

Thank you, Bishop. I had to run to get here tonight!

Tomorrow morning, we will follow our order of worship, as we have been; and then I know you're all anxious to know that we're going to vote on the Judicial Council nominees first thing. Following that, we'll take up the conference business; and we'll be hearing from Faith and Order and Church and Society. Thank you, Bishop.

Concordat with Puerto Rico

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Thank you. Now we have a very special opportunity tonight to be a part of a historic time in the life of our church. We passed earlier in the conference a concordat agreement between The United Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and The United Methodist Church; and tonight they are going to sign this agreement, the concordat, in our presence. So I would like to call on the four following people to join at the podium in order to do this: Bishop Peter Weaver, who is the president of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church; and Bishop Juan A. Vera Mendez, who is the presiding bishop of The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico; Carolyn Marshall, secretary of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church; and Victor Ortiz, the lay representative of The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico.

BISHOP PETER D. WEAVER (Philadelphia Area): Thank you, Bishop Hutchinson. Isn't it wonderful to know that something you did at the beginning of today is now reality tonight? For we *(applause)*

We are about to recognize that by the movement of the Holy Spirit, you approve this morning a new concordat relationship between The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and The United Methodist Church; and we have that concordat here tonight. I want to read simply the last lines of that concordat that are instructive, not only for our rest tonight, but our preparation for a new day tomorrow, "We enter this concordat believing that the God revealed in Jesus Christ has far more in store for our

churches in matters of mutual faithfulness to the gospel than we can see our imagine at this important juncture. Thus we enter this concordat with mutual trust, gratitude, and hopeful expectation in the name of Jesus Christ."

On behalf of The United Methodist Church, I will begin by signing this concordat and then turn to Bishop Juan Vera Mendez to sign on behalf of The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, and then Carolyn Marshall to sign as Secretary to the General Conference, and Victor Ortiz to sign as a lay representative of The Methodist Church in Puerto Rico. To God be the glory.

(applause)

BISHOP JUAN VERA MENDEZ: Good evening to the Council of Bishops, the General Conference Officers, and delegates, sisters and brothers in The United Methodist Church. This journey started 100 years ago for the sake of Jesus Christ and God missions in the world. Today we reaffirm our commitment to same Jesus Christ and the same mission. The world is our parish together, and all churches will pray and work together for peace and justice, for salvation and liberation. To our mother church we say, "You have raised good children; faithful and loving." Tonight as sister churches, now let's pledge together to always keep our hearts and arms open and caring for each other and for the world. Muchas gracias! We love you.

(applause)

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Alright, I'm going to—I'm going to call now on Carolyn Marshall for any final announcements and concerns.

MARSHALL: Bishop, just one this evening, and that is the Church and Society Legislative Committee will consider one petition immediately following the adjournment of this session. You will meet in Room 320. Church and Society Legislative Committee, Room 320.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: Alright, thank you. There was one request for

personal privilege. Is that young man here? Yes, at mic 7.

BRYAN C. BAKER (West Virginia): Hello General Conference. My name is Bryan Baker. I'm a lay person from the West Virginia Annual Conference. I just wanted to take a moment to ask us to pray on behalf of our brothers and sisters throughout the world, not just the United States, who are in conflict at this time; whether it be war or within their countries. A United States soldier sent me these beads from Iraq telling me that he was praying for me during the Lenten Season, during Easter, and praying for our General Conference now. I'd like us to do the same for them.

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: I've asked if Bishop Ben Chamness of the Central Texas Conference will lead us in our closing prayer, and he is going to prepare—or to include that in his prayer—that request for people in conflict throughout the world. Bishop Chamness.

(prayer)

BISHOP HUTCHINSON: We are adjourned.

**Tuesday Morning,
May 4, 2004**

(worship service)

BISHOP BRUCE A. BLAKE (Oklahoma Area): And let us be in order for the business of the day. Please be seated. I am aware that some are coming, but we want to invite our colleague bishops and presidents of autonomous and autonomous-affiliated churches to join the bishops of our communion on the platform. You are invited to sit with us and come now or at your convenience. We welcome you in the spirit of this service this morning.

Friends, as we begin our day together, I would like to—we will call first on the Committee on Calendar and Agenda to share their report with us, Hee-Soo. Let us give attention to the Committee on Calendar and Agenda.

HEE-SOO JUNG (Wisconsin):

Bishop Bruce Blake, Council of Bishops, delegates, friends, and guests. My name is Hee-Soo Jung, clergy delegate from Wisconsin. It is my privilege and joy to serve as the vice chair of the Agenda Committee, which is a faithful and hard-working team behind the conference.

Bishop, I propose today's agenda, printed in cover page of today's *DCA*. We will begin by Judicial Council elections. We need to move to open from the table and then move to conference business items from Church and Society Legislative Committee after break at 10:30 this morning. Our agenda will be following as printed.

The resolution of multicultural sensitivity training for the future General Conference leaders raised by Won Sung Namkoong, North Carolina delegate, will be presented for action item for tomorrow after it is appropriately printed in *DCA*. Now I invite Fitzgerald Reist, calendar coordinator, to present the (*unintelligible*) calendar items.

L. FITZGERALD REIST: Thank you, Hee-Soo. Good morning, I'm Fitzgerald Reist, coordinator of the calendar; and I'd like to introduce John Brawn from the secretary's staff to show us where we are in our process this morning.

JOHN BRAUN: Good morning, I'm John Brawn, coordinator of the legislative activity for the secretary of the General Conference. As I'm sure all of you are by now aware, the task of the legislative committees is to review and make recommendations to this plenary on each and every valid petition submitted to this General Conference. I am really pleased to announce that all legislative committees have completed their work.

(*applause*)

Every petition—all 1,584 of them—have been read, weighed, debated, and voted upon at some point in the last 6 ½ days. 1,561 petitions in the form of 1,496 calendar items have been published in the *DCA* as of this morning.

To save you from doing the math, that leaves 23 petitions, which are now in the final stages of preparation for the calendar.

Consent Calendar

I want you notice two important things on this first chart. First of all, we fully expect to achieve our goal of publishing the last of the calendar items in tomorrow's *DCA*. This will be two full days earlier than the process we achieved in 2000. But I also want you to notice the red lines near the bottom. As of this morning, we have nearly 100 more calendar items to consider on the floor of this conference than the total we had in 2000. This is a result of fewer calendar items qualifying for the consent calendar and also a much larger number of calendar items having been removed from the consent calendar so far this session.

I encourage you to carefully consider the need before you remove any item from the consent calendar. We've now used 20 percent of the plenary time available to us; and I'm sure the sharp-eyed among you have noticed that we've already voted on more than 20 percent of all the petitions before us, but this does not mean that we are ahead of our work and can afford to slow down. Remember, these numbers include three of the six expected sets of consent calendars. If we ignore all the items on the consent calendar, we have completed only 12 percent of our calendar items, but we have used 20 percent of our time. At our current rate, we will finish some time during the day on Thursday, May 13.

(*laughter*)

As a part of the impartial staff of the secretary of the General Conference, I'm not asking that you move in a direction to which you are not being called. I am just asking that you move expeditiously when you hear your call. Thank you.

(*applause*)

REIST: Fitzgerald Reist, coordinator of the calendar. I ask that you turn to p.

1695 in the *DCA*, p. 1695 in the *DCA*, Consent Calendar A04, Consent Calendar A04. The following items have been removed from Consent Calendar A04: Calendar Item 552, 552, has been removed and appears on p. 1857 of today's *DCA*. Calendar Item 634, 634, has been removed and appears on p. 1857 of today's *DCA*.

JUNG: Bishop, I move to approve the consent calendar as corrected.

BISHOP BLAKE: This motion is before you. Seconded? Seconded. It is supported. The motion on the consent calendar is before us. You are ready to vote. Please vote now. [*Yes, 854; No, 19; Abstain, 4*]

The Consent Calendar A04 has been approved with the deletions as noted.

REIST: Please turn to p. 1705, p. 1705. Consent Calendar B04, Consent Calendar B04. The following items have been removed: Calendar Item 702, Calendar Item 702 has been moved to p. 1857. Calendar Item 707, Calendar Item 707, has been removed to p. 1857.

JUNG: Bishop, I move to approve the consent calendar as corrected.

BISHOP BLAKE: Consent Calendar B04 is before you. You are ready to vote. Please vote now. [*Yes, 877; No, 19; Abstain, 1*]

Consent Calendar B04 has been approved with the deletions as noted.

REIST: Please turn to p. 1727, p. 1727. Consent Calendar C04, Consent Calendar C04. Calendar Items 790, 790.

BISHOP BLAKE: Page number of that, please.

REIST: Page number for the removal, 1731, 1731. Calendar Item 813, which appears on the following page. Calendar No. 825, 825, which appears on the next page. Calendar No. 826, Calendar No. 826, Calendar No. 829, Calendar No. 829; Calendar Item No. 833, Calendar No. 833. All of these have been moved to p. 1857, p. 1857. If you turn to Calendar Item 945, which is on p. 1740, p. 1740, Calendar Item No. 945, on the facing page, Calendar No. 956,

Calendar No. 956, and Calendar No. 970, Calendar No. 970, have all been moved to p. 1858, p. 1858.

REIST: Bishop, I move to approve the consent calendar as it corrected it.

BISHOP BLAKE: Mic 3 please.

BRADLEY LAURVICK (Rocky Mountain): Good morning, I am Brad Laurvick from the Rocky Mountain Conference. And on, on behalf on myself and the United Methodist Student Movement and campus ministers, I would move to suspend the rules to remove Item 807 from the Consent Calendar for consideration by the body.

BISHOP BLAKE: Is this seconded? This is a motion to suspend the rules to remove an item from the Consent Calendar by the floor. Suspension of the rules require that two thirds vote. I am waiting right now for the translation to be finished because we vote this without—we go right to the vote because it's not debatable. Just waiting for the translation. Prepare to vote. You are ready to vote. If you will suspend the rules for this purpose, please cast your vote now. [*Yes, 490; No, 425; Abstain, 5*]

It requires a two-thirds, and therefore the rules are not suspended.

We have the motion before us on the consent calendar: Consent Calendar C04. You are ready to vote, please vote now. [*Yes, 864; No, 44, Abstain, 9*]

Consent Calendar C04 has been approved with the deletions as noted.

REIST: I have asked to draw your attention to p. 1859 and the following page, regarding the conference budgeting process. This information may be helpful to you as you discern what needs to be done relative to matters with financial implications. Thank you.

JUNG: Thank you. Bishop this concludes our agenda committees report. Thank you.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you for your report. And now return to Bishop Melvin Talbert to make introductions of those who are sharing our time with us this morning; Bishop Talbert.

Ecumenical Introductions

BISHOP MELVIN G. TALBERT: Thank you Bishop Blake. To delegates and friends of the conference, it's my privilege to make some introductions and to coordinate some presentations and that will complete our program of ecumenical presentations for this morning. As your ecumenical officer, the ecumenical officer for the Council of Bishops, it's been my privilege to represent this church in various ecumenical settings and it's in these settings that I have been closely associated with many of these colleagues and friends this morning, and so it gives me a great honor and privilege to introduce them to you in behalf of the Council of Bishops.

As I read their names, I ask that you hold applauses until they have all been introduced and then you will join me in greeting and welcoming them. I begin first of all in acknowledging, again, our speaker for the morning, the Right Reverend McKinley Young and his wife, Dorothy, representing the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Will you stand?

Representing the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), the Reverend W. Darwin Collins regional minister here in Pittsburgh, will you stand?

Church of the Brethren, the Reverend Michael Hostetter, pastor and committee chair of the inter-church relations of the Church of the Brethren of Roanoke, Virginia. From the Church of the Nazarene, Dr. Jesse C. Middendorf, General Superintendent from Kansas City, Missouri. Churches Uniting in Christ, its director, the Reverend Bertrice Wood, Cleveland, Ohio. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reverend Dr. Randal E. Lee, director for ecumenical affairs of that church, Chicago, Illinois. From the Free Methodist Church of North America, the Reverend John Kelley, a pastor, locally from Monroeville, Pennsylvania. The International Council of Community Churches, the Reverend Herman Hermelic III, the Ecumenical Officer

from Poughkeepsie, New York. From the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Father William Winter.

The general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA the Reverend Dr. Robert Edgar. From the Orthodox Church in America, Archpriest Paul Sutter, Dean of the Chapel of the cathedral in Pittsburgh. The Presbyterian Church USA, the associated stated clerk and director of the Department of Ecumenical and Agency Relations, the Reverend Robina Winbush. United Church of Christ, the Reverend Alan McLarty, Conference Minister for the Penn-West Conference in Greenburg, Pennsylvania. From the World Council of Churches, Dr. Larry Bropleh, permanent representative for the UN and joining him as intern, is S. Edward Harman, an intern in New York. Representing the World Methodist Council, its general secretary, the Reverend Dr. George H. Freeman. And we were expecting some interfaith colleges and did they arrive?

I was expecting Rabbi James Gibson of Temple Sinai and Rabbi Stephen Steindel of Beth-Shalom. They did not get here. And from the American Jewish Committee, Mr. David Shtulman. Did not come. These are they, my friends, and I want to recognize at this time, our host bishop to introduce, I believe, he has two other ecumenical guests from the local scene and then I will call on a person to say a word in behalf of Ike and all the friends. Bishop.

BISHOP HAE-JONG KIM (Pittsburgh Area): Thank you, Bishop Talbert. As the host Bishop, I have a privilege, an honor, of introducing two more ecumenical leaders. We have in episcopal area, what is called, Christian Leaders Fellowship, which meet every month, have a breakfast and prayer, ten bishops and other leaders of denominations, but two of them are here. Reverend Dr. James Meade, the Pittsburgh Presbytery, the Presbyterian Church of the USA, and Bishop Metropolitan Maximus Diocese of Pittsburgh, Greek Orthodox Church,

also represented the United States of America.

BISHOP TALBERT: Thank you very much. At this time I want to invite one in their midst to say a few words of greetings to us representing them all, and she is the Reverend Robina Winbush, associate stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and I invite her to share some words with us now. Robina.

Presbyterian Guest

ROBINA WINBUSH: Thank you Bishop Talbert. To Bishop Weaver, to the Council of Bishops, to the newly elected general secretary of the GCUIC, Dr. Larry Pickens, to the delegates of this General Conference, to my sisters and brothers in Christ and in creation, we greet you this morning in the awesome name and in the wonderful hope of the resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ. I want to thank you for this invitation to come and to share with you as a witness to God's gift and God's call to unity in the body of Christ for the sake of unity in the whole of human kind. I want to thank you for your ongoing commitment to the ecumenical task before our churches. You have been faithful partners in the World Methodist Council, in the National Council of Churches, in churches uniting in Christ, in the World Council of Churches, and in countless local and regional ecumenical councils throughout this country.

United Methodists have been faithful partners in the giving of your time, your resources, and your talents. We give praise to God for you and for your continued partnership as we seek to be faithful in seeking God's gift of unity for the body of Christ. As you have been deliberating and as you will continue to deliberate, we know that we share many concerns with you. Your struggle is not your own, and we know what it means. I also greet you on behalf of The Presbyterian Church.

Now I'm tentative to say that these concerns are the concerns of the whole of the ecumenical count world, but we

know what it means to struggle for integrity and fidelity in witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what it means to struggle to find ways to continue to walk together as a family, when there are so many issues that would tear you apart. We know what it means to struggle to find structures that have meaning and relevance for the work of ministry in this day and age, and we know what it means to be financially challenged and responsible.

But as you work, know that our prayers are with you. For it is not simply for our own sakes that we have these internal struggles. But it's so that we might realize that in a world of unimaginable war and violence, in a world of unspeakable disease, in a world of unconscionable poverty, in a world that defies and denies life, you, The United Methodist Church, might be a part of the whole of God's family, seeking to give witness to God's transforming power, God's promise of shalom, God's justice-filled peace, knowing that you cannot do it alone. But if you do your part, faithfully, we promise to pray for you, to continue to work and walk with you, and to live and to seek together, God's will for us.

Thank you for this time with you, and we look forward to hearing the good news of what God is doing in your midst in the days ahead. May God be with you and may God bless your labor. Amen.

(applause)

BISHOP TALBERT: And now, before we make some presentations, I want to ask our—all of our ecumenical delegates and friends to stand, so you can greet them and welcome them on this day, all of our ecumenical (*unintelligible*).

(applause)

We have a couple of presentations to make, and it's appropriate that we make them now because of their uniqueness. First I want to recognize Bishop Fritz Mutti, who is the president of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious

Concerns to come forward and to make a presentation. Bishop Mutti.

(applause)

BISHOP ALBERT FREDERICK MUTTI (Kansas Area): Thank you, Bishop Talbert. Bishop Blake, members of the General Conference, my pleasure to serve as the president of the Commission of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. Just a word of information for us, to remind us who we are as United Methodists. In our Constitution we are committed to seek the unity of the church. We confess that we are not the whole church in this communion of faith and we do need one another and the whole Christian community in order to be the church.

National Council of Churches

As members of the Commission on Christian Unity do their work, we try to relate, on your behalf, to ecumenical organizations in this country and around the world in many different expressions. The National Council of Churches of Christ of the United States of America is one of those organizations. Just prior to the coming of the new general secretary to the National Council of Churches there was a time of turmoil and lack of vision and uncertainty about the future of the National Council of Churches. The search for new leadership in the National Council led to a United Methodist clergyman, who is a member of the New Jersey Conference, and who has an interesting history, as a member of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, as the president of Claremont School of Theology, and now the general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Dr. Bob Edgar, would you come and join me at the podium?

Since Dr. Edgar came to his position there has been a significant turn around in the vitality and viability of the National Council. The finances, which were a bit confused and in disarray, are now very stable. I'm very pleased to report to you that there are three years

of budgets in the black. That's due, a lot, to his leadership.

(applause)

It's a very distinct pleasure on my behalf to present this certificate of appreciation to Dr. Edgar at this time. And the certificate reads, "Certificate of Appreciation. The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns of the United Methodist Church presents this certificate of appreciation to Robert W. Edgar in recognition of his leadership as general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, during the 2001-2004 quadrennium. We celebrate the return to financial health of the council, and recognize the diligence and hard work that was necessary to achieve that result. Given in the presence of the General Conference, May 4, 2004, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania." Dr. Edgar.

(applause)

BISHOP MUTTI: We invite Dr. Edgar to bring us a word of greeting.

ROBERT W. EDGAR: Let me just begin by saying a strong word of thanks. When I took over the National Council of Churches, The United Methodist Church had just suspended its funding to the council. You thought we had a \$2 million deficit. We did better than that. We had a \$5.9 million deficit. But through your help, through your love, and through the commitment of my colleagues in the ecumenical movement, we not only have balanced the budget, but we restored the long-term reserves for the council and we've committed the council to the work of alleviating poverty, caring for planet Earth, and for working for peace and justice among the peoples of this Earth.

It is the commitment of The United Methodist Church to the ecumenical movement that gives me hope as I work, day to day, to make the ecumenical spirit of the council alive. It was your previous general secretary, Bruce Robbins, who in April of the year 2000, at a consultation had a revelation that has stuck with me forever, and I con-

gratulate him for it. He said, "Our vocation is not to fix what's wrong with the National Council of Churches. Our vocation is to restart the spirit of ecumenism and interfaith relations for this decade and for this time." It is that vision that we have stuck to at the National Council of Churches.

I leave you with the words of Sam Kobia, the new general secretary of the World Council of Churches, as a guiding principle for your remaining work. He shared an African proverb that said, "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together." God be with you as you walk together.

(applause)

Recognizing Bruce Robbins

BISHOP TALBERT: Thank you. One additional presentation. The Council of Bishops, periodically will recognize persons who have, in unique ways, expressed an ecumenical witness in behalf of the whole church. It is my honor and privilege now to make this presentation in behalf of the Council of Bishops. And I want to invite to join with me here at the podium the Reverend Dr. Bruce Robbins.

(applause)

BISHOP TALBERT: Bruce is a clergy of the Troy Annual Conference, and he's now serving in Minnesota.

(applause)

BISHOP TALBERT: He served as associate general secretary of the general commission from 1985 until 1990 and he's been its general secretary from 1990 through 1993—2003. These are some of the things that he's done and makes it important for us to present this award: He challenged our church, through the commission, to develop and to have the act of repentance for racism, and he was the person fostering that vision, and we did that the General Conference in 2000. He has given leadership in dialogues on homosexuality and the unity of the church, issues that have tended to divide us, but he has found ways to foster dialogue. In par-

ticular, he has led us in the General Commission to a place of dialogue within The United Methodist Church on very divisive issues, as well as a place of dialogue among those of different faiths.

His leadership in the National Council of Churches has included some very difficult issues, particularly in the area of finances, asking the hard questions. His service in the World Council of Churches is noted by the general secretary on many occasions, where he's currently serving on the Central Committee and he co-chairs the Pentecostal Dialogues. His strengthening of our relationships with the World Methodist Council. He has been a champion and a person who has been pushing us to stay in relationship with that organization, but at the same time to be accountable in a mutual working relationship. His leadership in cooperative work with other general agencies in our church in strengthening our mission and ministry together and his particular work, particular with the Council of Bishops in their role as the corporate ecumenical officer. He has been that person who has, behind the scene, constantly lifted before the council an agenda for being more effective as the corporate offices and have assisted in many, many ways, particularly working with the standing committee on relational concerns, and then his strong instance for inclusion of youth and young adults at all levels of participation and representation in the ecumenical arena.

My colleagues of the Council of Bishops, I want you to stand as I read and present this award, the Ecumenical Award to Dr. Robbins in your behalf. It says on behalf of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, and in the presence of the General Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 4, 2004, we present the Council of Bishops Ecumenical Award for 2004 to Bruce W. Robbins, in recognition of his exceptional leadership as ecumenical staff officer and general secretary of the General Commission on Christian Unity and

Interreligious Concerns from 1990 to 2003.

His representation of our church in ecumenical arenas has been of the highest caliber and we are grateful for the dedication and the perseverance he has shown. We celebrate all he has done to promote the unity for which Christ prayed in John 17:21. Signed, yours truly, Melvin Talbert, ecumenical Officer and Bishop Albert Fritz Mutti, president of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.

(applause)

BISHOP MUTTI (Kansas Area): I am honored and blessed and offer thanks, thanks to our God in three persons. I want to thank the delegates and your predecessor delegates here whose generosity of supporting the general agencies of the church have made ministries like this one possible. I want to thank the ecumenical colleagues who embody so many who have taught us so much about what the means to be the body of Christ. I want to thank so many in The United Methodist Church who have been my mentors and teachers about how to be a United Methodist and how to be faithful to God. Thank you very much.

(applause)

BISHOP TALBERT: Finally then, my sisters and brothers I want to take this opportunity to thank our ecumenical guests for their presence and participation in this arena today. We had hoped for a presence from the Muslim community as well, but I must again express our deep appreciation to us brothers who have come to meet with us from the Jewish community. We are delighted to have you here because we have a strong commitment, not only ecumenically but interfaith as well, because we realize that we are sisters and brother together, children of God. So thank you for coming to be with us today and God bless you and staff now will lead you off to the side. Thank you, and remember at 12:30 today we have a luncheon planned for you in the

same room where we gathered this morning. Thank you so much.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you so much.

BISHOP TALBERT: Mr. Bishop, that's it for this morning. Thank you, George.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you so much. . . . Thank you for the presentation. Yes, what is your—go to mic 2. We have an agenda for the day established.

Judicial Council Procedures

PATRICIA L. MILLER (*South Indiana*): Patricia Miller, South Indiana. Thank you, Bishop. Yesterday afternoon I spoke with an interpreter who is here helping some of our non-English speaking delegates. He told me that by the time the translation was completed on the Judicial Council elections, the voting time had expired. Therefore, I would like to —

BISHOP BLAKE: I would like to, well go ahead with your motion...

MILLER: Therefore, I move that the voting time be extended from ten to 30 seconds and further that the vote tally be left on the screen long enough for delegates to be able to review the results.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, this motion of procedure is before you. Is there a second? Is there discussion? Would you reread the motion so everyone is clear concerning the intent, and then, be sure that a copy is brought to the desk of the secretary.

MILLER: Yes, I move that the voting time be extended from ten to 30 seconds and further that the vote tally be left on the screen long enough for delegates to be able to review the results.

BISHOP BLAKE: All of you who would approve this motion will vote yes; those who do not support, it will vote no. You're ready to vote, please vote now. [*Yes, 733; No, 166; Abstain, 3*]

(pause)

The motion is approved.

I do not know, and we will have to check out, how long it will take to make the necessary changes in the program to extend the time as you have so ordered. We will discover that. I simply want to indicate that for the first part of our agenda this morning we're going to go to the Judicial Council elections. I want to indicate that there's going to be four. I'm not going recognize you right now. I'm going to go ahead with the calendar of the day. We will recognize you in due time. As the calendar is established, I want to explain to you what the process is, cause I think this will enable us to move together on the first part of our work together.

First of all, you tabled the Judicial Council elections. We will first have a motion to remove this item from the table. Remember when you table you must also lift it from the table. That will be the first order, to lift the item from the table. Then, I will give a ruling concerning the Judicial Council elections. Then Mr. Jay Vorhees will make a statement concerning the elections and what was done overnight to deal with the dilemma we had yesterday and then we will proceed with the election. So in that order is what we have planned for the Judicial Council elections. It is an order of the day and it's important business that I think we should address as a council first before anything else, and so at this time, we have the need for a motion to lift this item from the table. I recognize this person here, mic 2.

(pause)

ROBERT L. LOCKABY JR. (Holston): Bob Lockaby, Holston. I move that we remove from the table and return to the floor my original motion to invalidate the Judicial Council election and to vote by written ballot and the two later proposed amendments to that motion.

BISHOP BLAKE: It is to be removed from the table. It's not debatable. After we give time for the translation to be completed, we will vote.

You're ready to vote. Please vote now on the motion to lift from the table the subject of Judicial Council elections. Please vote now. [*Yes, 852; No, 73; Abstain, 1*]

(pause)

The motion to lift from the table is sustained, so the matter of the Judicial Council elections is before us.

In parliamentary procedure, elections are valid when they are declared by the chair except in issues of fraud or where errors of calculation are made. That is the rubric we are working under. The facts are that the computer program was not designed according to the rules of the conference. It was simply a mistake that was made. The fact is that invalid votes were recorded, but not invalid ballots. It is not known specifically whether enough ballots would have been ruled invalid, if the computer would have been designed, the software would have been designed appropriately.

The only way this could have been determined would have been to, last night, go to every keypad and have someone go to every keypad, to revote what was recorded as your vote. The possibility of error in that process is obvious. So that was not done, and whether or not there would have been time for it to be done is problematic. In the result of the ballot, in the, that's in the first election, there were 69 invalid votes and in the second there were 5 invalid votes. Whether or not enough ballots would have been ruled invalid cannot be determined and have not been determined. However, there is potential of there being enough invalid ballots in both elections for the lay members of the Judicial Council that to be certain that this body and the church considers the election to Judicial Council proper, in order, and valid, I am ruling that the actions that this body took in relationship to the Judicial Council be null and void; that we begin again after Jay Vorhees makes his statement of explanation concerning the process and procedure in the technology involved; that we move to the first

ballot in the Judicial Council elections. That is the ruling that, I believe, will facilitate the work of the conference and move us ahead to the process of election.

I would call now on Jay Vorhees to make a statement to the council that will include what has happened, the corrections that have been made, the testing that has been made.

Judicial Explanation

JAY VORHEES: Bishop Blake, members of the annual conference, and brothers and sisters in Christ, when the people at the Antioch United Methodist Church asked me what I would be doing at General Conference, I had no way of knowing that I would be standing here before you. As I begin today, I first want to ask the body's forgiveness because in the midst of answering—the stress of answering your questions yesterday, I made a statement that went beyond my status as a staff member of the General Conference. As I reviewed that statement, both in my mind and in conversation with many of you, I recognize that I misspoke and beg your forgiveness.

What I was trying to communicate—very poorly, I admit—was that the problem we encountered in the election for the six reserve delegates to Judicial Council was present throughout the entire election process. Through a variety of circumstances, the system—as Bishop Blake has said—was invalidating votes but not ballots. And this did not conform to the rules adopted last week and, thus, skewed the totals needed for election. Once the issue was identified, we immediately initiated conversations with our voting equipment vendor to fix the problem. We clarified the specifics of our rules, and a programmer worked quickly to create a patch which was e-mailed to our technicians.

Following our session last night, 25 pages and marshals spent quite a bit of time voting on the system to insure that it conformed to our rules. A six-person ballot was taken using every keypad in the hall—or as near as we could tell, every keypad in the hall—to test the

full system. And then a number of tests were taken on a representative number of keypads to insure that the system conformed to our rules. And before we left for the evening, we polled the marshals and pages about their comfort level with the system as it was now changed; and everyone present—technicians, myself, and the pages and marshals—agreed that the system conformed to our rules as we understand them.

I remind you that you adopted the parameters for what constitutes an invalid ballot last week. They are: attempting to vote for the same person more than once during any ballot, failing to vote for the total number of positions being considered, voting for someone who has been excluded due to election, or entering a number that is not attached to a name on the ballot. In each of the tests last night, we purposely broke these rules to insure that all invalid ballots were not counted. In each case, the system calculated the election according to the rules you established last week.

One note about how the system reports totals. While the programmers were able to reprogram the system to conform to our rules, they were not able to rewrite the display software to conform to our practice of listing valid and invalid ballots. Thus, we will be handing Bishop Blake a printout after each ballot so that he may read that information to you. The system will display the total number of valid votes cast and the number needed to elect.

One other word on procedure. During the delegate orientation when Gary Bowen was reviewing voting procedure, he reported that you did not have to enter or hit the “enter” button to record your vote after you enter your two-digit number. That was incorrect. With that in mind, to insure that we are all clear on how to cast your vote, we'd like to review the voting procedure right now.

First, Bishop Blake will introduce the ballot informing you of the number of positions we are electing. At that

time, a list of candidates will appear on the screen. When Bishop Blake is ready to open the ballot, he will call for that vote by saying the words, "Please vote now." And by your actions just a few minutes ago, we will then open the timer, which will appear on the screen for 30 seconds. During that 30-second period, you need to cast your vote and press the two digits corresponding to the person you are voting for.

Once that appears correctly in your LCD display, please hit "enter" to lock your vote. Now one word on that, please verify your vote before you hit "enter." Because once you hit "enter," it is locked and it cannot be cleared. I'm going to say that one more time so the body understands. Please verify your vote before you hit "enter" on the keypad, because once you hit "enter" the vote is locked and it cannot be changed.

The computer will need about 30 to 60 seconds to process the vote and display the totals. We will bring Bishop Blake the written report, and he will call for the results to be displayed. If someone is elected, Bishop Blake will announce that fact; and that person will become excluded from further votes.

It has been a long day and a long night for all of us, and I speak for all the involved staff in conveying how deeply we regret the inconvenience that has been placed on the General Conference. We've worked hard to deal with this problem, and we believe that the system is now ready to conduct elections according to the rules established of the 2004 General Conference. Thank you, Bishop.

(applause)

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you for expressing your appreciation. All of us have worked as staff in our life some-time in our journey of faith and in the church. We've supported others in doing their work, and we appreciate these persons who support us as we do our work.

The matter the Judicial Council elections are before us. We will begin with

the Lay vote. The ballot will be for two persons. There will be two voting times displayed before you. When the first voting display is on the screen, you will vote for the first person, by number, and then you will push "enter." And then there will be a second display. You will enter another number—other than the number you voted for first—and that will be your second vote on the first ballot. We're ready for the first ballot for Judicial Council lay persons. This ballot is open. You will vote two times. And I am going to wait so that the translators have finished their translation to the delegates.

Lay Election

Do you have a point of order? I cannot hear you. Yes, thank you, thank you. We will have a time of prayer. Thank you very much. Let us pray.

(prayer)

Please vote now your first vote in ballot number one.

(pause)

Please vote now your second vote on ballot number one. You are not to repeat the number that you entered for your first vote. Please vote now. *(pause)* As was noted, there will be from 30 to 60 seconds before the tally is completed. Will the results be displayed, please? Then I will read what is before me. Votes cast were 913 valid ballots. The votes needed for election 457. Jon Gray was elected with 519.

(applause)

Now we will have a ballot for one person, for there is one remaining position, which we have an election. Let's put the tally back up there from the first ballot please. We'll leave this up here for a moment for you to be able to see the results. OK, I think we're—yes? Is there an inquiry? Yes, mic 6.

JAMES A. SIZEMORE (Virginia): Thank you, Bishop. Jim Sizemore, lay delegate from Virginia Conference. One of the keys on my keypad is inoperable.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, we will hold up for a moment; and a new key pad is on the way.

(pause)

Would you, as a delegate, to facilitate our time, by coming to this table? And there will be a screen up here that you can see; and that will help us, I think, in terms of the time. Thank you very much for calling that to our attention. This will facilitate the voting of the body. Thank you, so much. I think that walk will be a shorter time period than swapping out a keypad.

Yes? Is this an inquiry? Go ahead. No. 2.

NICHOLAS MCGEEHON (Illinois Great Rivers): Nick McGeehon, Illinois Great Rivers, young adult. I just want to make sure that votes for Amy Valdez Barker are still valid and that she's reinstated on this vote since she withdrew yesterday. Is that OK for us still to vote for her?

BISHOP BLAKE: All the matters yesterday related to the Judicial Council election were null and void, including the withdrawal. I think we're ready to vote now. You will vote for one person. A vote for Jon Gray will invalidate your ballot. Please vote now.

(pause)

Please display the results. There were valid votes: 931, there were no invalid ballots. The votes needed were 466. The results of those who received votes are on this screen. We'll leave this up so you can study . . . Our next ballot is the same as the previous ballot. When we vote, you will vote for one person. A vote for Jon Gray would disqualify your ballot. Please vote now.

(pause)

Please display the results.

(applause)

There were 933 valid votes, no invalid ballots, 467 votes needed. Beth Capen was elected with 472.

Now, we have the ballot for the

reserves. Reserves are, again, elected by majority of the votes cast. You will vote for six reserve positions, who will be elected in order—who will serve as reserves in order of their election. Any vote for the two persons that you have elected to Judicial Council will invalidate your ballot; and if you do not vote for six persons, your ballot will be invalidated.

So we will have six times to vote on this ballot. I would encourage you not to visit with each other as you're voting for six; that you check off as you vote for each person; and the 30-second time limit will give you time to do that to be assured that you do not vote for the same person twice, because voting for six, it would be easy to do that. And so be your own recorder. You have time to do that.

We're now voting for the six reserve positions for Judicial Council of the laity. I'm waiting for a moment for the translation to be finished. Only those persons who are on the candidate list are eligible to receive your vote. You will vote for six of these persons. Please vote now for your first vote on ballot, on this ballot.

(pause)

BISHOP BLAKE: Please vote now your second person.

(pause)

Please vote now your third vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now your fourth vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now, your fifth vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now, your sixth and final vote on this ballot.

(pause)

We will have time to wait for the results. Please display the results. The votes that were needed for election

were 419. The valid votes were 5,822. The valid ballots were 837. So the votes needed were 419. There were 113 invalid ballots. However, you have elected Solomon Christian, Edwin Gausi, Daniel Ivey-Soto, David Beckley, Daniel Evans, and Raymundo Annang as your six lay reserves to Judicial Council. You have completed the lay election.

(applause)

Clergy Election

Now, we will move to the clergy election for Judicial Council. Can we have displayed the list of eligible person—nominated persons—clergy for the Judicial Council? Let's look at the list. Become familiar with the numbers that you will use for voting. Let us pray together.

(prayer)

You will vote for two persons. There are two positions. You will vote for two persons; the same procedure as we have followed in the lay elections. There will be two opportunities to vote on this first ballot. Please vote now, your first vote on this clergy ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now, your second vote on this ballot, not repeating the vote you just cast. It must be for a different person. Please vote now. We will wait for the results.

(pause)

Please display the votes. The valid ballots were 925. The votes needed for election were 463. There's no election. We will again vote for two persons on this ballot. We'll leave the display up there for a little bit more—longer. You're ready to vote. Again you will cast two votes. There were 25 invalid ballots. So, again you will vote for two persons. You must vote for two persons and you cannot repeat your vote for the same person on the two screens. Please vote now, casting your vote, your first vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please cast your second vote on this ballot, not repeating the person you voted for the first time and you must vote twice. Please cast your vote. We will wait for the results. Please display the results.

(applause)

The valid ballots were 926; invalid were 24. You have elected Susan Henry-Crowe.

(applause)

Now, you will vote for one person; look at the tally. This ballot will only involve 1 vote. A vote for Susan Henry-Crowe will invalidate your ballot.

BISHOP BLAKE: That will only involve one vote. As Susan, a vote for Susan Henry-Crowe will invalidate your ballot. These are the results. Now let's have the list of eligible persons to be voted for. You will vote for one person. There will only be one screen. Please vote now.

(pause)

Please display the results.

(applause)

We're pretty good when we only vote for one, folks. There were no invalid ballots. There were 943 valid ballots needed for election—472, you have elected Dennis Blackwell with 472 votes.

(applause)

Now we will vote for six reserves in the clergy. Let's look at the tally again of the last ballot. On this next ballot and the corresponding lay ballot, there were a number of invalid ballots. I would simply encourage you again to keep track of the persons you voted for and be sure you vote and push the enter button on every time there is a screen before you. We will vote for six reserves for clergy. The eligible persons that you can vote for are one the screen. Be aware that a vote for Susan Henry-Crowe or Dennis Blackwell will invalidate your ballot and it will invalidate your ballot if you don't, if you do not vote every time a screen is before

you. We are voting six times on this ballot. Please vote now, casting your first vote for clergy reserves.

(pause)

Please vote now your second vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now your third vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now your fourth vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now your fifth vote on this ballot.

(pause)

Please vote now your sixth and final vote on this ballot.

(pause)

We will await the results. Please display the results.

(applause)

The valid ballots were 850; 99 were invalidated. Those receiving the highest number of votes needed for election, 426. The highest number of votes will be the reserves, in this order, Shamwange Kyungu, Rex Bevins, Rodney Wilmoth, Frank Trotter Jr., John Harnish, and Gloria Brooks are your reserves for Judicial Council.

Now we're moving—This concludes our Judicial Council elections. We will turn to the Secretary for announcements and then I will give you the time that when we will reconvene with our calendar items as the report of the committee gave them to you this morning. Do we have announcements?

There are no announcements. I don't know what time your watch indicates, but whatever it is, we will be in our places to begin in 20 minutes. My watch says 20 to 11 but this is immaterial because whatever your watch says, it is 20 minutes from now. We will reconvene after our break.

(break)

Let's move to our seats, please, let's move to our seats. We'll be in session soon.

(pause)

BARBARA DAY MILLER: As you are making your way to your seat, we invite you already to be in prayer as we continue our work of the day, holding before us the promise of God that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. Whether we pass through the waters, pass through the fire, we stand on a firm foundation; and we will never be forsaken. Would you stand as we sing this great hymn, "How Firm a Foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in God's excellent Word."

(song)

Amen.

The Day's Agenda

BISHOP BLAKE: The Calendar and Agenda Committee, with all the committee chairs, has decided that our calendar items that we will be dealing with from this point through our consideration, will be all the calendar items related to the subject of homosexuality. The committees have worked together in sequencing this agenda, putting it in sequence to facilitate our work together. I would like to make a couple of statements concerning parliamentary procedure that we've learned so far, and a I simply want to remind us that a motion to table will not be allowed if a person has made a statement concerning that motion. A motion to table is not debatable. Therefore, the maker of the motion cannot make a statement prior to the motion to table. Any motion to table simply must be for that purpose. This is—and it is non-debatable, and I simply want to remind the group of that.

Secondly, we will be dealing with some calendar items that have just been published today but that will only be done after a motion is made to suspend the rules. These are not the major items

that will be before us; but some of them will be, and we are aware of that. And if there is any item that has not been published until today's *DCA* that the legislative committee chair desires for the body to act on, a motion to suspend the rules will be made by that committee chair. We will move to the legislative committee on Church and Society, Jessica Moffat.

Church and Society Items

JESSICA F. MOFFAT (Oklahoma): Bishop, delegates, and guest of the General Conference, I am Jessica Moffat, clergy delegate from the Oklahoma Annual Conference. And first, I want to thank the delegates of the Church and Society Legislative Committee and to tell you that they are a persevering, enduring, and hard-working group. We have worshiped as we have worked. I also want to extend our thanks to our vice chair, Roger Hopson from the Memphis Annual Conference, and our very efficient secretary, Brent Salsgiver, from the Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

(applause)

Bishop, we have a request concerning how we will present the petitions that came to us that are related to Paragraph 161G in *The Book of Discipline*. We would like to present one petition on which we voted concurrence as amended. We believe that this one main motion covers the subjects of the other petitions regarding Paragraph 161G. It also has a minority report attached to it. After that petition, we would like to present 24 petitions that also relate to Paragraph 161G on which we voted non-concurrence. On these 24 petitions, our legislative committee handled each one individually; and we voted non-concurrence on all 24 petitions.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, I think that is clear before the house. We are now dealing with the petition that's been dealt with by the committee in favor of all the other petitions.

MOFFAT: Presenting the petition we

are offering is Margaret Mallory of the West Ohio Annual Conference.

MARGARET M. MALLORY (West Ohio): I am Margaret Mallory of the West Ohio Conference, clergy delegate. Bishop, delegates to the west, to the General Conference, I direct your attention to Calendar Item 1022; *DCA*, page no. 1746; Advance *DCA*, p. 153; Petition 40553.

I'll repeat that: Calendar Item 1022; *DCA*, p. 1746; Advance *DCA*, p. 153; Petition No. 40553—the Retention of Paragraph 161G. The committee recommends concurrence with amendment.

The amendment reads as follows: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We recognize that Christians disagree on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching and we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Our rationale: More than any other issue facing our church, this issue has been the proverbial thorn in our collective sides and we have exposed our wounds to the world. This amendment seeks to move the polarities from their respectable, irreconcilable corners to a place where meaningful dialogue can take place. For the sake of the church we love and a witness to truth-telling, we recommend the adoption of this petition.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you. Now, since we have a minority report, we will hear the presentation of the minority report. Then we will return to the majority report if there is any perfection by the body. And then we will perfect the minority report, in that sequence. So now, we turn to the presentation of the minority report.

MOFFAT: The minority report will be presented by Eddie Fox, Holston Annual Conference.

Minority Report

EDDIE H. FOX (Holston): Bishop, and members of the conference, and friends and guests, I greet you as Methodist people around the world greet one another, especially in Nigeria: "The Lord is good... and all the time." Page no. 1746 in the *DCA*, Calendar Item 1022, the minority report.

This is an urgent matter. I love this church. I am eight generations Methodist. My family was Methodist in 1787 and Wesley is still alive.

I love this church and through the graciousness of God I have been privileged to come to know this church around the world. It has been my joy to be involved with our church in ecumenical circles all across the globe. This is an urgent matter, not only to the people in this room; it is an urgent matter to our people in this country and to our movement around the world. Let me show you the key difference between the minority report and the committee report. The minority report will delete this sentence, "We recognize that Christians disagree on the incompatibility, on the compatibility, on the incompatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching."

I remind you that we are focusing on the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church. We are not dealing with *The Book of Resolutions*. Principles need to be clear, concise, and faithful to who we are as a people—a people who understand Scripture as primary in the essentials of faith. To place the sentence which qualifies our statement that The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching—to place that disqualifying sentence before this, or after it, is to send a confusing message. If we placed such a sentence in front of all the legislation with which we disagree, we would need to place that sentence at the very front preface of the book of the *Discipline*.

The consequences of an unclear

statement in our church are enormous. That is not fiction with me. I know from my own experience in knowing this church around the world. I witnessed churches—especially ethnic-minority churches in another church in another part of the world—I saw ethnic-minority churches excluded because they would not agree to accept such an unclear statement as this. Churches have experienced great divisions, loss of direction and membership as a result of the church failing to point to a clear conviction and understanding of the biblical revelation.

The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, right across ecumenical circles. It is especially incompatible in the understanding—the biblical understanding—of the order of creation, the maleness and the femaleness. Jesus clearly said, "From the beginning of creation, God made them, male and female." We must not, we must not, give a message which is confusing to the world and to the people of The United Methodist Church; especially, especially we must not do that to those who belong to this global church on the continents of the world. To do so is to suffer great consequences for us in our faithfulness and for us as a global church. I ask you, we ask you, large numbers of persons in that legislative committee ask you to support the clarity and integrity of the minority report and to vote yes in its support.

Perfection of Majority Report

BISHOP BLAKE: Now we will turn to the perfection, if any, of the majority report. I may remind you that this is not the time for debate on the main motion. This will come later. But this is a time if there is any perfection of the majority report. The majority report is before you under Calendar Item 1022. And a case statement has been made for that majority report. I see no requests for perfection. Yes, back at no. 6.

JAMES A. SIZEMORE (Virginia): Thank you, Bishop. Jim Sizemore, lay delegate from the Virginia Conference. On the Main Motion, there is a—I

would recommend deletion of a word. The paragraph in 161G that begins: "Homosexual persons, no less than" if you would go to the next to last sentence in that paragraph, my amendment would be to strike the word "their" (t-h-e-i-r). If there's a second to it, I'd like to speak to it.

BISHOP BLAKE: Is there a second? It is seconded. You may speak and this will be the first speech in favor of the amendment.

SIZEMORE: I do believe that by striking this word, the sentence becomes more loving and compassionate and it takes out the divisiveness of us versus them in my view. Thank you.

BISHOP BLAKE: Be sure, Page, that that—a copy of that motion gets to the secretary as soon as possible. Bring it up. Is there a statement against the amendment? Is there a statement in favor, against the amendment, mic 2. Yes.

MARK A. MILLER (Greater New Jersey): Mark Miller, lay delegate from Greater New Jersey. This might be a point of order, Bishop, but I believe in our sub-committee and then in the legislative committee of Church and Society, we approved the main motion that was read by Margaret Mallory and the word "their" that was deleted, it was deleted in the motion. It did not appear in the *DCA* this way, but that's, I think, what we voted on in committee.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, I would turn to the committee as an answer to that clarification. This will not constitute the right of the committee to make the last statement on the amendment.

MOFFAT: He is right. We removed that word.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, that word is removed by action of the committee. Is that correct? Therefore, I would rule that the amendment is not before the house because we've had a clarification of the report of the committee, in the... I see no other—yes, back at mic 7.

JAY K. BRIM (Southwest Texas):

Bishop, Jay Brim, Southwest Texas lay delegate. Just a parliamentary inquiry to determine whether the word was "incompatible" or "compatible" in the main motion. We heard it both ways from speakers at the podium and if you could confirm for us whether it properly should be "compatibility" or "incompatibility."

BISHOP BLAKE: Will the maker of the main, of the majority report, will that person please address this inquiry.

MALLORY: If you could tell me, sir, at what point you are speaking. The word "incompatibility" enters a couple of times.

BRIM: As I read the statement in—on p. 1746 of the *DCA*, in your amendment the second bold portion of the amendment "we recognize that Christians disagree on the—and its written there—compatibility."

MALLORY: Yes

BRIM: But we heard it read both ways by both you and Mr. Fox. Is it to be "compatibility" or was it "incompatibility" as passed by committee?

MALLORY: Just a second. and I'll get it. It's "We recognize that Christians disagree on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching."

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, that is the majority report. That was for clarification.

FOX: And in the minority report, Bishop, may I clarify the sentence?

BISHOP BLAKE: Well let's—let's wait to do that until we get there. We're dealing with the majority report; to be sure the house is clear on the majority report.

(pause)

I think the majority report stands. And now, let's turn to the minority report. You can now make your clarification you wanted to make just a moment ago, and then we will turn to the house to see if there's perfection of the motion.

Perfection of Minority Report

FOX: Thank you, bishop. And you

can see if you would look at the minority report, the way the language is written, "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality, and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teachings..." and then, you can see the rest—shall I read the rest? "We affirm that God's grace is available to all..." and then it's added, "and we will seek to live together in Christian community." The bold type is that which is added.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, what we have is that the *DCA* is accurate in its presentation, except for the one word having to do with the amendment that we noted on the majority report. I see no one in the body desiring to perfect the minority report. No. 3. We're now on perfecting the minority report.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bear with me. The translator was not able to catch up with the speed. That's why I raised my hand. I did not have a question.

BISHOP BLAKE: Let's please go slower for the translation to take place. Thank you for the request. OK, I see no action on the minority report, so they are before you. Now we will—we will treat the minority report as the substitute and I would ask that the chair of the committee make the motion as a substitute motion, as the minority report—that the minority report be offered as the substitute motion for the majority.

MOFFAT: I move that the minority report be offered as a substitute motion for the majority.

Debate on *Minority Report*

BISHOP BLAKE: Now this item is before you. It's open for—I want to remind us that we've been—we perfected the documents, now we're open for debate. We need a statement for, and I will turn to this center section, about mid-way back, and go to mic 2, please.

MILLER: You want to go first? My speech is against the substitute motion. Should I hold, bishop?

BISHOP BLAKE: Substitute motion for....

MILLER: My speech is against the substitute motion—the minority report.

BISHOP BLAKE: OK, substitute motion for the minority report. Let's hear it, and then we'll determine whether or not it's in order.

MILLER: I would like to speak against the minority report. Is that in order at this point?

BISHOP BLAKE: Yes, that's in order. You're the first speaker.

MILLER: OK, I'll start my watch. My brother, Eddie Fox reminded me in subcommittee that this was an essential of the church—this sentence in the *Discipline*. And I wish I could take you, Bishop, and all of you, General Conference, and carry you to the places I've been over the last seven years around this country, leading worship and playing music, in Florida, Lake Junaluska, and Texas, and California, and Ohio, Chicago, New Jersey; and I was never asked—it was never an essential—the practice of my sexuality or my sexual orientation was never the essential that was asked in those cases.

In fact I was five years old in 1972, when The United Methodist Church first put the issue of sexuality into the *Discipline*, homosexuality that is. And in 1972 it didn't mean anything to me, then. But by the time I was a teen-ager and went to my dad, who's a United Methodist pastor, and I said to him, "Dad, I'm gay."

He replied, "Your mother and I love you, no matter what, and God loves you." I think if at that time my dad had quoted the *Discipline*, I probably wouldn't be standing here, today.

As the maker of the amendment—of the majority report in committee, I can tell you that this was an agonizing decision, all around. I personally would like to see this language taken out of the *Discipline*, but for the sake of the church, I believe in retaining this language that says homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. But I would add that there's a signifi-

cant group on this floor that disagrees with that statement. I'm not speaking about ordination of homosexuals, I'm not speaking about union services, and I'm speaking about this one sentence.

I would be for retaining that sentence that says "incompatible with Christian teaching," because the majority on the floor believes that, but I would ask you to also believe that there are many of us in good faith—we're United Methodists and most of all we're followers of Jesus Christ, who do believe differently. Thank you, bishop.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you. That is a speech against the substitute motion as the minority report. Now if someone would speak for. And I'm looking at mic 4. This is a speech for the minority report?

TSHIBANG KASAP 'OWAN (North-West Katanga): Kasap 'owan, North-West Katanga Annual Conference. I want to speak in French. French translator, please.

BISHOP BLAKE: Is there a translator?

KASAP 'OWAN [*simulation interpretation*]: Kasap 'owan from the North Katanga Province. We have received teaching from our missionaries on marriage. Before Christianity arrived in Africa we practiced polygamy. And the Christian teaching that we received taught that there should be marriage between one man and one woman. And this was Christian marriage. We Africans, we accepted this teaching, and we became Christians.

Now we are hearing another message in this General Conference, speaking of homosexuality. For we Africans, this is a very difficult thing for us to understand, because of our culture. African culture forbids us to speak about our sexuality. For us it's taboo to speak of our sexuality. I would like to ask two questions: What is the tradition in The United Methodist Church, today, concerning marriage? What is the teaching that our church needs to retain concerning marriage. The Africans, here, are in confusion. We have no understanding, because of our culture.

We respect our culture and the good things in our culture and we do not want to become drawn into this problem of homosexuality. I believe that we all, members of this General Conference, need to seek what will edify our church. We need to have respect for the culture of each person. And respect for the teaching missionaries brought to Africa. I thank you.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you. We've had one speech for.

(*applause*)

There will be no applause, please. There will be no applause. We're a legislative body, to confer with one another and in that process of conferring let's express ourselves in prayerful discernment. I want to recognize over here, mic 1. Please identify whether or not you're speaking for or against the substitute as the minority report.

JOHN W. EDGAR (West Ohio): John Edgar, West Ohio, speaking against the minority report. I speak against the minority report and in essence in favor of the report that comes from committee, because I think it always right to acknowledge truth. "We will know the truth and the truth will set us free." But the truth in this moment is not to argue over who's right or wrong on homosexuality, the truth that I think that we desperately need to acknowledge as a General Conference, is that people of good faith see this in more than one way. All that we are asking in this report, and it will be preserved if we vote down the minority report, all we're asking is to be able to say two things that together are a greater truth.

The first statement is that as a denomination we have said, and no one's trying to change it, that the majority of folks in this General Conference for several quadrenniums say that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

TSHIBANG KASAP'OWAN (North-West Katanga): ...statement, is that as a denomination, we have said, and no one is trying to change it, that a majority of folks in this General

Conference for several quadrenniums say that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, but there are so many of us who believe that there is more truth, that there is more than one perspective. The people I pastor with—who are good, loving Christians, and who are gay and lesbian folks—all we're asking for is to be able to acknowledge the truth that we are not all of one opinion. And as we hide from the truth, we confuse one another. As we hide from this truth, we become angry and polarized. If we would simply acknowledge what we all know is true—that we all love Jesus Christ, our salvation is through grace and we didn't earn it—and if we would admit that Christians of good will see it differently, we could begin to heal our divisions and move forward with all the good things that we can be and God yearns of us as United Methodists. But we will never move forward if we hide from the truth, that a majority cannot make the rest of us see it their way. Help us to be the church, a church that's big enough and graceful enough to acknowledge the simple fact that some of us see it different, and we still love Jesus and one another as much as the majority. I beg you to vote down the minority report and let us speak truth to one another.

BISHOP BLAKE: We've had two speeches against, we need a speech for, I will turn to mic. 3, right here, mic. 3.

YEMBA KASONGO (Central Congo): [*simultaneous interpretation*] Yemba Kasongo, Central Conference of Africa. I will speak in Swahili for me to express myself very well. I stand for the Minority Report, the way it is. The church needs to speak with a clear voice. An ambiguous voice which is neither (*unintelligible*). This report shows that this would nurture everybody everywhere. Another thing is that the church is not here to follow the will of every country or tribe or a person. It is to the individual to follow God's will through the church voice.

The third purpose is the Conference of Africa would be uplifted and nurtured through this clear and unambiguous voice. We heard this morning's sermon, that now we do it. That is why I challenge and urge all the conferences

of Africa and here in America to move for concurrence this Minority Report because the church has a mission that God gave to it. If America would not do it, God will raise the bones to do it. Thank you.

BISHOP BLAKE: Thank you. Looking back on mic. 7—there at the middle, mic. 7. Please indicate whether or not you're speaking for or against. Sir, I was looking clear on back, thank you. For or against, please? Against. OK, this will be the last statement against. Go ahead.

MULAND AYING KAMBOL (South Congo): Against. I will need an interpreter, I will speak in French. [*simultaneous interpretation*] Bishop, my name is Aying, I am a pastor in southern Congo. If The United Methodist Church today is passing through a time of confusion, our children will live through a time of destruction in the church. A large church, as we are today, is it permitted to us, and by the way, I am very proud to be a part of this church, is it permissible to us to waste so much time speaking about sin? And if this is our vision, as The United Methodist Church, our church will surely die. The freedom that we have to do good—and this is what I would like—and to choose not to do what I do not want to do, does this freedom that we have give us the right to cover up what God has told us? For me, I am discouraged when I see so much time being spent to talk about this sin, when to me, it is very clear that this is sin. Bishop, please allow me, if I could ask that we would just disregard all of the petitions that have to do with homosexuality. Thank you.

BISHOP BLAKE: That was a speech for the minority report. Now we have one speech against the minority report, I'm going to look back at No. 8, back at No. 8.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP BLAKE: No, I recognize the other person. I'm sorry. I recognize the other person in the far section, whoever. Yes.

JAMES PRESTON (Northern Illinois): Bishop and other delegates, I wish I could take you back, as well, to our Church and Society Legislative Committee. Certainly, we're of many different perspectives about this issue as it faces our church. But in our time together, we were able to see that we are all committed to Jesus Christ, committed to the primacy of scripture in its revelation to us as disciples of Jesus, and found common bond in our love, our deep and abiding love for The United Methodist Church. What we also learned, over those days, and many hours together, is that we found ourselves in love, as fellow Christians and United Methodists, with one another. In that spirit, after much discernment, much discussion, much prayer, and much turning to scripture, we came up with the majority report, and the vote is substantially supportive. Yes, there are those who disagree with the report, as seen in the minority report, but a majority of us felt that this Holy Spirit had moved much as the Spirit moved in Acts, Chapter 2. That led us to acknowledge the truth about who we are as a people called United Methodist, and as a people, disciples of Jesus Christ. I believe the majority report is very, very, very clear, and people will read this statement and be clear about our stance. But I also believe the majority report speaks truth. I work with youth in my local United Methodist church, and part of what I think is critical in our life and ministry together with them, is to ask them to live in truth, to speak truth whenever possible, and I would hope that we would witness to that as the church, that in all of our differences, as Paul said in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, we are all needed, we are all needed, we are all part of it, and the statement just to acknowledge that we disagree is in line with scripture and speaks the truth, both as we experience in Acts, chapter 2, in the movement of the spirit that we saw in our legislative committee and in 1 Corinthians 12 it acknowledges that we are many parts, but one body. Let

us not support the minority report.

BISHOP BLAKE: Please conclude.

PRESTON: In respect of my brothers and sisters on the minority report, it does not speak the truth.

BISHOP BLAKE: We have had three speeches for, three speeches against. According to our rule, we are closing debate with the right of the presenter of the minority report, to, under the rules of debate, have a three-minute, up to three minute statement, and then the presenter of the majority report will have a three minute statement. At the end of those statements, we will have a prayer and then we will move to the vote. So this is closing the debate, first of all, with the presenter of the minority report.

EDDIE FOX (Holston): Thank you, bishop.

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(Continued in May 6 issue)