

Oregon Idaho Cabinet Connection

The work of your Conference Cabinet

December 17, 2007

Appointive Cabinet
Bishop Bob Hoshibata
Kate Conolly, Western
Bob Flaherty, Eastern
Bonnie Parr Philipson, Metro
Donna Pritchard, Southern
John Watts, Central

Ministry Cabinet
All of the above plus:
Scott Harkness, DCM
Bob Meyers, Treasurer
Tom Wogaman, Lay Leader

Cabinet Trip to Lake Junaluska November 8-10, 2007

November 8, 9, and 10 were significant days for the Ministry Cabinet of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference. All nine of us were privileged to join with 864 others from around the world for an historic gathering of bishops and extended cabinets at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Perhaps you've already seen reports and releases from our denominational news sources.

In this issue of the "Cabinet Connection" we'd like to tell you more about this experience, along with our personal impressions. Below is an edited version of the United Methodist News Service report of the gathering. Following are brief paragraphs containing the thoughts and feelings of some of the members of our Ministry Cabinet. Bishop Hoshibata has already written a piece related to this event addressing the ["Three Simple Rules"](#) that not only rest in the heart of our tradition but show us the way forward as a global church.

Since I am introducing this issue of the "Cabinet Connection," I'm going to take the lead by sharing a few of my own thoughts and impressions.

I have to confess that my perceptions and interpretations of the messages we received during our time at Lake Junaluska were greatly impacted by the few days I spent in Phoenix at a Western Jurisdiction Congregational Development meeting just the week prior. That event for me was transformative and inspiring. Led by the new national director of the "Path 1" program of our church, the Rev. Tom Butcher of the Desert Southwest Conference, opened our hearts and imaginations to the compelling need of starting new faith communities throughout the country and, indeed, the world. The future of our denomination depends on it.

Butcher brought with him two other key leaders in church development from our denomination: Stephen Compton from North Carolina and Bob Crossman from Arkansas. After hearing their presentations and joining in open discussion, I left Phoenix with a much clearer sense of what our conference and denominational priority needs to be. Here's what Compton writes in his book, *Rekindling the Mainline: New Life Through New Churches*: "So

long as local churches and aging denominational groups seek to define their futures from the successes of their past, they risk losing what is most valuable about the church. The church as an institution may survive in some form, yet the purpose of the church as a vital community of faith may be obscured by attention to membership growth, fund-raising, building maintenance and the perpetuation of once-meaningful traditions." Almost everything I heard at Lake Junaluska was filtered through my Phoenix experience. What gives me hope about our denomination is not necessarily the honesty about our decline that was emphasized at Lake Junaluska, nor the challenges passionately delivered to reclaim the glory we once knew as a church. What gives me hope was the repeated call by the leaders of the church to the leaders of the church to take the living and redeeming heart of our tradition (e.g., the Wesleyan "Three Simple Rules") and offer it to our world today in innovative and relevant ways. I left inspired and optimistic.

*Scott Harkness
Director of Connectional Ministries*

Convocation focuses on 'the United Methodist way'

From a UMNS article by Linda Green



United Methodist Bishop Violet Fisher addresses nearly 1,000 participants at the "Convocation of Extended Cabinets " Nov. 9 at Lake Junaluska, N.C. (UMNS photos by Linda Green.)

"Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God."

Nearly 1,000 United Methodists from throughout the world learned those three simple rules at a convocation of bishops and their extended cabinets Nov. 9-11 at Lake Junaluska Conference Center, North Carolina. They committed themselves to teach the three rules to others as they extend the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This was the first joint meeting of bishops and their cabinets in almost 40 years. The last occasion was in 1969, just after the merger of the former Methodist Church and the former Evangelical United Brethren Church to form The United Methodist Church. This convocation brought together district superintendents and others charged with leading their annual conferences to develop clarity

around the church's purpose, mission and identity and to prepare to lead the church in new ways.



"We, as United Methodists, must rediscover the vocation of being full-time Christians," says Bishop Gregory Palmer.

Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living, a new book by Bishop Rueben Job, was one of the convocation's guides. In the book's preface, the retired bishop writes that in the fast-paced and complex world of the 21st century, people of faith are ready for a more faithful way of living and discipleship. Methodism's founder John Wesley articulated how to live faithfully and then practiced and taught those principles.

"And now it is up to us to see if we will take it, teach it and practice it until it becomes our natural way of living, a way of living that will mark our life together and our lives as individual Christians," Job said.

Throughout the convocation, the bishops emphasized a commitment to teaching the rules of United Methodist living in order that people and congregations may be strengthened and grow in faith.

Prior to the gathering, participants read and discussed "The United Methodist Way: Living the Christian Life in Covenant with Christ and One Another," a paper commissioned for the convocation by the Council of Bishops. [The paper is available by clicking here.](#)

Comments from Participants

As I read over my notes from the Extended Cabinet Convocation at Lake Junaluska earlier this month, one thing keeps jumping out at me: change/reform/church renewal begins with ME! If we are serious about changing our church's decline, and if we ever hope to change the world (even a little), it must begin with each and every individual. We are reminded by Wesleyan scholar Randy Maddox that Methodism began because of the nominal commitment and spiritual lethargy of the "church folk" of John Wesley's day. We

need to ask ourselves whether we might be in the same place today, especially here in North American Methodism! The heart of our Wesleyan DNA challenges us to answer the question, "How can we be who God wants us to be?" in our own time and place. For surely God intends for us to continue to be the people of changed hearts who will change the world beginning with ourselves. *(Rev. Donna Pritchard, Southern District)*

All the bishops and superintendents in the United Methodist Church were last called together in 1969, the year after the merger between the Methodists and the Evangelical United Brethren. That's nearly 40 years. I'm sure it was a good meeting, but since that meeting, we have declined in membership nearly 2% per year. This time we were called together out of the realization that it's high time for an honest appraisal of our decline and also for the kind of radical, systemic change it will take to turn things around. When we were growing, we were a movement. We were nimble. We could move to seize ministry opportunities as they presented themselves. Now we're an institution. We have a built-in resistance to change. "We have more harness than horse," as a bishop once famously observed. What I liked best about the Lake Junaluska meeting was its positive, hopeful tone. Our future can be different from our recent past. Indeed, recapturing the genius of our not-so-recent Wesleyan past may be the key to our future. Will the 40-year decline continue even though the bishops and superintendents had another good meeting? It's easy to be cynical. I think of the farmer who, after listening patiently to the extension agent, says he already knows how to farm better than he does. Knowing what we need to do and doing it are two different things. There's a lot of inertia to overcome. A giant ship doesn't turn on a dime. But if we're going to turn, people like bishops and superintendents, who, it could be argued, have a vested interest in the status quo, are the right ones to issue the clarion call. God once raised up a people called Methodist. I don't think God's through with us yet. *(Rev. John Watts, Central District)*

I enjoyed very much the opportunity to attend with our bishop and ministry cabinet "The United Methodist Way: A Convocation of Extended Cabinets" at Lake Junaluska in the western mountains of North Carolina. Since I grew up in the South Georgia Conference and transferred to Oregon-Idaho in 1978, it was an opportunity to revisit my roots in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, where Junaluska is a United Methodist Mecca. It was fun to see seminary friends from Duke Divinity School from years ago. I especially enjoyed seeing Bishop Hope Morgan Ward from Mississippi and Bishop Greg Palmer from Iowa. Seeing the far-flung leadership of our church, not only from all over the United States but especially from Africa and Asia, was very exciting. The tone of the conference was harmonious and hopeful, focusing on our common mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The Holy Spirit was evident to me in the worship, conversation, sharing of meals and enjoying the beauty of the lake and

mountains and fall colors. I returned refreshed and particularly appreciative of our own bishop and cabinet and being blessed by this experience of renewal together. *(Rev. Bonnie Parr Philipson, Metro District)*

It was thrilling to be part of the gathering of bishops and their extended cabinets from around the world. While we in the northern hemisphere are concerned about declining membership, declining worship attendance, aging congregations, and growing bureaucracy, other parts of the church, especially in Africa, are exploding. The enthusiasm from United Methodists from those parts of the church was infectious. Speakers and interaction among cabinets at the convocation made it clear that the leadership of the United Methodist Church desires to exercise leadership, as opposed to simply administering the institution, to energize and vitalize the church, evangelize the world, and bring our influence to the globe as an agent for transformation. *(Rev. Bob Flaherty, Eastern District)*

I was impressed by the tone of the session. There was an honest recognition of the problems facing the church (e.g., decline in the U.S. in recent years), but no sense of giving up in the face of those problems. In fact, there seemed to be a pervading optimism that the church has a significant future with an important mission. I was impressed also by the general tone of friendliness and respect among the hundreds of leaders from all over the country and some central conferences abroad. I didn't detect the divisiveness and occasional back-biting that marked the Pittsburgh General Conference and some of the mailings I've received since then. At Lake Junaluska there seemed a general recognition that we're all in this together. *(Mr. Tom Wogaman, Conference Lay Leader)*
