue, Ann Whiting

## Agenda for Tuesday, May 9

- 8:00 a.m. Choral Music  
 8:15 a.m. Worship Service  
 9:00 a.m. Committee on Calendar and Agenda Report  
 \*9:10 a.m. Words from a Circuit Rider  
 9:13 a.m. University Senate Election  
 9:23 a.m. Calendar Items  
 \*11:45 a.m. GCFA Report  
 12:05 p.m. Conference Announcements and Committee on Presiding Officers  
 12:15 p.m. Lunch Recess  
 1:30 p.m. Legislative Committees  
 3:45 p.m. Calendar Items  
 5:30 p.m. Dinner Recess  
 7:20 p.m. Gathering Music  
 7:30 p.m. Report of the Committee on Calendar and Agenda  
 \*7:30 p.m. Calendar Items  
 9:35 p.m. GCOM: The Advance for Jesus Christ and His Church  
 10:00 p.m. Announcements  
 10:05 p.m. Adjournment  
 \*Order of the Day

### Daily Christian Advocate

Cleveland Convention Center

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## Weekend Activities Renew, Prepare Delegates for Busy Week

Refreshed by a weekend that included a concert by the five United Methodist-related colleges and universities in Ohio Sunday evening, General Conference delegates plunged Monday into the final week of their 2000 session.

During the Monday night session, five persons were elected to the Judicial Council: Mary Daffin, an attorney in Houston; Rodolfo Beltran, an attorney from the Philippines; James Holsinger, chancellor of Chandler Medical Center, University of Kentucky; Larry Pickens, pastor of Maple Park United Methodist Church in Chicago; Keith Boyette, pastor of Wilderness Community United Methodist Church in Fredericksburg, Va; and Jane Tews, superintendent of the Central East District of the Desert-Southwest Conference (4-year term).

In an earlier election, Carolyn M. Marshall, Veedersburg, Ind., was named to her fourth term as conference secretary.

Turning to legislative proposals, delegates rejected a petition related to abortion. Opponents said the proposal would make a police force out of the church's central finance agency in monitoring statements by church agencies, clergy and laity on either side of the issue. Also defeated was a petition intended to eliminate from the *Book of Discipline* "guaranteed appointments" for clergy.

The conference declined to mandate no clergy will be appointed unless he or she affirms homosexuality is not God's will. Delegates approved updating a statement on sexual ethics within ministerial relations. The statement declares "sexual misconduct within a ministerial relationship can be defined as a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role, and the exploitation of those who are vulnerable in that relationship."

On another issue, monitoring was ordered at every level of The United Methodist Church as part of the effort to eliminate racism.

More than 92 percent of the delegates rejected a measure that would have deleted church policy that prohibits annual conferences or congregations from reducing their apportionments. Apportionments are the amounts of money allocated to each conference to support churchwide mission and ministry.

Delegates approved a petition to boycott *USA Today* to protest the lack of progress in the five-year-old labor dispute involving the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*. *USA Today* is the flagship newspaper of Gannett Co., which owns the *Detroit News* and has a controlling interest in the joint operating agreement between the two Detroit newspapers. Some 2,500 workers at the Detroit papers went on strike July 13, 1995, and many were later replaced by management.

The General Conference also authorized a study of communion in The United Methodist Church. The effort will be aimed at developing a meaningful understanding of the service of Holy Communion.

Jeff Quick, Bryant, Texas, said the church's focus on young people claims them as assets for the church.

Shalom communities, the church's emphasis on urban issues, are increasing, delegates were told. The communities now number more than 300 in the United States and Africa.

Strengthening the African-American church is a gift to the entire church, said Carolyn Johnson, West Lafayette, Ind. Nothing, she added, is as satisfying as hearing from people whose lives have been strengthened by Christ.

In his morning sermon, Bishop Daniel Arichea Jr., Baguio, Philippines, Area, declared inclusiveness and diversity make the church's message more effective. "Because God accepts us, we should accept one another," he said. "There is room for diversity as long as we hold onto the center of our faith: Jesus Christ." The church, he cautioned, must never let differences stand in the way of its message and ministry.

News media covering the session increased in numbers Monday. A survey of interest in General Conference news showed 9,000 General Conference Web site users the first day, and the number has grown since then, surpassing 11,000 users one day. A comparable number of users are visiting the United Methodist News Service General Conference site, said Susan Peek, director of Internet Services for United Methodist Communications.

### Where in the Convention Center Is . . . Brad Motta?????

You can find me in a place where the sounds are muffled, and all the extraneous noise in the convention center is filtered out. The people in this area bring clarity to some delegates who would otherwise sit in confusion. It is a place occupied by fast thinkers and talkers. Taking a photo of the inside proved very difficult as you will see because it is very tight quarters.

See photo on page 2020 for the location.

—*Robert Lear*

## Prayer Areas, Concert of Prayer Inspire Delegates

The East Ohio Conference Evangelism Committee welcomes delegates and visitors to the General Conference prayer areas in the convention center's Little Theater and Musical Hall. The Rev. Charles J. Naylor recruited local church volunteers to staff the areas 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

The first area—in the Little Theater—is a place for private prayer, communion and anointing. Soft lighting, music, banners, a fountain, and a prie-dieu create a quiet ambiance. An elder from the East Ohio Conference offers communion and anointing. Stations of the Lord's Prayer comprise the second area, a private, self-guided prayer center. Plants, posters, and other items adorn each table. The third area, located in the Concert Hall to the left of the Lord's Prayer area, is available for those who desire to offer more audible praise and prayer.

A daily Concert of Prayer is held from 1:45-2:15 p.m. in the Little Theater. Eighty to 100 persons visit the area each day. In addition, several conferences are having round-the-clock prayer vigils.



*C. Irene Coates of Grand Island, Neb. lifts up the prayer concerns of delegates and attendees at the General Conference prayer room.*

—Dewayne and Ginnie Lowther photo

—Patty Meyers

—Patty Meyers

## Sabbath Provides Time to Contemplate

I rarely have appreciated Sabbath more than I did May 7—the Sunday between the two weeks of General Conference. The opportunity to cease from work, from the “order of the day,” to be silent and contemplative, is a great blessing.

The Creator modeled Sabbath. According to the New Revised Standard Version, “And on the seventh day God . . . rested . . .” (Genesis 2:2). Some scholars say the Hebrew word for “rest” means more than resting or finishing work: God *contemplated* on what God had done.

As I sat in Severance Hall and let the glorious music wash over me, I contemplated another Hebrew word, *hesed*, usually translated as “steadfast love.” I once counted 107 occurrences of “steadfast love” in the Psalms alone. The phrase occurs many times throughout the scriptures. Psalm 118 repeats the litany several times: God’s steadfast love endures forever.

As the Sabbath drew to a close, I gave thanks for its blessings, asking that the General Conference return to “the order of the day,” rested, contemplative, secure in God’s steadfast love and willing to share it with others.

## Author Signings at the Cokesbury Store

### Tuesday — May 9

1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

**Robert Martin Walker**, *You Might Be a United Methodist If . . .*

**Boyce A. Bowdon**, *The Child-Friendly Church*

### Wednesday — May 10

11 a.m. to noon

**Robert Martin Walker**, *Encounters with the Living God*

Noon to 1 p.m.

**Rodney Wilmoth**, *How United Methodists Share Their Faith*

**Donald Messer**, *The Befuddled Stork*

**Marie White Webb**, *The Power of the Dream*

**ST Kimbrough Jr.**, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*

1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**James W. Moore**, *Some Folks Feel the Rain*

**Deborah K. Cronin**, *Holy Ground*

## General Conference to Consider Two Resolutions on the Philippines

Saturday evening, the conference approved a petition related to a conflict in the Philippines. On Monday morning, the conference moved reconsideration of the matter, and after a presentation by Davao Area Bishop Paul L.A. Granadosin, a delegate offered a substitute resolution.

Both resolutions concern conflict on Mindanao, the largest island in the southern Philippines, and smaller islands close to that part of Malaysia that is on Borneo. Also, the Moluccan Islands of Indonesia come into play.

Islam is strong in Mindanao and the southern islands. Both the distance from the capital Manila and the Roman Catholic majority in the rest of the country lead many citizens either to seek independence or to become an autonomous region. Some groups, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, seek both independence and establishment of an Islamic government with application of Islamic (Shria) law.

The main difference in the two resolutions is that the first places blame for the current situation on the group recently blamed for kidnapping tourists in Malaysia and now holding them in the Philippines. The second resolution does not blame a specific group but places blame on government troops for their actions. The two resolutions reflect two different understandings of how to negotiate toward peace in the region and how to strengthen the peace process.

The situation is crucial. Groups have taken international prisoners, acts reported in European and U.S. newspapers. The region also experiences daily bus bombings and other acts of violence. Concern about that situation catalyzed the initial response.

The plenary postponed the matter of substitution until both petitions appear in the *DCA*.

—Robert McClean

### Resolution presented by Angelito G. Samson (Kansas East) and passed May 6:

We rejoice with the reported rescue of the 15 hostages previously held by extremist Muslim rebels of the Abu Sayyaf group. But with them were four dead: a priest and three teachers. We share the agony of those 21 hostages from Sipadan Island in Malaysia, among them, French, German, Lebanese, South African, Finnish, and Malaysian nationals who face continuing uncertainties. We lament the outbreak of violence involving Muslim rebels in the 14 localities of Mindanao, including those in Sulu and Basilan islands. And so, we are grimly reminded of what we stand for as members of The United Methodist Church.

Whereas “individuals are affirmed by God in their diversity, so are nations and cultures”; and “while recognizing valid differences in culture and political philosophy, we stand for justice and peace in every” situation [*Book of Discipline*, Par. 69A].

Whereas, “we believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. . . and insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises

between or among them; that human values must outweigh military claims as governments determine their priorities” [*Book of Discipline*, Par. 69C].

Be it hereby resolved that the General Conference 2000 of The United Methodist Church express its prayer that hostilities begin to cease, for there are only losers in wars, and those who claim to be victors must live with the threat of violent reprisals in an unending cycle of vengeance; that food, medicines, clothing, and safe refuge be ensured by all parties to those whose life are in their hands; that humanitarian agencies be allowed to care for them until the ultimate return of peace in their disturbed lands; that we join all with this our resolution of the conflicts and sorrows; that we call upon all peoples to recognize one another, to be in community with each other, in the hope of a just world order, upholding how all persons and groups must feel secure in their life and right to live within a society if order is to be achieved and maintained by law, and if we especially express this hope to both Christians and non-Christians alike, we must leave the rigors of the sovereign Philippine community.

### Resolution presented by Ricarta R. Rapisora (Mindanao Philippines) as a substitute, on reconsideration of the resolution that was passed May 6:

We rejoice with the reported release of 15 hostages previously held by extremist Muslim rebels. We share the agony of those 21 hostages from Sipadan Island in Malaysia, among them French, German, Lebanese, South African, Finnish and Malaysian nationals who face continuing uncertainties. We condemn the outbreak of violent conflict involving the rebels and the Philippine government in 14 localities in Mindanao including those in Sulo and Basilan Islands.

Be it hereby resolved that the General Conference 2000 of The United Methodist Church express its prayer that hostilities immediately cease; that food, medicines, clothing, and safe refuge be insured by all parties to those whose lives are in their hands; and that humanitarian agencies be allowed to care for them until ultimate return of peace in their lands; that we join all who desire a solution of the conflicts and the struggles that will build a just and durable peace; that we call upon all peoples to recognize one another to be in community with each other in the hope of a just world order, upholding how all persons and groups must feel secure in their life and right to live within society if order is to be achieved and maintained by law; and that we especially express this hope to both Christians and non-Christians alike, who live the rigors of southern Philippines community.



### **Future Bishop**

*Oblivious to the work of the General Conference is Elizabeth,  
daughter of Susan Brambaugh, Internet assistant.*

### **Play ‘Jeopardy’ at General Conference**

In the game “Jeopardy,” a contestant receives the answer and then is given a few seconds to come up with the question to which the answer is directed. Take a moment to challenge your brain with a game of General Conference “Jeopardy.”

1. Water and voting pads
2. \$2
3. “I move the previous question.”
4. 150 pounds
5. 10 pounds
6. 1,500 words a minute
7. Nosebleed
8. Everyone looks alike.
9. Faith and Order
10. Salt and pepper
11. The Third Fifth Bank
12. “Serious trouble will bypass you.”
13. Fast food
14. Pittsburgh
15. “It’s too cold in here!”

Questions can be found on page 2020

—Brad Motta

## Prayer Concerns

You are invited to bring prayer requests to any Cokesbury checkout counter or to Brad Motta in the *DCA* office.

Requests will be printed in the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

Please pray for the following:

- Mary Beth Anderson, Illinois Great Rivers Conference delegate, who had to remain home for chemotherapy
- The Rev. Robert L. "Bob" Benson, retired pastor of the Wyoming Conference, who had a heart attack
- Dr. Neal R. Berte, North Alabama delegate and president of Birmingham Southern College, unable to attend General Conference because he is undergoing treatment for a painful calcium deposit
- The Rev. Robert L. Burgess, Louisiana delegate, and his spouse Peggy, who had to return to Monroe, La., to attend the eulogy for his brother-in-law, Edward R. Cromwell Jr.
- Laura Dassama, 16, daughter of Mousa A. Dassama Sr., Liberia delegate. She suffers from sickle cell anemia, and is in a crisis situation regarding her spleen and liver.
- Rebecca Day, daughter of page Sharon Cade, who has Graves' disease
- Vanessa and Jeff Edwards
- Helen, an Africa University choir member, and her cousin who was injured in an auto accident. The cousin is the primary care-giver for Helen's three children while the choir is on tour.
- Anita Fenstermacher, North Indiana alternate delegate, unable to attend because of cancer treatment
- The Rev. Mary A. Johnson-Maasaquoi, Sierra Leone delegate, admitted to the Metro Medical Health Center. She will undergo bypass surgery.
- Joanne Kirkland, Oklahoma reserve delegate, injured in a serious car accident immediately before General Conference
- Laura, daughter of conference marshals, who will have a brain tumor removed May 24
- Amelia Mostyn, undergoing heart surgery
- People of Sierre Leone, United Nations peacekeepers held hostage, and their families
- The people of Vieques, Puerto Rico
- Persons whose homes are threatened by forest fires in New Mexico
- Jim Pitka, spouse of Iowa pastor the Rev. Marjolein Pitka. He is near death in Iowa City.
- Cindy and Dave Poteet in Oklahoma City as Cindy received negative news on the results of her cancer chemotherapy
- Family and friends of Preston Price's father, who died May 4
- Betty Reilly, a conference page, now hospitalized
- The Rev. Wally Riches, California-Nevada Conference, undergoing treatment for leukemia
- Ruth Rodriguez, very ill with cancer
- Eddie Self, North Alabama delegate, elected seven times, but now in intensive care at the University of Alabama Hospital at Birmingham with a malignant brain tumor
- John T. Shettle, North Indiana delegate, unable to attend because of cancer treatment
- Jean S. Sublette, Alabama-West Florida delegate, whose mother died May 5
- Sustainable peace in Sierra Leone, where fighting recently erupted
- Bert Talbott, South Indiana alternate delegate, unable to attend because of back surgery
- The inclusion of all God's children
- The marriage of Marty and Kristi





Musicians from Ohio's five United Methodist-related colleges and universities entertain a packed house Sunday evening. —UMNS Photo by Mike DuBose

## Severance Hall Concert Stirs a Packed House

The recently renovated Severance Hall, home of the Cleveland Orchestra, was consecrated Sunday evening in a festival of music and worship as choirs and musicians from Ohio's five United Methodist-related colleges and universities performed before a packed house.

Students from Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea; Mount Union College, Alliance; Ohio Northern University, Ada; Ohio Western University, Delaware; and Otterbein College, Westerville, presented a powerful performance, culminating in Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* under the direction of internationally known conductor Robert Page.

Attendees also welcomed the Rev. Ralph E. Jarboe Jr. and his son Matthew, 12, modern-day circuit riders as they completed their horseback journey from St. Paul, Kan., to Cleveland. Celebrating the tradition of their Methodist ancestors, they stopped each night for worship and preaching.

One chaplain described the evening as "a rare opportunity for the church to see the fruits of what it has sown in higher education," adding "tonight was an intimate and personal experience with the present and the future of our church." Dr. Sandra W. Lutz, event coordinator, expressed appreciation "for a chance to celebrate and take a break from the business of General Conference."

The performance—recorded by Cleveland radio station WCLV—95.5 FM—will be broadcast Tuesday at 9 p.m.

—David Persons

### You Know the Second Week of General Conference Has Begun If . . .

- You wish "Thou shalt sleep in" were one of the Ten Commandments.
- You awaken saying, "I move the previous question on all that is before us."
- You refer to Rice Crispies Squares as health food.
- You'd pay "good money" to have Dr. Scholl as your personal podiatrist.
- You've figured out which at-the-door handouts make you mad.
- You find yourself thinking in acronyms such as "TBFMT" (Tomorrow's Bishops at the Floor Mikes Today).
- You wish they'd put "The Price Is Right" on the big screen.
- You wish the *Daily Christian Advocate* had something funnier than this.
- You wonder why you worked so hard to be elected a delegate.
- You no longer care where Brad Motta is in the convention center.

—John Thornburg and Friends

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Yellowstone Conference luncheon is noon Tuesday at the Holiday Inn Lakeside. All YAC members are welcome.
- The Nebraska Area delegation's dinner with Bishop Joel and Dr. Raquel Martinez will be held 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Hong Kong Jockey Club Restaurant at Tower City Center (lower level). Delegates and friends of the Nebraska Area are welcome.
- The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico invites all delegates, visitors and observers to visit its booth (Exhibit Hall B entrance) to see the news, photographs and video of the removal and arrest of peaceful demonstrators, including Bishop Juan A. Vera-Mendez, from the island of Vieques.
- The New England delegation dinner will be held at 5:45 p.m. today at the Ferris Steakhouse at the corner of Prospect and Fourth.
- The Albany Area will celebrate together this evening at 5:30 p.m. for a dinner buffet in the Grille Room at the Sheraton City Centre Hotel. Contact Brolin Parker at seat 13 or Shirley Byers at the Sheraton for reservations.
- The Northwest Texas/New Mexico Area delegations and visitors will have dinner today at 6 p.m. at Johnny Q's Steakhouse, 55 Public Square. Contact Eddie Allsup, Northwest Texas, or Sandra Roberts, New Mexico, for more information.
- The Commission on Central Conference Affairs will reconvene for further business today at 1:30 p.m. in room 212-A.
- The Baltimore-Washington delegation dinner with Phyllis and Bishop Felton May will be held today from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Marriott Key Center. Special guests at the dinner include Bishop Christopher Jokomo and Rev. Josephat Banda.
- The bus for the Kansas West/Kansas East's reception today will load at 5 p.m.
- The German Central Conference delegation's luncheon with Bishops Kleiber, Minor and spouses will be held at 12:30 p.m. today in the Grille Room of the Sheraton City Centre hotel.
- Space is extremely limited for additional seating at the Northern Illinois Conference dinner Tuesday from 5-7:30 p.m. Contact Rose E. Arroyo for tickets (C-6-9) and more information. The dinner, a time for fun and relaxation, will be held in the second floor Salon at the Marriott Hotel.
- The editor of the *Danish Christian Advocate* invites all delegates and other official participants from Russia and the Nordic and Baltic countries to a social gathering tomorrow at 10:15 p.m. in the Sheraton.
- Bishop Rader invites all "Wisconsinites" to gather for lunch at Hornblowers, 1151 N. Marginal Road at noon Wednesday. Contact Sue Setterlund (A-14-13 or 771-7600) to reserve a place. Cost of the meal is \$10.
- All are invited to the Native American banquet at 5:30 p.m. tomorrow at the Residence Inn, 527 Prospect Ave. Keynote speaker is Juanita Helphrey, minister for racial justice and Native American programs, United Church of Christ. Tickets are \$25 at the door. Call the Marriott, 696-9200, room 415 for reservations.

### **'I Feel Really at Home Here With You All,' African Delegate Says**

At the end of four days of plenary and subcommittee meetings, a Conferences Committee member rose for the first time to address the tired delegates.

"I receive it as a joy in my heart as how well organized you are and how well you work together," said Tudinga A. Lopempa, delegate from Oriental and Equator Congo, through a French interpreter.

"Since we are now in a conference where there is war...eastern Congo area...nobody thought I would be able to be here. It is a miracle to be here," he continued. "Your work here

shows me how committed to the life of the church you are. I am grateful.

"I ask your prayers of peace for my country and for my neighbors and my family. I feel really at home here with you all," Lopempa added.

"The only change I would suggest to what you said," added Vance Summers Jr., West Ohio, "is to change the 'you' to 'we.' You are part of us. We are doing this *together*."

—Dean Snyder and Wally Athey

## Where in the Convention Center Is . . . Brad Motta?

The translation booths are a vital link for English- and non-English-speaking delegates. The almost soundproof rooms usually contain two translators who work together to bring the translated proceedings to the delegates. They provide a link so that we can hear one another in our language. Many times they struggle to hear and translate phrases and words that are not easily translated into the language they are assigned. Pictured here with me are the Swahili translators, Betty Kiboko and Kalamba Kilumba.



—Dewayne and Ginnie Lowther photo



—Dewayne and Ginnie Lowther photo

## Deacons, Diaconal Ministers Greet Friends, Give Thanks

The Section of Deacons and Diaconal Ministers invited deacons, diaconal ministers, and friends to a luncheon May 8. A trolley took 60 of them to Cleveland's First United Methodist Church. The luncheon's tenor was far different than that of previous General Conference gatherings. It was not a caucus. It was a time to greet friends and give thanks. It seems clear the church is committed to two orders of ordained ministry.

Since the 1996 General Conference created the order of deacon in full connection, 900 diaconal ministers have been ordained deacon. Approximately 500 have chosen to remain diaconal ministers. More than 600 have become candidates for the order of deacon. Deacons and diaconal ministers serve in many capacities throughout the church.

Jimmy Carr, assistant general secretary, expressed his appreciation, encouraged ecumenical bridge building, and praised his successor, Joaquin Garcia. Garcia expressed concern for lay ministry and encouraged attendees to work for those who are disenfranchised.

Carr and Garcia invited participation in the 2001 World Diakonia Conference in Australia.

- Patty Meyers

## General Conference 'Jeopardy' Game

1. What are two things that don't mix at General Conference?
2. What is the cost for the two life-saving beverages of a delegate: coffee and water?
3. What words should have been spoken 15 minutes before you actually heard them?
4. How heavy is a delegate's General Conference tote bag?
5. What is the average number of pounds gained by General Conference attendees?
6. How fast must you read to digest all of the fliers distributed at General Conference?
7. What happens when you sit in the upper levels of the auditorium?
8. What is the view from the upper levels of the auditorium?
9. What does it require to get through General Conference?
10. What is the dominant hair color at General Conference?
11. What is the most confusing name of a bank you have ever heard?
12. What fortune cookie message did this writer receive?
13. What do you call any meal consumed at General Conference?
14. In four years what city will suffer a paper-recycling crisis?
15. What is the favorite whine of the General Conference?

—Brad Motta

# **COKESBURY CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE**

*Exhibit Hall A (Lower Level)*

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and Board Members in white shirts.***

## ‘Soulforce’ To Stage Protest After Negotiations Cease

After two negotiating sessions with a group of bishops and civic leaders did not result in gaining entrance to the conference floor, members of the gay Christian activist group, Soulforce, plan to stage a non-violent act of protest outside the Convention Center on Wednesday morning.

Referring to the negotiations in a statement released late Tuesday night, the bishops stated:

“The meetings we’ve had with Soulforce were for the purpose of offering the hospitality of the church. We have hoped that everyone knows our doors are open, but we wanted Soulforce to be told by us personally. The meetings were very cordial and helpful. We will honor the privacy of those meetings by offering no further specific details. The meetings have concluded, have been fruitful, and have served their constructive purpose.” Bishop William Oden, president of the Council of Bishops added, “There was a good spirit in the meetings.”

Twice Monday, five bishops met with city of Cleveland officials and four members of Soulforce, a nondenominational coalition dedicated to “promoting justice for sexual minorities.” Soulforce is headed by the Rev. Mel White, an author, filmmaker and former evangelical minister. Rev. White “came out” in 1993 in a sermon delivered at Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church, Dallas. He had previously been a ghost writer for Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker and Jerry Falwell.

In a pre-conference news release, Soulforce leaders announced their intention to stage a non-violent protest on May 10 when George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury, is scheduled to speak. Their original request was to be able to have members of Soulforce kneeling in a silent prayer vigil throughout the archbishop’s sermon. “We want to be on the floor at the foot of the cross and at the same level as the

archbishop,” said White. “We won’t speak. We won’t interrupt. We won’t move.”

In a meeting early Monday morning, the four Soulforce representatives “raised their ante,” White told the *DCA*. Additional negotiating points were introduced Monday morning, including requests to speak and be present on the floor of the conference. During the Monday evening negotiations, the bishops offered to take the matter of the requests to the delegates, informing Soulforce leaders that it would take a two-thirds vote to do so. Soulforce withdrew from the talks at that point. White suggested that the possibility of losing a two-thirds vote would have been painful for them.

Soulforce is using the occasion of the General Conference to sponsor “Soulforce University,” an event to train people in the nonviolent resistance principles of Mohandas Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Gandhi’s grandson, Arun, and King’s daughter, Yolanda, are in Cleveland to participate in the training at an event this evening at Cleveland State University.

“We take a risk of offending the delegates,” said White. “But we also say that you haven’t seen anything yet.”

AMAR, a coalition including Affirmation, the Reconciling Congregation Program, the Methodist Federation for Social Action, and United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church, have chosen not to be a partner with Soulforce in this action. Coalition leaders are aware that some of their members will want to join in.

—John Thornburg

### Transforming Congregations Say They ‘Uphold Apostolic Faith’

In the ongoing debate regarding homosexuals and their

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ch, the goal of Transforming Congregations is to “uphold the apostolic faith as regards sexual morality,” according to executive director Jim Gentile in an interview with *DCA*.

Transforming Congregations seek both to inform the church and to “proclaim the truth in love” in “transforming” homosexuals, according to Gentile. “We feel it is just as dangerous to proclaim only truth. Both love and truth must be present”.

Asked why Transforming Congregations focus so exclusively on the issue of homosexuality, Gentile said homosexuals “are the only group that is asking their sin to be blessed. Other sinners are not seeking official sanction.”

Gentile also noted what he sees as a dilemma facing conservatives in the church: “When we wish to talk about the truth in the same way we have talked about love we are labeled ‘mean-spirited’ and ‘hateful,’” he said. He went on to argue that the church in the United States “is polite to the point of *erring* in love. It is a sloppy agape.”

—David Persons

### **Transforming Congregations newsletter declares “the doors to full acceptance will remain closed”**

In a newsletter to delegates, “Transforming Congregations” asked: “Help me understand! Why would people remain connected to a group who doesn’t affirm them or approve of their behavior? . . . Why, especially in light of the fact that there are several denominations that bless and approve homosexuality?”

The newsletter continued: “Imagine a room of one hundred people. Ninety-nine like you, but one does not. The emotionally dependent heart yearns for the love of that one who rejects it. . . . The UCC, the MCC and Unitarian Universalist all open wide their doors to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. Their polity, doctrines and practices embrace such ones with great celebration.”

The newsletter distributed Monday declared that the desire of some to stay where they are a “voluntary victim” is a “place of emotional immaturity. A voluntary victimization of self returning over and over again to a place of rejection.” The abuse victim stays in the abuse, according to the newsletter, because “poor relating is better than no relating.”

Transforming Congregations raises concern that The United Methodist Church might “lower His standards to our experience. Healthy persons with enough self-respect and ego strength would not permit themselves to remain in such places of incongruity. . . . Psychologically whole enough individuals would seek that place of acceptance and get on with life. “

The newsletter closed with the advice:

“STOP BEING A VICTIM. FIND THE STRENGTH TO MOVE TOWARD A SITUATION WHERE WE CAN ALL EXPEND OUR RESOURCES ON MINISTRY RATHER THAN CONFLICT.”

—Brad Motta

## Affiliated Autonomous Church Representatives

The Methodist Church of Argentina  
Bishop Aldo M. Etchegoyen  
Miss Amal Azzam de Strasser

United Protestant Church of Belgium  
John Opoka  
Philippe Laurent

Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia  
Hno. Rufino Tarifa  
Obispo Efrain Yanapa

Methodist Church in Brazil  
Bishop Paulo Lockmann  
Pastor Marisa de Freitas Farias Coutinho  
Henrique de Godoi Alvim

The Methodist Church of Chile  
Ms. Kendy Maldonado  
Bishop Neftali Aravena Bravo

Methodist Church of the Republic of China  
Dr. Harry Fay  
Bishop Philip Tseng

Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica  
Dr. Luis F. Palomo, Bishop  
Mrs. Zulay Palomo

Methodist Church in Cuba  
Rev. Ernesto Betancourt  
Dayimi Pimentel

Dominican Evangelical Church  
Rev. Alejandro Figueroa  
Juan S. Roman

The United Evangelical Church of Ecuador  
Dr. Cabezas A. Salomon  
Lic. Pilatuna L. Alfredo

The Methodist Church in Fiji  
Rev. Tomas Kanailagi  
Mrs. Erma Kanailagi

The Methodist Church, Hong Kong  
Rev. Dr. Ping-kwong Li  
Mr. Sze-yuen Ng

The Methodist Church in India  
Rev. Mrs. Sulbha Ahaley  
Mr. Naleen Kumar Samson  
Mrs. Perveen Tikaram

The Methodist Church in Indonesia  
Mrs. E. P. Situmeang  
Rev. J. Sitorus  
Dr. Gerben Hutabarat

Methodist Evangelical Church of Italy  
Rev. Valdo Benecchi  
Dr. Giunio Censi

The United Church of Christ in Japan  
Rev. Dr. Jin Arai

The Methodist Church in Kenya  
Rev. Prof. Zablon Nthamburi, Bishop  
Mrs. Hellen Mung'athia

The Korean Methodist Church  
Rev. Kim Young Ju  
Mr. Lee Sang Kyu  
Ms. Mary Um

The Methodist Church in Malaysia  
Mr. Steward Saga  
Rev. David Tharmakan

The Methodist Church of the Union of Myanmar  
Bishop U. Maung Than  
U Myint Than

Evangelical Methodist Church of Nicaragua  
Rev. Ruben V. Pak  
Rosolio Reyes

The Church of Pakistan  
Rt. Rev. S. K. Dass  
Mr. Marvin Pervaz  
Mrs. Khushnud Azariah

Evangelical Methodist Church of Panama  
Bishop Pedro Arauez  
Juan Fajardo

Methodist Church of Peru  
Bishop Jorge C. Figueroa  
Mrs. Beatriz A. de Testino

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines  
Bishop Elmer M. Bolocon  
Bishop Alan Ray B. Sarte

Igreja Evangelical Metodista Potugesa  
Ireneu da Silva Cunha

The Methodist Church in Samoa  
Rev. Faatoese Auvaa  
Mr. Pa'u Motootua

The Spanish Evangelical Church  
Dr. Enrique Capo

The Methodist Church in Singapore  
Rev. Dr. Robert Morgan Solomon  
Mr. Chan Fook Kay

Evangelical Methodist Church in Uruguay  
Ms. Beatriz Ferrari

## Reports of Legislative Committees

### Church and Society—(5/8/00 5:15 p.m.)

CORRECTION to page 1955 col. 1 of the *DCA*:

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Asking the US government to impose a moratorium on the death penalty.

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Amending “Immigrants in the U.S.: Ministries of hospitality, advocacy and justice” to include work on behalf of legal immigrants who are now denied welfare benefits and to support church-based immigration clinics;
- Recognizing the necessity to include private church-based social welfare programs in the total picture and to uphold the same standards for such programs as government programs are held to;
- Clarifying the 1996 Resolution on Grand jury abuse as referring to the U.S.;
- Establishing prison ministry outreach through BOD, GBGM, GBCS and the Racial Justice Integrity Task Force;
- Deleting the current resolution on penal reform;
- Urging state legislatures to review their policies for including candidates on a ballot;
- Amending resolution on repression and the right to privacy to expand the definition of censorship and decry government secrets kept from the public under the guise of “national security”;
- Endorsing fair employment practices under Project Equality;
- Calling for a phase-out in dioxin production;
- Amending “New Developments in Genetic Science” to oppose human-germ-line therapies;
- Calling for a halt to mountaintop removal coal mining;
- Calling for GC to petition the US president to pardon Latin-American debt as an aid to reestablishing human lives;
- Calling for the U.S. to provide a framework for bringing to an end the Israel-Palestinian conflict;
- Affirming the precautionary principle in toxic chemical and pollution reduction;
- Seeking justice for Filipino WWII veterans;
- Instruct every Annual Conference to establish a board of church and society or other structure to provide work on the social principles;

- Calling for the eradication of sexual harassment in the UMC and society;
- Calling for a change to laws that treat pseudo-addiction and addiction in the same way;
- Updating the 1996 Resolution on “Prejudice against Muslims and Arabs in the U.S.”;
- Promoting active to preserve the sacred sites of Native Americans;
- Instructing GBCS to provide training and witness to Native American UM churches on the social witness program during the next quadrennium;
- Calling for GBCS and other relevant agencies to actively an end to the oppression of Native Americans;
- Updating the 1996 Resolution on “Treatment of women under Social Security in the U.S.”;
- Opposing continued cuts in Federal funds for Indian Health Service;
- Calling for UMC to work to prevent juvenile delinquency and appropriate treatment of offenders;
- Asking GBCS and annual conferences to provide education on the relationship between white privilege in the US and the continuation of racism;
- Calling for UMC to declare universal healthcare a basic human right;
- Readopting 1996 resolution on “UMC and America’s native people”;
- Readopting 1996 resolution on “Comity agreements affecting development of Native American ministries by UMC”;
- Calling on U.S. UMC members to support voting rights for the people of Washington, D.C.;
- Protecting disability, survivor and retirement Social Security benefits for women;
- Deleting “Ratification of the D.C. Representation in the 1996 Discipline because it is redundant with a new resolution;
- Encouraging every UMC to be a “weapon-free zone” amended to strike “and that no firearm or edged weapons be allowed in the place of worship or any part of the church plant”;
- Supporting current abolitionist efforts to end slavery;
- Setting out strategies for being the church amid disagreement, with two additions to the list under “Ministry of Mindfulness”;



- Amending 1996 Resolution on Housing and specifically address housing in the USA;
- Expressing grief for acts of violence;
- Giving NUMNAC \$100,000 to be the lead agency on a tribal economic strategies study;
- Decrying war in the Congo as redrafted;
- Deleting 1996 resolution opposing radar in Lajas Valley and Vieques, Puerto Rico;
- Updating the wording of the 1996 “UMC and Peace” resolution;
- Amending 1996 “Nuclear Abolition” resolution to set new goals and recommend new actions;
- Calling for the appointment of a Secretary of Peace in the U.S. cabinet;
- Calling for the U.S. Army School of the Americas to be closed;
- Calling for an end to Puerto Rico’s colonial status;
- Demonstrating solidarity with the people of Vieques, Puerto Rico;
- Calling on the US government to take specific steps to end the war in Columbia;
- Opposing hate crimes in the U.S.

—*Gretchen Hakola and Paul Widicus*

**Conferences—(5/8/00 5:45 p.m.  
All business completed.)**

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Exempting the Board of Ordained Ministry from the one third, one third, one third requirement;
- Referring to the General Board of Discipleship the request that each annual conference hold a training seminar to identify unmet spiritual needs of the community;
- Encouraging each annual conference to develop a plan to help seminary graduates retire their educational debts. This was amended to include graduates of ‘course of study’;
- Calling for annual conferences to have a conference committee on disability concerns or other structure to provide functions;
- Enabling legislation to support earlier action relating to the reduction in the number of bishops in a jurisdiction and the impact on missional needs;
- Renumbering of certain paragraphs to reflect earlier committee action;
- For the conference chancellor to have floor privileges without vote at annual conference if not a conference member;

- For open meetings within annual conferences with some exceptions;
- Removing the word “preferably” from the instructions for ordering conference journals;
- Modifying rules for access to unpublished annual conference records;
- Making the conference lay leader a member of annual conference;
- Adding Lay Speaking Ministries as a group to which the conference lay leader relates;
- For each annual conference to have a Board of Trustees;
- Allowing the conference chancellor to be either laity or clergy;
- Including deacons in full connection among the clergy to calculate a charge’s number of lay members to annual conference;
- For clear connections between General Conference agencies, annual conference entities and the local congregation and clear checks and balances regarding program functions and financial/administrative functions within the annual conference;
- Removing the word “effective” from before the date of assignment for bishops in Para. 407.1 so as to allow General Church support for newly elected bishops;
- Reducing the life of resolutions from 12 years to eight;
- Changing the number of General Conference delegates from a minimum of 600 and a maximum of 1,000 to a minimum of 800 and a maximum of 1,200;
- Allowing central conferences to choose to give lay members the unlimited right to vote including on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

The committee recommended nonconcurrence:

- Calling for the realignment of annual conference boundaries if the annual conference exceeds 250,000 members;
- Creating an Evangelical Missionary Conference in the Western Jurisdiction. A minority report is expected.

—*Dean Snyder and Wally Athey*

**Discipleship—(5/8/00 3 p.m. All business completed.)**

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Creating the position of certified lay assistants with duties, expectations of, and process for certification. This category of ministry is intended to provide ministry to small membership churches.

- Approving the Korean United Methodist Hymnal to be listed in the *Book of Discipline* as an official resource together with other official resources.

—Linda Green and Frank Estrada

#### **Faith and Order—(5/8/00 5 p.m.)**

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Keeping language stating “homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching”;
- Prohibiting holy unions;
- Keeping self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being ordained or appointed.
- Imploring families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends;
- Calling for worldwide enforcement of laws against sexual exploitation of children by adults, “including images in all media.”

The committee recommended nonconcurrence on approximately 121 petitions on homosexuality.

—Ann Whiting and Erik Alsgaard

#### **Financial Administration—(5/8/00)**

The committee recommended concurrence on General Council on Finance and Administration reports 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Reports 8 and 16 met with nonconcurrence with the committee recommending changes in the reports. Reports 8 and 16 deal largely with a new apportionment formula that would base apportionments on a percentage related to economic figures in a given area.

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Adding intangible assets to the list of properties that are held in trust for the United Methodist Church;
- Permitting charges to apply for emergency subsidy grants from the Equitable Compensation Fund;
- Requesting the General Conference to develop policies asserting ownership of general agency surplus funds.

The committee recommended nonconcurrence:

- Allowing local congregations flexibility in determining apportioned giving;
- Requiring the General Conference, annual conferences, and districts to relinquish all claims to local church property.

—Davie Burgdorf and Tom Burger

#### **Global Ministries—(5/8/00)**

The committee recommended concurrence with amendments:

- Sponsoring a four-year study on the economic impact of colonialism and capitalism on native people;
- Recommending the end of Puerto Rican colonial status;
- Relating to United States and China political relations;
- Updating information on “East Timor” in the Book of Resolutions;
- Supporting and ministering to victims of crime.

—Cheryl Hahs Edwards and Linda Bloom

#### **Higher Education and Ministry—(5/8/00 5 p.m.)**

- Considering continued funding for the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico;
- Changing “disability” to “incapacity” in first sentence of Para. 325.4;
- Bringing list of pastoral duties into line with Part IV of the *Book of Discipline*. Referred to General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM);
- Amending title of Para. 340 to License for Pastoral Ministry;
- Amending wording in second sentence of Para. 315.8 to “a person with a disability can meet professional standards.”;
- Adding new paragraph on Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to Para. 345;
- Amending Petition 30912 to read “Ordained clergy or probationary members from another annual conference may transfer into. . . .”;
- Clarifying language and make consistent (uses ordained clergy and not elders);
- Regarding leave of absence;
- Adding new paragraph on Appointment of Deacons in Full Connection to Para. 434;
- Adding word “disability” to Para. 430;
- Deleting Para. 537.10;
- Affirm clergy appointed to a general agency of the UMC shall be covered by the agency’s policy for maternity/paternity/disability leave;
- Declaring the 2001-2004 quadrennium as a time for discerning the ministry of the church;
- Reinstating of local pastor status;
- Defining retirement requirements and privileges of local pastors;
- Clarifying Para. 344.1 regarding continuance as a local pastor;

- Amending Petition 31781 that all ordained clergy are “encouraged” [from “mandated”] to participate in an intensive training to help develop multi-cultural sensitivity. Referred to GBHEM for implementation;
- Amending Petition 30756 regarding mentoring and mentors in Para. 346;
- Amending Petition 30170 regarding authenticating lay professional ministry. Referred to GBHEM and GBOD for study in order to bring a report to General Conference 2004;
- Requiring evangelism as a requirement for seminary graduates and for local pastor candidates;
- Continuing the Black College Fund;
- Requiring annual conference Boards of Higher Education and Campus Ministry to promote United Methodist educational programs and distribute scholarships in cooperation with the UM Foundation for Christian Higher Education;
- Amending Petition 30946 to require that district committees on ordained ministry include elders in full connection, and where possible, deacons in full connection, and where possible, an elder who has taken the Course of Study;
- Reiterating the confidential nature of complaint procedures.

The committee recommended nonconcurrency:

- Deleting “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” from Para. 321.4;
- Amending Para. 326 regarding receiving into full membership associate members who have reached 55 or older and served at least five years as an associate member by three-fourths vote;
- Amending Para. 340 regarding the voting rights of student local pastors in the annual conference;
- Making local pastors who are certified candidates for ordination eligible for appointment to extension ministries.

—*Duane Ewers and Terri Hiers*

#### **Independent Commissions—(5/8/00 5:15 p.m.)**

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Continuing membership in the Consultation on Church Union and promoting the “Call to Christian Commitment and Action to Combat Racism”;
- Deleting subparagraph 3 from Paragraph 1902;
- Resolving to remember the Holocaust;
- Charging cost of agency promotional materials against receipts;

- Changing membership of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women to include 10 per cent young adults as well as 10 per cent youth.

The committee recommended concurrence with amendments:

- Increasing membership on the General Commission on United Methodist Men to 39, including three presidents from national organization of UMMs in each of the three central conference regions, with funding for participation to be included in the funds provided for the work of the commission, and at least two young people between the ages of 19-30.
- Encouraging the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women to explore the relationship between spiritual gifts and women in the Bible;
- Adding to the agenda of the General Commission on Religion and Race to assist central conferences and churches outside the US in addressing issues of tribalism and ethnocentrism;
- Adopting the statement on “Churches in Solidarity with Women: From Solidarity to Accountability;”
- Adopting “Steps Toward Wholeness: Learning and Repentance,” a study guide for United Methodist congregations in preparation for an act of repentance and Pan-Methodist Conversations on Union;
- Replacing language concerning covenantal or conciliar relationships in bodies including the Consultation on Church Union, National Council of Churches USA, World Council of Churches and the National Association of Evangelicals and World Evangelical Fellowship;
- Resolving that every annual conference in the United States have a strategy and program for eradicating racism;
- Providing a “Resolution of Intent with a View to Unity” concerning relationships with the Roman Catholic Church;
- Changing membership of the General Commission on Archives and History to assure representation from all three central conference regions.

The committee recommended nonconcurrency:

- Requiring a jurisdictional commission on archives and history;
- Requiring United Methodist Communications to monitor misrepresentation within official and unofficial UM publications and report it;
- Making support of scouting contingent on its meeting United Methodist Constitution and Social Principles values, believing this to be an inappropriate use of the Social Principles;
- Proposing a constitutional amendment to include the Council of Bishops and the Judicial Council among those

- groups of The United Methodist Church whose meetings are to be open except under limited circumstances;
- Broadening the scope of the General Commission on Religion and Race;
  - Adding education about ethnocentric violence to the program responsibilities of the General Commission on Religion and Race;
  - Changing the name of the Minority Group Self-Determination Fund;
  - Embracing the gift of the historic episcopate.

– *Andy Ellis and Kathy Noble*

- Allowing exemption from the trust clause;
- Requiring every church to have a child advocate on staff;
- A resolution rejecting overtures from the United Religious Initiative;
- A resolution allowing a local church to establish a Covenant of Church Membership and to require an annual renewal of the covenant by its members.

– *Tom Slack/Charlene Bailey*

### **Local Church—(5/8/00)**

The committee recommended concurrence:

- Establishing a Youth Council for Youth Empowerment;
- Rewriting Para. 254 to reorganize and revise the responsibilities of the church council;
- Expanding the role of small groups in congregations;
- Defining the ages of people involved in youth and young adult ministries;
- Allowing for the election of a scouting coordinator;
- Rewriting Para. 262.2 to define the responsibilities of the Pastor Parish Relations or Staff Parish Relations Committee;
- Creating a new committee on lay leadership to replace committee on nominations and personnel;
- Shortening the terms of leases of church property;
- Requiring District Superintendents to help congregations assess their potential before recommending discontinuance;
- Using equity to fund church redevelopment;
- Allowing a local church to move to another annual conference;
- A resolution to encourage the use of a variety of metaphorical images from the Bible in print publications and audiovisual media;
- A resolution encouraging support for cooperative parish ministries and ecumenically shared ministries.

The committee recommended nonconcurrence:

- Making a United Methodist Women unit optional in the local church;
- Allowing a congregation to withdraw from denomination after 5 years of voting to do so;
- Changing the way a church member is reinstated after withdrawal from membership;