



Missional Justice

A Newsletter of the Social Justice & Mission Ministry

Pre-Conference Edition

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WEIGHING THE ISSUE *who we can be as an annual conference*
naomi sea young wittstruck leadership development minister

It is hard to believe it's almost time to come together again as laity and clergy from around the state to commemorate Annual Conference! This summer will mark my fourth Annual Conference (AC) since I began serving as your Leadership Development Minister for Social Justice and Mission. During my tenure, I have experienced this statewide gathering as a joyful time of renewing connections with people we often do not get to see, wonderful worship and celebration of the ministries thriving in our Conference, and a time to come together to grapple with the shifting realities of our congregations and communities and the ministries each of us are individually and communally called to do with all of God's people.

Unfortunately, I have also observed AC becoming a platform by which clergy and laity can publicly criticize, reprimand, and degrade others in their ministry; a time for people to share their bitterness, anger, and resentment at "the Conference" or other laity and clergy for whatever pent-up emotions have been specifically reserved for this public forum. I have witnessed the historic encampments of people with divergent theological, social, and political perspectives vying to elevate their views and beliefs to be *the* views and beliefs of the entire body and degrading anyone who comes from a different perspective. Too often than not, we miss the opportunity to witness positively to other Iowans about how welcoming and set-apart we are from the deep divisions of the world, because we sometimes fail to treat people within our own community with respect, grace, and kindness.

It would be profoundly amazing if particularly during this tumultuous time in history when people, societies, and governments have become further polarized, separated, and broken, if each of us who comprise the Iowa Annual Conference could live out Christ-inspired grace and respect towards all. To go even farther, what if we intentionally made this 2011 AC, the year before the United Methodist shift in Quadrennium, the year we vibrantly and faithfully live out God's grace and love with one another in ways that move us forward as a denominational community and furthers the work we are doing for and with people around the state and the world.

As *The Book of Resolutions, 2008-2012* notes in Resolution #2061, Being the Church Amidst Disagreement: "As a church facing a new millennium we continue to disagree, sometimes bitterly. Important biblical, theological, and scientific questions remain in dispute among persons
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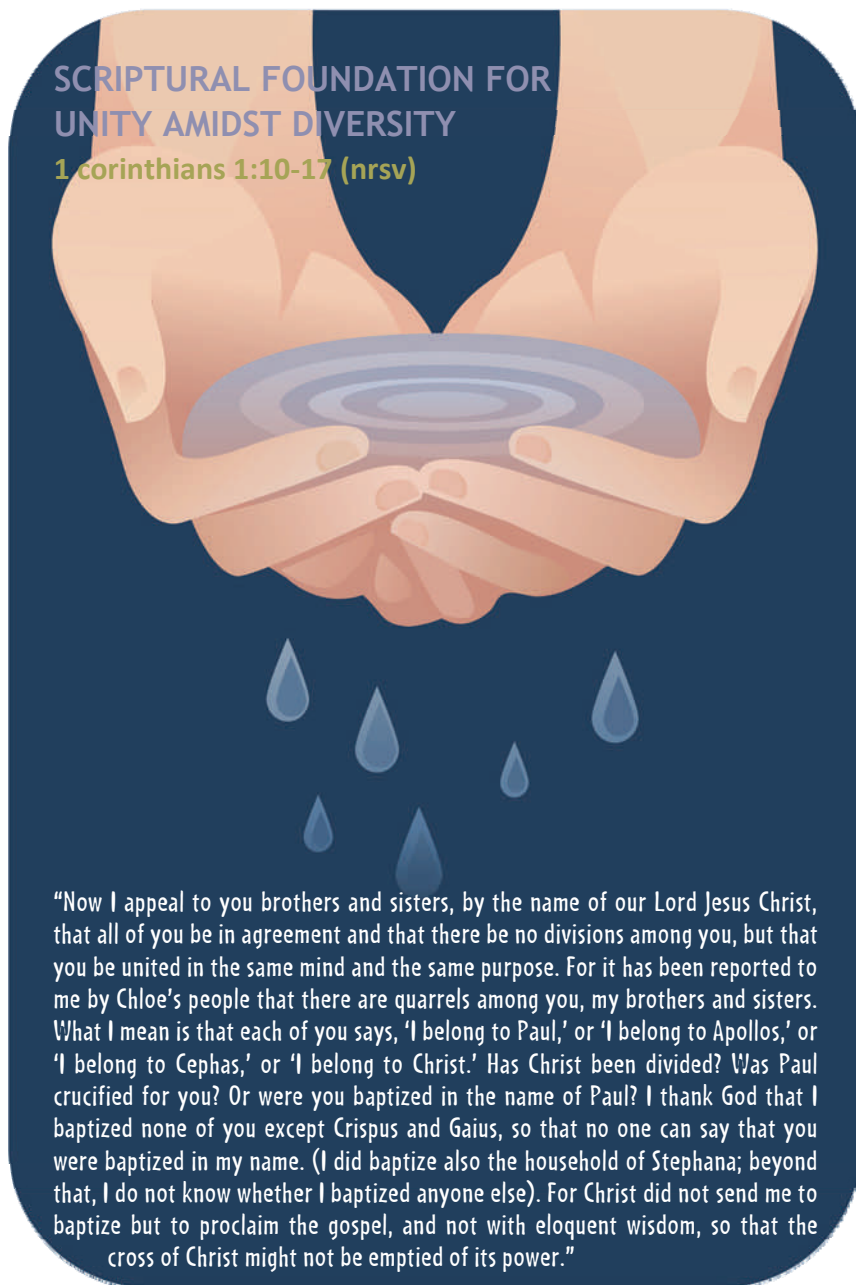


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of good will. Called as United Methodists to be vigilant on issues of inclusiveness, we reflect on the process of disagreement. When we engage in deeply felt struggles for the truth, emotions run high. Our human nature moves us to yearn for “victory” – for winning the debate, making judgment in hopes it will settle the controversy that causes us discomfort and pain as a community. In prolonged disagreement, we may find ourselves stepping on the feelings of others in our urgency to find the true, winning position. **We remind ourselves as a community of faith to remember who we are, how we are perceived by both civil and religious communities when we disagree, and what we have called ourselves to be as a church.”**

May this Annual Conference be a celebratory time that upholds joy in the midst of the challenging work we come together to do as a community. And let us live out the statement “Called to Inclusiveness” in ¶139 of *The Book of Discipline, 2008*, “as a diverse

people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God’s grace to the unity of the church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus’ ministry to all persons.” “[I]f we heed this call to value all of God’s creation, we show our world how to disagree in remarkable and loving ways” (Resolution #2061).



PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION DURING ANNUAL CONFERENCE

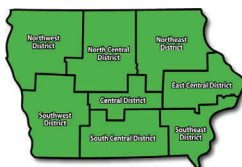
Video Showings: You will have the opportunity to watch clips of the films *9500 Liberty* and *Abused: The Postville Raid* that are being shared by the Iowa United Methodist Church Immigration Task Force. They can be viewed at the Board of Global Ministries' Justice For Our Neighbors information table. For more information, email Mark Young at revmyoung.78@gmail.com.



Peace March: The second annual March for Peace and Social Justice will be held **Monday, June 6, over the noon break**. We'll march from Hy-Vee Hall to Nollen Plaza, where we will gather for a brief prayer service before returning to Hy-Vee Hall. Sponsors of the march include the Iowa chapter of Methodist Federation for Social Action, Iowa United Methodist Women, the Conference Board of Church and Society, and the Conference Board of Global Ministries.



Special Mission Projects: Each of the eight districts has a designated mission project for us to support during AC. [Click here](#)* to view the list. There is also a need for 24,000 hand towels to complete the UMCOR health kits. To learn more about size, etc, of the hand towels, please [click here](#)**



Resources on Mission and Social Justice:

If you are interested in more information on social justice and missions, please visit the AC displays of both the Conference Board of Global Ministries and the Conference Board of Church and Society (Hall B).

*<http://www.iaumc.org/site/link/BOHKEPHHIBOMFDOPFPHEJLHIIIBPJDFBIOGBFEOLILMGOCGHCIDHIMIPMHIGDLEPBMHP>

**<http://www.iaumc.org/site/link/BOHKFCHIBOLFMOKGOIHNGHEFBFIMDOJLFKICPBJGLCODEEGDCJIPJFKOIBHKJBFAMCEOHBDGLDBM>





PERSPECTIVES FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2011

Wesleyan In 1742, John Wesley wrote a paper entitled, “The Character of a Methodist.” In this paper Wesley notes, “as to all opinions that do not strike at the root of Christianity, think and let think.” What he continued on to formulate is the importance and the inherent core of Methodism that provides for diversity of interpretations, experiences, and perspectives on issues while joining together in shared commonalities at the heart of Christianity that bring us together as covenant community.

Statements on Meaningful Dialogue and Doctrinal Heritage from *The Book of Discipline, 2008* This is a very familiar statement for leadership trainings I have led but a vital portion of our heritage and life together as United Methodists is centered upon the importance of living out our faith in meaningful and transformative ways.

As the section entitled “Our Doctrinal Heritage” notes in *The Book of Discipline, 2008*, “we insist that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. By joining heart and hand, we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness, and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world” (§101).

The Book of Resolutions, 2008 and Social Principles Resolution #2061. Being the Church Amid Disagreement — “To the people called United Methodists, with the hope that through prayer and holy conferencing, we will engage each other in love and grace as we deal with issues upon which we disagree: As a church facing a new millennium we continue to disagree, sometimes bitterly. Important biblical, theological, and scientific questions remain in dispute among persons of good will. Called as United Methodists to be vigilant on issues of inclusiveness, we reflect on the process of disagreement. When we engage in deeply felt struggles for the truth, emotions run high. Our human nature moves us to yearn for “victory” – for winning the debate, making judgment in hopes it will settle the controversy that causes us discomfort and pain as a community. In prolonged disagreement, we may find ourselves stepping on the feelings of others in our urgency to find the true, winning position. We remind ourselves as a community of faith to remember who we are, how we are perceived by both civil and religious communities when we disagree, and what we have called ourselves to be as a church...”

Our Calling as United Methodists In “Called to Inclusiveness” (§139, *The Book of Discipline, 2008*), we hold ourselves accountable to this call: “We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God’s grace to the unity of the church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus’ ministry to all persons. ...[i]f we heed this call to value all of God’s creation, we show our world how to disagree in remarkable and loving ways.”

Power of a Discerning Question In the midst of engaged debate, our ability to listen to one another can weaken. True listening, hearing feelings as well as ideas, can be enhanced when we focus on discerning one another’s positions on matters of importance. Questions that might help us do this are:

- *How can we show hospitality to one another while we disagree?*
- *What hopes and interests do we have in common?*
- *Can we temporarily suspend decision-making in order, through prayer, silence, and study, to discern and deepen our understanding of all positions on the issue?*
- *Until we agree on a resolution, can we agree to suspend motions, decisions, policy development that will assert one position over the other?*
- *What are the positive and negative effects of our disagreement on our congregations, our members, our clergy and laity, and on the communities where we serve?*
- *What action as a community of faith should we take in light of these effects?*
- *What would we like the nature of our church or community to be when this issue that divides us is finally resolved?*