

Daily Christian Advocate

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Cleveland, Ohio

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UMNS Photo by Paul Jeffrey



UMNS Photo by Mike DuBose

Final Votes on Homosexuality Reveal a Church in Pain



UMNS Photo by John Goodwin

Top left: In the auditorium balcony, an unidentified woman is restrained as she appeals for understanding and compassion.

Top right: Outside the convention center, Cleveland police arrest Albany Area Bishop Susan M. Morrison (center) and Chicago Area Bishop C. Joseph Sprague for blocking a General Conference session.

Bottom left: On the stage of the plenary hall, bishops stand in solidarity with persons making a witness to the church's anti-homosexual policies.

Delegates Wrestle with Difficult Decisions

Arrests yesterday of 29 demonstrators, including Bishop Susan M. Morrison, Albany Area, and Bishop C. Joseph Sprague, Chicago Area, marked the final major votes on petitions related to homosexuality. The demonstrators had filled the space in front of the platform, sitting or kneeling in cross formation, after the first vote maintaining the current language in the Social Principles was taken. The Social Principles state that homosexuality is considered "incompatible with Christian teaching." As the demonstrators took their places, a woman climbed onto the balcony ledge, appealing for understanding and compassion. Witnesses differ about whether she appeared in tent on jumping or simply wished to protest.

Presiding Bishop Dan E. Solomon, Louisville Area, asked the conference to allow the demonstrators to remain in place if they agreed to a covenant not to interrupt proceedings. The General Conference agreed, 621 - 328. The group, according to Bishop Solomon, wanted a motion to come before the General Conference to declare a four-year moratorium on all "negative language" relating to homosexuality. The Rev. Richard Parker, New York Conference, moved the moratorium, but after discussion, it was defeated 637 - 320. At that point, according to their agreement, the demonstrators stood in front of the stage.

After the lunch recess, delegates and demonstrators took their places to continue business. After a vote to continue prohibition of holy unions, demonstrators turned and marched up the steps to the platform, stood around the table and behind Bishop Solomon, and sang "We Shall Overcome." Bishop Solomon asked the demonstrators to leave, then put his head in his folded hands, saying he did not wish to witness what would happen next. A second time, Bishop Solomon asked the demonstrators to leave. AMAR spokesperson Randy Miller refused. Cleveland police immediately escorted the demonstrators from the stage. At press time, it was reported that those arrested would likely be held overnight for arraignment to day.

Tight camera shots on the presiding bishop kept some delegates in the hall, and others watching on monitors throughout the convention center, from identifying demonstrators or witnessing the arrests.

The Faith and Order Committee and General Conference delegates have turned back every effort to change or moderate the church's policy on homosexual practice.

On Wednesday, Soulforce—an ecumenical group seeking inclusion for gays and lesbians—staged an early-morning demonstration and civil disobedience action outside the convention center. The next day delegates considered the proposal from the Faith and Order Committee to maintain the language of the Social Principles: "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. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Presenting the legislative committee's concurrence, the Rev. Robert E. Hayes Jr., Texas Conference, described the leg-

islative committee's intent: to ensure every voice and position was heard. Times of prayer and discernment united the legislative committee. "Last Saturday was a day of Pentecost," Hayes said.

The legislative committee voted 59 - 43 - 1 Sunday to maintain the church's current statement.

A minority report, presented by the Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, Baltimore-Washington Conference, asked the conference to "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."

Delegates defeated the minority report and voted to retain the prohibitions against the ordination or appointment of self-avowed practicing homosexuals and the rule against clergy conducting same-sex unions. Later in the afternoon, delegates voted to move the same-sex union prohibition from the Social Principles to the section of *The Book of Discipline* dealing with pastoral responsibilities.

Other minority reports seeking to modify language were also defeated. Delegates voted against:

Agenda for Friday May 12

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| 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. | Elections and Calendar Items |
| 12:10 p.m. | Conference Announcements and Committee on Presiding Officers |
| 12:15 p.m. | Lunch Recess |
| 2:20 p.m. | Gathering Music |
| 2:30 p.m. | Report of GCFA |
| 5:30 p.m. | Dinner Recess |
| 7:20 p.m. | Gathering Music |
| 7:30 p.m. | Report of the Committee on Agenda |
| 7:30 p.m. | Calendar Items |
| 10:25 p.m. | Announcements |
| 10:30 p.m. | Adjournment |

- changing the words “*shall not*” to “*should not*” in relation to conducting holy unions;
- changing “*We acknowledge*” to “*Most*” (or “*many*”) acknowledge” in the statement on the incompatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching;
- stating that homosexual practice is incompatible with “*some*” Christian teaching;
- a minority report, filed by Don Messer, Rocky Mountain Conference, that would have allowed “pastors in charge” to have authority to decide for themselves whether or not to conduct holy unions.

Following the defeat of a minority report asking that the Social Principles state homosexuality is incompatible with *some* teaching, presenter Stephen G. Frantz, Oregon-Idaho Conference, announced, “You’ve made it clear that I don’t belong in this church.” Removing his credentials, he threw them on the altar and left the auditorium.

Delegates added a sentence to the Social Principles: “We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends.” Proposed by the Methodist Federation for Social Action, the petition passed on the Consent Calendar.

A motion to have the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns continue dialogue on homosexuality passed, 766-172.

—Ann Whiting, Erik Alsgaard, Tom Slack

‘Leaving in the Light of God’

“We are leaving in the light of God,” they sang as they marched out of the convention center. They were not arrested. They chose to leave rather than stay in a church that condemns people because of who they are. If there is not room at the table for their friends, they don’t want to be there either. I wonder if I will ever see them again. Then I heard a friend say, “It’s obvious I don’t belong in this church.” This man who is a responsible church leader, who has given up so much to attend this General Conference, walked out.

In a hallway outside the auditorium, Oregon-Idaho lay delegate Stephen G. Frantz was surrounded by half-dozen supporters who hugged him as he sobbed. His friends encouraged him, saying the vote following his speech was the most favorable to the inclusion of gay persons. Frantz responded that he no longer belonged at this conference. He left to walk alone.

We often hear the church will lose members if it includes gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. Today we lost a great many people, and I fear it will only get worse. We all lost today.

When I was working toward a doctor of ministry degree in a class of international, interfaith students, the school invited us to celebrate daily communion services. Roman Catholic priests—students in my class—excluded Protestants and women. Unable to overcome centuries of patriarchy, the class held two communion services. The table was not extended to us. I wrote a poem that day:

God invited me to the table,

My brother turned me away.

We both went away hungry.

God, I’m hungry to day.

—Patty Meyers

A Helpful Process

In light of the General Conference action that transpired yesterday, the Rev. Frank D. Wulf, California-Pacific reserve delegate and Wesley Foundation director at UCLA, offers a process General Conference delegates may want to try here or at home.

Over the past three years, the California-Pacific Annual Conference has turned to a dialogue process that works effectively to discern God’s will in dealing with controversial issues. He believes the church’s relationship with lesbian and gay Christians has become the most pressing issue facing the church today. The conference has engaged clergy and laity in a dialogue process that has proven transformative. He reports that people with very different positions on homosexuality have learned to work together and relate to each other with compassion, trust and respect.

The process involves three essential steps:

- speaking one’s own understanding of the truth boldly and honestly;
- listening respectfully to the ideas and opinions of others; and
- opening oneself to the possibility of being changed by the Holy Spirit.

Rather than being divisive, he says, the conference has found a new way to be more inclusive. They offer it to the General Conference as a gift for future consideration.

—Patty Meyers

Sexuality Issues Dominate Thursday Agenda

The arrest of 29 people—including two bishops—Thursday afternoon on charges of disrupting a lawful meeting is believed to be the first time during General Conference police have removed persons from a plenary hall.

The arrests came at the end of a tension-filled day in which the church's positions on homosexuality were reaffirmed by approximate margins of 2 to 1. A veteran observer called it the most emotional day he had ever seen at a General Conference.

Late Thursday night, Carolyn Marshall announced that the 29 persons had posted bond and been released. Their arraignment would be on Saturday. A fund to help pay fines has been created and is located in the AMAR office at the Sheraton Hotel.

Other General Conference business was transacted as the final day of General Conference 2000 came into view. Delegates were told at the beginning of the day that 669 items remained to be handled.

The Rev. John G. Corry, Nashville, Tenn., was elected president of the Judicial Council, succeeding Tom Matheny who is gravely ill. Corry has been vice president of the council.

The Rev. C. Rex Bevins, Lincoln, Neb., was elected vice president. Sally Curtis AsKew, Bogart, Ga., was re-elected secretary. Seated for the first time on the church's highest court were Rodolfo C. Beltran, Cabanatuan City, Philippines; the Rev. Keith D. Boyette, Fredericksburg, Va.; Mary A. Daffin, Houston; James Holsinger, Lexington, Ky.; and the Rev. Larry D. Pickens, Chicago.

Delegates adopted resolutions Thursday morning urging governments and others to work for peace in the Philippines, Sierra Leone and the Congo.

Membership in the National Council of Churches was reaffirmed.

General Conference 2000 has seen greater involvement of ethnic minorities, both clergy and lay, than any previous meeting of the church's top legislative assembly, according to the Interethnic Strategy Development Group which comprises five ethnic caucuses in the denomination.

Delegates agreed May 10 to ask the U.S. attorney general to investigate agriculture with regard to possible violation of anti-trust legislation.

Delegates will face a busy Friday if all the work is to be completed by the scheduled adjournment time.

—Robert Lear

Prayer Concerns

- The Asbury family, Annie and Roy Little, and Phyllis Leeper—all from the Western North Carolina Conference—for healing
- DeDe Ashikakath, a young adult from the Desert Southwest, has received a note from home that her father must have heart surgery next Tuesday. Let us keep this family in our prayers.
- Alma Edwards, former General Conference delegate (Detroit Conference), whose husband died May 2.
- Marshals Opal and Dennis Gillis, whose home is in the path of an approaching brush fire in New Mexico.
- The Baltimore-Washington delegation thanks God for Washington Area Bishop Felton Edwin May's amazing recovery following heart-bypass surgery Feb. 15. Praise God!
- Prayers of thanks to God for the wisdom of Louisiana Area Bishop Dan E. Solomon as he led delegates through yesterday's difficult sessions.
- South Indiana alternate delegate Norbert L. "Bert" Talbott, who is unable to attend General Conference because of recent back surgery, followed by serious complications caused by infection.
- The family of Hidetoshi Tanaka, as sociate general secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race, who died April, 28.
- Laurie Word, who will give a bone-marrow transplant today, and an unknown 12-year-old boy who will receive a chance for life.

Additional Nomination from the Council of Bishops

Roland Siegrist, from Austria Provisional Conference, was nominated to fill the unexpired term of Rodolfo C. Beltran, a member of the General Commission on General Conference, who was elected to the Judicial Council.

Recommendation Focuses on Development of Communities, Congregations, Leaders, Resources

General Conference referred to the General Council on Finance and Administration are request for nearly \$1.82 million to address ministry needs in Asian-American communities over the next four years. Delegates approved recommendations of the Asian American Language Ministry Study that calls for churchwide efforts to help create additional Asian-American congregations, ministries and fellowships.

The study recommends four primary areas for ministry:

- development of new congregations;
- recruitment and training of pastoral and lay leadership;
- development of community ministries; and
- development of language resources and materials.

“One of the most pressing needs for Asian-American United Methodists is the recruitment and training of language ministers,” according to the report’s authors. “With the exception of the Korean-American United Methodist community, where there is an ample supply of language-speaking ministers, Asian-American churches are in dire need of ministers who can speak the native tongue of new immigrants.”

The languages needed to serve new Asian-American ministries include: Amoy/Taiwanese, Cambodian, Cantonese, Gujarati, Hindi, Hmong, Ilocano, Japanese, Lao tian, Mandarin, Tagalog (Visayan), Tamil, Telugu, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Another need is leadership training for Asian-American communities. “Many of the existing churches,” the report states, “are served by local pastors [who] need to be provided with adequate training in order to serve their churches and develop new congregations. Until more persons are trained for the ordained ministry, there is a need to . . . provide training for lay persons who can serve churches on a voluntary basis.”

Community ministries are essential, the study adds: “The immigrant churches are and can be important vehicles to transmit one’s . . . cultural heritage to the following generations. The immigrant churches are not only faith communities, but they function in our society as a place where meaningful programs and activities take place.”

The development of language studies is another focus area: “Language materials from their native countries do not reflect the different social settings in the United States and are, consequently, not useful for congregations in the United States. Asian-American churches find that they need to develop their own resource materials . . .” A variety of worship resources such as hymns and liturgies are needed.

A major challenge for supporting the Asian-American community is that with so many language groups, developing new congregations and ministries is complex.

A committee will implement the study and recommend budget priorities. It will include:

- 20 Asian-American ethnic caucus members (selected by the caucuses);
- one staff member of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) Asian-American Ministries Office;
- one staff member related to racial/ethnic ministries from each United Methodist general agency;
- one staff member of the National Federation of Asian-American United Methodists; and
- other persons as needed (determined by the committee).

The GBGM will provide administrative oversight of this program. Annual conferences are encouraged to participate in the development of these new ministries.

—Kurt Gwartney

Concern for Workers Task Force Continues

Throughout its history, The United Methodist Church has shown great concern over the plight of workers.

Those efforts will continue and could expand after General Conference 2000 approved a petition to continue the Concern for Workers Task Force. Administered by the General Board of Church and Society, the task force was created by the 1996 General Conference.

The task force sponsored a Global Consultation in November 1998. That event brought to gether voices from the United States and other countries. In addition, the task force developed resources for the church to use in its life and mission, issued an annual Labor Day message, and created a United Methodist network of persons concerned about justice for working people.

Under the approved petition, during the next four years the task force will:

- educate the church about the integration of justice for workers with the Christian faith and
- empower the church to advocate for workers’ rights in local and international struggles.

—Woody Woodrick

Host Committee Fields Thousands of Volunteers

It's not all tea and cookies at General Conference 2000. Just ask the young African delegate from Sierra Leone who was laid low by news of fighting in his country.

"I took the young man to a physician," said the Rev. Kenneth W. Chalker, chair of the General Conference Host Committee. "The doctor—part of the division we created to offer first aid, medical advice and treatment—said his headaches were due to stress."

Chalker said the doctor took the young man to lunch, hosted him over night at his home, and brought him to church the next morning.

The first aid division was one of many groups working to make General Conference 2000 a success. Chalker listed more than 20 areas headed by co-chairs from the 47-member host committee.

"But as well as we've been prepared, when you have people from all over the world, fulfilling their needs takes a lot of effort," Chalker said.

Seven years of intense preparation by the East Ohio committee yielded a number of changes.

- The traditional bishops' reception transformed into a party at the Rock-and-Roll Hall of Fame.
- A new Youth Ministry Division offered special activities to youth delegates.
- From cookies to logo and beyond, the area host committee was involved in every aspect of General Conference planning.
- The structure of the Committee on General Conference was changed to include the host committee chair.
- A committee was formed to deal with the special needs of Central Conference delegates.
- Drawing in excess of 2,100 people, a Severance Hall concert featured performances by groups from five Ohio colleges.

Approximately 2,000 volunteers, drawn from churches across East Ohio, worked to make this conference a success. Volunteer Mary Lou Sykora said, "The United Methodist Church runs on volunteers; it's a tradition!"

And while volunteers provided more than 20 cookies per delegate each day of the 10-day event, some driving hours to deliver their sugary treats, hosting General Conference 2000 was a lot more than tea and cookies.

—Cathy Farmer

Resolutions Add Impact to Front-page News

On Thursday General Conference affirmed resolutions brought by delegates from three different areas of regional conflict. The DCA contained the text of each statement.

The situation in the southern Philippines produced two resolutions. Printed with an explanation of their differences, the body accepted the more broadly based one.

Delegates from Sierra Leone brought one resolution. It asked national and international bodies to help bring and enforce peace.

Persons from the Democratic Republic of Congo requested U.S. support for international efforts to support peace. If such do not succeed, they said an arms embargo (and export embargo on resources stolen from their country) should be imposed. They also asked for continuing financial support from The United Methodist Church.

Although all three documents describe front-page news, they confronted most delegates with a new immediacy and importance.

All three resolutions provided a test for the DCA staff. All contained regional place names unfamiliar to most. One (from Congo) came in French with English translation.

—Bob McClean

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

I am in a part of the convention center where the primary task is to open a window to the General Conference. The people here touch every part of the globe with their work. They see most of the conference but hear very little of it. Their nametag badges give high access to all activities of the General Conference. This week they have followed horses, dancers, singers, sleeping babies, and bishops to make them visible to United Methodists around the world.

See photo on page 2286 for the location.

Western Jurisdiction Loses Representation

As of mid-afternoon Thursday, General Conference had taken three separate actions that effectively reduced the number of votes and voices to be heard from the Western Jurisdiction.

On May 10, General Conference passed petition #30120, #1147 in the *DCA*, to reduce the number of Western Jurisdiction delegates from its current 56 to 48. The reduction holds major implications for representation on general church boards and agencies.

The same day, Western Jurisdiction also lost representation on the Judicial Council when the Rev. Jane A. Tews, Desert Southwest Conference, whom General Conference had elected to a four-year term Monday, had to relinquish her position. The Judicial Council ruled that, immediately upon adoption, the petition that eliminated the mandatory retirement age of 70 for Judicial Council members rendered the election of Tews invalid. General Conference earlier defeated a motion to mandate representation by area. The Western Jurisdiction has not had a Judicial Council member for more than 30 years.

On May 4, the Western Jurisdiction—the California-Nevada Conference—in particular, was affected when General Conference voted to ask the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision regarding *Discipline* paragraphs 2616.1 and 2616.2 as they relate to the constitutionality of actions taken that violate *The Book of Discipline* based on an annual conference's conscientious disagreement with a particular paragraph. It also asked if there are more fundamental covenants upon which annual conferences can rely to supercede or disobey disciplinary provisions.

One delegate commented, "Many in the land of vast topography and diverse populations of the West are feeling disenfranchised by this General Conference."

—Patty Meyers

Stewart Puts Her Quality-assurance Skills to Work at General Conference

When she is n't working for General Conference, Mollie M. Stewart, North Alabama lay delegate, is a quality assurance manager. As chair of the Commission on the General Conference, Mollie arrived before most delegates to prepare for more than 1,700 United Methodists and guests. While here, she is also a member of the legislative committee on finance and administration.

The Commission on the General Conference is charged with the responsibility of determining the time and the place of the meeting of General Conference and making arrangements for its sessions. The members have worked since the 1996 General Conference in Denver. The commission has worked with the Cleveland Area and East Ohio Conference, as well as Gary K. Bowen, General Conference business manager; Sandra Kelly Lackore, general secretary, General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA); Carolyn Marshall, General Conference secretary; and Steve Zekoff, assistant general secretary for communications, GCFA.

Mollie says she survived segregation. God is her strength, God is in charge, and she is a free woman. That is how she is getting through these very trying days of this conference.

—Patty Meyers



UMNS Photo by John Goodwin



Delegates and other General Conference attendees from northern Europe hail from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Included in the group are Northern Europe Area Bishop Hans Växby, Eurasia Area Bishop Ruediger R. Minor and his wife Gerlinde, and retired Bishop Ole E. Borgen and his wife Martha.

Alphabet Soup: NYMO Becomes UMYO

A new name, structure, and mission for the National Youth Ministries Organization (NYMO) gained General Conference approval. The organization will now be called the United Methodist Youth Organization (UMYO).

Supporters of the changes said the actions reflect the church's global nature. The organization coordinates ministries with youth, defined by the church as people ages 12-18. A series of petitions received consent approval to make *The Book of Discipline* more concise and up-to-date in this area.

UMYO's new mission is:

- to make The United Methodist Church a community of mutual respect and understanding between youth and adults, resulting in ministry where influence and worth are not limited by age or experience; and
- to respond to God's call for disciples here and now.

The core values are compassion, advocacy, partnership, outreach and leadership. The structure was changed to three units: Steering Committee, Youth Service Fund (YSF) and Convocation. The General Conference also approved slight changes in YSF organization and project selection.

Two other key petitions pertaining to youth were presented. One would have ordered each annual conference with at least 10 General Conference delegates to elect one youth delegate. Results of another petition that would have required all General Conference delegations to have a youth delegate were unavailable at press time.

—Kurt Gwartney

Beverly Holland, Volunteers' Volunteer

Beverly Holland co-chairs the host committee's secretarial support staff. She started sending letters inviting people to

work at General Conference almost three years ago and has worked to provide volunteers to the conference ever since.

This eager volunteer recruited more than 20 assistant secretaries and 20 recorders for legislative committees, hostesses for the DCA office, runners to deliver audio tapes of plenaries, channel identifiers and transcribers, and assistant secretaries for General Conference secretary Carolyn Marshall's office.

While she originally had 55 applications, some had to drop out, and she had to recruit additional helpers. The people in her district are "so wonderful," Beverly says. It warms her heart to know people care about the church. Her district people aren't the only wonderful volunteers. Many people have put in hundreds of hours of service behind the scenes.

Assistant secretaries support the elected secretary of legislative committees. They get copies and referrals, and help with counts on the floor. They and the recorders work long hours. Mary Ann Haney was the coordinator for the recorders.

Beverly is excited about serving at General Conference because she has become more informed about the inter-connections of the church. She is compiling a disk of information for the next person who serves in her role. She lives in University Heights, a Cleveland suburb. When not serving at General Conference, she is the administrative assistant/bookkeeper for the Cleveland District office of the East Ohio Conference.

—Patty Meyers

Resolutions Submitted to the Committee on Agenda and Calendar

5/9/2000

Resolve that our General Conference honors, supports and upholds in our prayers those men and women who serve in our armed services and, in addition, honor and support those United Methodist Clergy who serve as chaplains.

Kurt G. Glassco, Oklahoma Conference

—Whereas an inclusive church seeks to be accessible to people who are deaf/hard-of-hearing:

—Let it be resolved that the General Conference commission beginning in 2004 budget for the full funding of Professional American Sign Language Interpretation for delegates and non-delegates. This is to be coordinated by the General Board of Global Ministries.

Announcements

- The Cokesbury Book store will close to day at 1 p.m.
- If you've misplaced any items, please go to the lost and found department in the business office (223). Items not claimed to day will be given to charity.
- Audio tapes of the worship services are available at the Good News TV booth. These tapes may be ordered from GNTV, P.O. Box 2637, Macon, GA 31203 after the General Conference has adjourned.
- This is nurses week and their work is appreciated and applauded by the assembly.

Views from Two Chairs

I'm serving as a marshal at General Conference. Getting around the convention center is often a chore as we track down committees and subcommittees, district meetings and the like. Relieved to a wheelchair because of knee surgery, I didn't expect my job to be easy. However, I didn't expect to need athletic training!

When I arrived at the center, no one seemed to know where the elevators were located. (The signs weren't posted until Tuesday night.) Hearers of my questions seemed befuddled as to why I could not ride the escalators.

I finally made it to the marshals' training session, only to find the group about to tour the convention center. I raced from elevator to elevator, trying to keep up, but sometimes I felt as if I was playing hide-and-seek!

Over the following days I experienced door sills that needed a running start to get over them and doorways where my knuckles were scraped as I went through. I had numerous near-misses as people stepped in front of me without even seeing me, and able-bodied delegates rushed past me to snatch taxis without giving me a second thought.

I pondered this situation, knowing I was a fairly healthy human being except for my knee surgery. If I were experiencing these difficulties, what were others experiencing? How can we say we are an inclusive church if it is this much of a struggle just to get around and find and use basic necessities? (Restrooms with wheelchair-accessible stalls are only on the lowest and highest floors, and often non-wheelchair-using people occupy those stalls.) In addition, going down the ramp to the basement is steep enough to give a person heart failure.

When I thought the situation could get no worse, the small elevator that goes between the taxi ramp and the display halls kept shutting off, and I got a chance to ride the escalators—once sitting in my wheelchair and once standing on one leg. I pray, God, Pittsburgh will be better.

—Kathy Haley, marshal, Rocky Mountain Conference

All in the Family

Stephen M. Yoost, a student at the College of William and Mary, was the first lay delegate elected in East Ohio. His father, Dr. Charles D. Yoost, is a clergy delegate from the same conference. In 1996, Stephen's brother Tim, a college junior, was a delegate along with his dad.

Mississippi delegates—Stephen L. McAlilly and the Rev. William T. McAlilly (re serve)—are brothers.

It is with a heavy and disillusioned heart that I return home from my first visit to General Conference. I use a wheelchair, and I believed my delegation had prepared me for the lack of facilities for persons with disabilities at the meeting site in Cleveland. However, I could not have imagined the overwhelmingly hostile atmosphere that seemed to prevail, discouraging persons with disabilities from participating fully and independently in the work of the conference.

On Sunday, at the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women worship service, I was blessed to participate in a truly spirit-filled liturgical dance. Our dance visualized denial, questioning exploration and then showing the wonderment of acceptance of the whole person by seeing beyond the wheelchair. All who attended were moved and changed.

Yet, as I moved through the convention center, the absence of accommodations for those with special needs was troubling and disheartening. I have always been proud to be a United Methodist, in part, because we have always stood on the foundation of caring for all of God's creatures: "We Who Are Many Are One Body."

After an arduous and complex travel route to the floor of the assembly, however, I was directed to sit in the segregated gallery for "the disabled," in the back of the auditorium. I heard an amendment to include language concerning those with disabilities, in a resolution, perhaps defeated because delegates believed this group of people and their needs were already recognized and addressed. If, indeed, our needs are recognized, why was such an inordinately inaccessible facility selected for the site of the 2000 General Conference? Were people with disabilities consulted in order to address potential problems? Have we no gifts to offer The United Methodist Church? Or are we too unimportant to merit consideration?

I believe every one will face a disability—either temporary or permanent—during his or her lifetime! Where is the mechanism within our structure to focus or advocate for this under-represented and unrecognized part of the body of Christ? Is it funding? Is it not politically correct? I was told there were not enough interpreters for deaf delegates and visitors because there was not enough money! Yet, every where I went, I saw little expense had been spared for such things as receptions, concerts and other amenities.

Some may contend that these issues are not important in the overall scheme of things. Some may believe delegates must focus on more important and vital matters that include the body as a whole. Yet, are we, as Christians, not bound to the principle that "We Who Are Many Are One Body? Have we as United Methodists lost or stifled our heritage of love and caring for all? If so, what do we really stand for and is that where we want to be?

—Pat Moreland, Iowa Conference

‘Teem with Life and Be Filled with Joy!’

“Oh, God, this sea is very big and my boat is very small!”

Echoing the words of St. Brendan the Nav i ga tor—the Irish saint who crossed the At lan tic in a small boat made of cow hide and wattle—the Most Rev. and Right Honorable George L. Carey, 103rd Arch bishop of Can ter bury, called for greater unity be tween An gli cans and United Meth od ists.

The view from the edge of the 21st cen tury, ac cord ing to Carey, reveals a world where old certainties have been dis placed and cor po rate re li gion has lit tle im pact, but peo ple still yearn to know God’s truth.

The senior bishop of the 70 million-member Church of England said, “We must tran scend the con cern for sur vival of the church and fo cus our con cern upon the king dom of God and its cen tral ity to church and so ci ety.” Carey called on United Meth od ists and An gli cans to work to gether in evan ge lism, min is tries with young peo ple, so cial con cerns, and theo log i cal ex plora tion. He said, however, a “theology of unity” does not mean uni for mity and same ness. The vi sion of one great or ga ni za tion with uni for mity of be lief, wor ship ing in the same way, is “un achiev able,” he said.

Nor is it nec es sary, Carey con tends. “I par tic u larly dis like it when one part of the fam ily feels they know the truth and no one else does,” he said to ap plause.

To be rec og niz ably “one church” in the eyes of the world, the arch bishop said it would be nec es sary to “af firm that our churches are apostolic churches—standing in continuity with ap os tolic faith and faith ful to the gos pel.”

“It is my strong hope,” he said, “that over the next few years, a solid foun da tion for unity be tween our churches will de velop into a vis i ble unity achieved by mea sur able stages. That is the only re spon si ble course of ac tion.”

We must be about the busi ness of build ing a grace ful, gen erous, mer ci ful church that con forms ever more deeply to the person of Jesus Christ, Carey said. “So come,” he in vited. “Make our vi brant church teem with life and be filled with joy!”

—Cathy Farmer

Cor rec tion to ‘All in the Fam ily’ (Page 2201)

Yes ter day’s “All in the Fam ily” vi gnette about two de scen dants of James Brown in cor rectly stated that he es tab lished what is now known as Zion United Meth od ist Church, Sharptown, Md., in 1948. It should have read 1848. The *DCA* re grets the er ror.

Cookie Jeopardy

Q: What ad slogan reminds you of cookies?

A: "Nothing says lovin' like something from the oven!"

Q: What Scripture do cookies and cookie-eaters illustrate?

A: "Look how they love one another."

Q: What exceeds the number of delegates?

A: The number of chocolate chips in General Conference cookies

Q: What exceeds the number of chocolate chips?

A: The number of pages in the *DCA*

Q: Late at night, cookie-filled delegates resemble what line in the Statue of Liberty inscription?

A: "Huddled masses yearning to breathe free"

Q: What do delegates want while eating cookies?

A: Grace and peace

Q: How does cookie distribution comply with special dietary needs?

A: A table of sugar-free cookies

Q: How are cookies like delegates?

A: They are a diverse group gathered under a common name.

Q: How are cookies like God's love?

A: The supply is infinite.

Q: How does a cookie table resemble a church?

A: All are welcome.

—*Ida B. Powell, Virginia Conference delegate*



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

Looking over the shoulders of the United Methodist News Service photographers is not easy because they rarely sit still. Paul Jeffrey, Mike DuBose, and John Goodwin provide the photographs that go around the world to tell the story of General Conference. From the whimsical to the serious, from a worship experience to a protest, the photographers open a window that allows access to the happenings of the conference. Their photographs travel the Internet and are used by church and secular press. The photographers rely on their staff to make photos available to everyone who needs them.

Pictured here are: volunteer Konnie Wenneman and staff Jackie Vaughan and Sheri Alford.

Photo by Ginnie and Dewayne Lowther



Judicial Council Decision

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MEMORANDUM NO. 889

IN RE: Request from the General Conference for a Declaratory Decision as to Whether a Vote Taken by General Conference on a Legislative Petition is Valid if Only a Portion of That Petition Has Been Printed in the *Daily Christian Advocate Advanced Edition* and in the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

On May 10, 2000 at a plenary session, a General Conference member moved:

to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council as to whether a vote taken by the General Conference is valid if only a portion of the petition is made available to the delegates.

Specifically the portion of Petition 31789 re: ¶ 2602, in dictating that the action would take effect immediately, was not made available to the delegates of the Conference.

Fewer than a majority of the members of the General Conference present and voting, but greater than one-fifth of those members, voted in favor of the request and the matter was referred to the Judicial Council pursuant to ¶ 2609.1 which reads:

The Judicial Council shall determine the constitutionality of any act of the General Conference upon an appeal by a majority of the Council of Bishops or one-fifth of the members of the General Conference.

The Judicial Council does not have jurisdiction in this matter.

Par. 2609.1 deals specifically with a request for a determination of constitutionality, and as such, provides for referral to the Judicial Council with less than a majority affirmative vote for requests from the General Conference.

In the instant matter, the request was for a declaratory decision, and, with no constitutional question at issue, the request comes under ¶ 2616. Although that paragraph could be more clearly written as to the affirmative vote required for referral, there is no reference to less than a majority affirmative vote for a request for a declaratory decision.

In this matter, a majority of the General Conference members did not vote for referral. The Judicial Council does not have jurisdiction.

A request for oral argument was denied for the reason that the Judicial Council does not have jurisdiction.

John G. Corry recused himself and did not take part in any of the proceedings related to this decision.

DIGEST

Requests for declaratory decisions which do not deal with constitutional issues require an affirmative vote from a majority of the General Conference members present and voting. In this matter, there were fewer than a majority of the members who voted affirmatively for referral and, therefore, the Judicial Council does not have jurisdiction.

May 11, 2000

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DECISION NO. 890

IN RE: Request from 2000 General Conference for a Declaratory Decision on the Constitutionality of Petition #31143-DI-273-D as Amended by a Legislative Committee for Consideration by the General Conference Relating to Certified Lay Assistant

DIGEST

Under Par. 52 of the Constitution, a bishop has no authority to appoint lay persons to charges; therefore, Petition #31143-DI-273-D as amended by a legislative committee for consideration by the General Conference would be unconstitutional if adopted.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

On May 10, 2000, the General Conference requested a declaratory decision on the constitutionality of Petition # 31143-DI-273 regarding duties, expectations, and process for certification of lay assistants. If adopted, this petition would add a new paragraph after ¶ 272 and would amend ¶¶ 273, 629.7(d) and 661 of the *1996 Discipline*.

The intent of the proposed legislation is to create a certified lay assistant category of ministry to churches of small membership “. . . associated with the lay preacher of early Methodism . . .”

An oral hearing was held in Cleveland, Ohio on May 11, 2000. Arnold Rhodes, Alec Alvord, Jean Edmister, James Waugh, Jeffrey E. Greenway and Ed Kail spoke in support of constitutionality. Joy Barrett, Bob Kohler and Margaret Knight spoke in opposition to the constitutionality of the petition.

Jurisdiction

The Judicial Council has jurisdiction under Par. 2609 of the *1996 Discipline*.

Analysis and Rationale

The subject legislation proposed is similar to the *1992 Discipline* paragraphs declared unconstitutional in Decision 693. That decision stated that ¶ 282 of the *1992 Discipline* created a new order of clergy to be called “lay preachers” who were to be appointed by the district superintendent. The Judicial Council declared ¶ 282 unconstitutional in that it violated ¶¶ 17 and 57 of the *1992 Discipline* (Par. 17 and 52 of the *1996 Discipline*).

The newly proposed legislation referenced above fails to meet the constitutional test in that it proposes to grant to the bishop the power to assign a lay person to a charge. Par. 52 of the Constitution is clear in its language:

Article X.—The bishops shall appoint, after consultation with the district superintendents, minis-

ters to the charges; and they shall have such responsibilities and authorities as the General Conference shall prescribe.

Under this constitutional paragraph a bishop has the authority to appoint only ministers to charges.

Decision

Under Par. 52 of the Constitution, a bishop has no authority to appoint lay persons to charges; therefore, Petition #31143-DI-273-D as amended by a legislative committee for consideration by the General Conference would be unconstitutional if adopted.

May 11, 2000

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