



## Greetings from Mozambique



Dear Members and Friends of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference,

This E-lumination finds me in the city of Maputo in Mozambique on the southeast coast of Africa. I am here along with the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church where we are meeting for one of our semi-annual meetings as a council. This is the first time the Council of Bishops has met outside the United States. It has taken me three days to arrive here. From Portland I flew to Washington, D.C. The next day I flew 15 hours to Johannesburg, South Africa, and then, following an overnight stay in Johannesburg, I flew to Maputo. It has been a tiring journey!

Today, we boarded buses from our hotel in Maputo and traveled to a conference center a couple miles away. At our destination, there were armed security guards at the entrance. The buses made their way to the conference center where we were warmly greeted by members of local United Methodist Churches from the area. As we were ushered into the large auditorium, I was told by a colleague bishop from Africa that the President of Mozambique was expected to address us.

As the welcoming ceremony began, there was joyful processional music by a choir. They sang in an African dialect which I could not understand. However, the joy and the rhythm and the spirit of their singing was unmistakably the presence of God's Holy Spirit. The choir robes they wore were accompanied by stoles upon which was embroidered the cross of flame of United Methodism. I was touched by the realization that half-way around the globe, I was connected by worship to United Methodists!

Psalms read in both Portuguese (the official language of Mozambique) and English called us to worship, along with a familiar hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," sung with gusto in both languages. (John Wesley, who counseled us to sing hymns lustily, would have been proud!) Prayer and more scripture and anthems followed. We were greeted warmly by the District Superintendent of the West Maputo District. Greetings were offered by the President of the Council of Bishops, who also introduced all the bishops present, their guests, and representatives of our church who had come to Mozambique for this occasion.

The President of Mozambique addressed us warmly. He spoke of welcome and appreciation for our being present. There was gratitude for all that The United Methodist Church has done for Mozambique and for Africa. And we were implored to continue to support with our love and resources and prayers as Mozambique and Africa continue to struggle in the aftermath of civil war; poverty; and AIDS. The call to us to continue to combat poverty rang familiar: This is something we can achieve!

My traveling fatigue has given way to a sense of gladness that I can be a part of this gathering. The fact that we have traveled here is of vital importance to our African sisters and brothers. They feel that they are honored as important members of our United Methodist family and are genuinely appreciative.

Tomorrow, we will commence our grueling schedule of meetings and conversations. I am assigned to a committee that will be planning worship for the General Conference to be held in 2008. A meeting for that committee will start my day over breakfast. Worship will follow, planned by the African bishops. The schedule continues with plenary sessions during which we will receive information and discuss what it means to be the global church, fully appreciative of the ministry and mission that is ours because we are connected at United Methodists all around the world.

I am pleased to be with colleague bishops that represent our global family: from Norway, Germany, the Philippines, Liberia, Angola; as well as colleagues from other parts of the United States. In our conversations, I am inspired to learn of many ways that our church is striving to make disciples of Jesus Christ. And I will have an opportunity to share with them about our own annual conference, and will share how we in Oregon-Idaho are boldly making disciples, giving God our best.

I hope to share more about my experiences with you. I know that I will return home with stories and ideas that may impact what we do as an annual conference. Please keep your Council of Bishops in prayer as we meet!

In Christ's shalom,

Robert T. Hoshibata

*Gracious God, in thanksgiving we pray for the human family! With gratitude, we give thanks for the connections that link us with sisters and brothers all over the world. Help us to appreciate all persons and their cultures. In our diversity, we see a thread of commonality: We are all your children. We pray therefore for peace. May there be an end to war, and a beginning of the lasting shalom which we know in faith through Jesus Christ. Grant this shalom to a world which is wracked by violence and killing. As the Council of Bishops meets, grant them the grace and wisdom to work together for our United Methodist Church and its mission and ministry in the world. We pray this in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Bishop Bob Hoshibata would like to communicate directly with Conference leaders. To do that he has established this email newsletter.

He encourages your feedback, comments, thoughts and ideas. Email him at [Bishop@umoi.org](mailto:Bishop@umoi.org).

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