

Proceedings of the 2012 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

**Thursday Evening,
April 26, 2012**

(continued from page 2096)

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church in Malaysia—

BISHOP JUNG: Bishop Yung Hwa, Che Suan Boh, Liong-Yung Wong.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas—

BISHOP JUNG: President Heinsley Augustus Johnson, Shirley Winslow Proctor.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church of Mexico—

BISHOP JUNG: Bishop Juan Pluma Morales, Esther Cano.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church of the Union of Myanmar (Lower Myanmar)—

BISHOP JUNG: Bishop Saw Shwe, Daw Kyin Thein.

BISHOP RADER: The Evangelical Methodist Church of Panama—

BISHOP JUNG: Bishop Pablo Morales Vega, Lupita Norma Salmon.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church of Peru—

BISHOP JUNG: Bishop Edilberto-Jorge Bravo-Caballero, Guillermo Yoshikawa Torres.

BISHOP RADER: The Evangelical Methodist Church of the Philippines—

BISHOP JUNG: Rev. Nathanael Payawal Lazaro, Bernard Bernardo Gorospe.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico—

BISHOP JUNG: Rev. Nydia M. Rios-Gabriel, Felix Angulo-Rodriguez.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church in Singapore—

BISHOP JUNG: President Chin Chung Chong, Premkumar Thambiraj.

BISHOP RADER: The Methodist Church of Uruguay—

BISHOP JUNG: Rev. Raul A. Sosa, Marcela Evelyn Robaina.

BISHOP RADER: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines—

BISHOP JUNG: Bishop Elorde Mendoza Sambat.

BISHOP RADER: Now I would invite all of you, you United Methodists sitting out there to greet these our ecumenical partners from around the world.

(applause)

Is it not true, my friends, that we are inheritors of a rich history and these people are reminders to us of the ongoing work we must engage as together we bring the good news of Jesus Christ to this troubled world. And now I would invite Bishop Shwe to greet us on behalf of these ecumenical partners. Bishop Shwe.

BISHOP SAW SHWE (the Methodist Church of the Union of Myanmar (Lower Myanmar): Good evening, it feels so excited because we receive your warmly welcome here. We just hear the call at the first day, your warmly welcome and invite last night, and today we are healed by your warmly welcome and by your hospitality.

As what I see a new change, a little change, at the conference I've been attend the first time in 1984 in Baltimore, the second time '88 in St. Louis, the fourth time 2004 in Pittsburgh, it is my fourth time. What is the changes? Since 1984, I was sit as a colleague to the rows we are sitting at—the—as—the back, but today we feel that you honor us. Let us seat number 21, 22 to be at the front. So we feel that you honor us and make us to be the front-tier soldiers

for Jesus Christ. As our topics, themes, we have to be good disciples of Jesus Christ and united in the Spirit of God, unity in Christ, and so that today we feel more warmly welcome as at home here. You treat us not as a guest only, just treat us, welcome us, warmly, as one of the family members. So that we are very appreciate and glad to be here, participate here. Though I'm—I have not prepare for the whole group. I just prepare for greeting one minute but suddenly ask me to say on behalf of the whole group, it is my great honor and very appreciated. Thank you very much. May God bless you.

(applause)

BISHOP RADER: Dear friends, these are our friends and colleagues in ministry around the world and they are here among us and I invite us as we move through these days of General Conference for you all to move forward and to greet them and to invite them out to dinner or to invite them for a cup of coffee and to learn together about the ministry that is going on in their church as you share what is going on in ours. We are grateful for their presence with us and for the work they do with us as are in this General Conference. Thank you very much. Thank you, Bishop Hayes.

(applause)

BISHOP HAYES: Let's give them a hand you all. We are indeed a global family and I want to thank Bishop Rader, I want to thank Bishop Jung, Bishop Galvan, Council, newly elected president Bishop Wenner, and Bishop Goodpaster.

(pause)

I know that many of these faces are familiar to many of you who have done mission trips and been

abroad and—and different places, different conferences and jurisdictions and countries and very familiar faces. Thank you all once again for coming such a long way.

*Nomination for Secretary of
General Conference*

Tonight, my brothers and sisters, we have to engage ourselves in some business, the business of nominations and this is what we are here to do as well tonight. If you look on your agenda you will see that we have some nominations to make tonight. I need to let you that the voting on the nominations will be done at a separate time. The nominations we will be receiving tonight will be Secretary of the General Conference—that will be first. The second one will be the names of the Judicial Council. And the last nominations will be received for the University Senate. And so we are going to begin that process right now. I'm going to—with the help of the video folks—we have some names that we're going to be putting up on the screen for you to see in all three of these categories so that you will have an opportunity to see who has been nominated already either by the council or whatever. And so you will see those names in just a moment. So let's move now to the Secretary of the General Conference. The name that has been nominated by the Council of Bishops for the Secretary of the General Conference is Fitzgerald Reist and at that—at this time if there are other names that you want to enter into nomination for the General Secretary of the General Conference, you may come forward or you may lift your cards and I will recognize you for nominations from the floor.

Fitzgerald Reist is the name nominated by the council. This reminds me of the front pews on most Methodist churches. Nobody wants to go there so we will enter that name into nomination, if I'm not mistaken, on next Wednesday. The

agenda calls for the election of the General Secretary of the General Conference. So seeing no names submitted, we will close the nomination on that particular category.

*Judicial Council, University
Senate Nominations*

We come now to the nominations for Judicial Council and I'm going to anticipate the names of those nominees to be placed on the screen here in just a moment. You will have an opportunity to see those names and hopefully get those names in hand so that you won't nominate them again. We'll see if we can get those names posted. If we don't get 'em posted I do a great shadow puppet act here. Ha, ha, ha. OK I think they're coming up.

(pause)

While we are waiting for the names to be projected, I would like to make you aware of some of the rules or some of the things that accompany the nominee for the Judicial Council. And that is that the person who is nominated must submit at—a one hundred word or less biography that should be submitted to the *Daily Christian Advocate*. The reason is because it has to be printed at least forty-eight hours prior to the time of election.

All nominees must submit a 100-word or less page biography and submit it so that it can be printed in the *Daily Christian Advocate*. That deadline will be Friday at 5:00. Just so we are very clear that anything after Friday at 5 will not be acceptable. That is because of the weekend and if you'll look in your agenda, the vote for the Judicial Council will be on Monday. So that is why we need to have those 100-word or less biographies into the hands of the people who publish the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

All right, the names are there behind me and I want you to take a look at those names and I'll get to you in just moment but I want to

give you a moment to look at those names. (*laypersons: Beth Capen, Randall Miller, Oswald Tweh, Danelle Tecah, Warren Plowden; clergy: John Harnish, Dennis Blackwell, Tim Bruster, Jane Tews, Susan Henry-Crowe, Øyvind Hellesen*) And any nominations that come from the floor I will recognize and we will enter those into nomination.

Again, we're not voting on them that will come at a later time. When you come to the mic I will need for you to identify yourself and then also to state the name of the nominee twice and I will repeat it so that we will all be on the same page. I saw a card over here by station 12—that was an orange card. If you will go to mic 12 I will get back over here in just a moment. State your name and your conference, please.

TOM PRICE (Baltimore-Washington): Tom—Tom Price, Baltimore-Washington Conference. And just a question for the chair, please?

BISHOP HAYES: Yes.

PRICE: How many will we be electing?

BISHOP HAYES: If I'm not mistaken there will be four from the General Conference. Let me read for you the information that I have here that will let you know. We will be electing four by the General Conference, two of whom shall be chief executive officers. No, I'm sorry, let me get that right. All right, here we go. "The number to be elected shall correspond to the number of members whose terms expire at the conclusion of each session." It's a very bad feedback here—just a moment. The number was supposed to be a part of this. I will get that figure for you in just a moment. But it will correspond with the number of people who will be retiring from Judicial Council.

PRICE: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP HAYES: We'll get that number to you in just a moment. I see two orange cards in the rear. I will recognize the person going to

mic no. 3, if I'm not mistaken. State your name.

MERLE M. IDOM JR. (Texas): Matt Idom Jr., Texas Annual Conference. I nominate the Rev. Dr. Kimbamba Kiboko, the Rev. Dr. Kimbamba Kiboko.

BISHOP HAYES: Kimbamba Kiboko. There should be forms—I see your teller is giving that to you. Once nominations are received, please fill that out so the teller can then bring it to us. We will make a copy and get one also back to you. So, Kimbamba Kiboko. Thank you. I saw another orange card here. Please, yes, the delegate going to mic 7.

JAMES DELRAY HOLLEY (Holston): Bishop, Del Holley, Holston Annual Conference, lay delegate. I would like to nominate Robert L. Lockaby Jr. from Holston Conference, also a layperson. Robert L. Lockaby Jr.

BISHOP HAYES: Robert L. Lockaby Jr. All right, thank you. If you would fill out that information, we will get that to you. Let me move over here now and then I'll come back over here. I see the orange card there. Yes, sir, if you would go to—is 10 the closest or 11? Ten—the delegate going to mic 10. We will endeavor to get the number to you from the first inquiry.

LAWRENCE LEE BURIAN (Virginia): My name is Lawrence Burian and I'm—I have the pleasure to nominate as a lay member of the Judicial Council the Honorable Curt Glasgow. Curt Glasgow of the Oklahoma Annual Conference.

BISHOP HAYES: Curt Glasgow. All right, thank you. If you would fill out that information. I see a green card in the far back. If that—yes, if that delegate turning around looking at us, if you would go to mic no. 3. State your name and conference.

KIMBERLY REISMAN (Indiana): Thank you, Bishop, my name is Kim Reisman from the Indiana Conference in the United—the United States. I nominate Mark

Dicken from the Indiana Conference. Mark's a preacher's kid, a lifelong Methodist, an ordained elder.

BISHOP HAYES: Excuse me, you don't have to—OK, just the name and conference.

REISMAN: Just the name and the conference, all right, sir. Thank you.

BISHOP HAYES: Mark Dickens _____. Please fill out the information. Thank you. I see a card here, mic 5. Delegate please to mic 5.

LEONARD GBLOH (Sierra Leone): Leonard Gbloh is my name, from Sierra Leone, lay delegate. I want to nominate Dr. Solomon Christian from Litland Tennessee.

BISHOP HAYES: Repeat the name again.

GBLOH: Dr. Solomon Christian.

BISHOP HAYES: All right, Solomon Christian. And someone will come with you with a sheet to fill out in just a moment. Thank you. OK, I see a white card here and then I will come back over to the orange and the white card on this side. The white card there in the back—yes, would you please stand, yes, yes. If you would go to mic 3, I recognize the delegate there.

BISHOP HAYES: If you would go to mic 3. I recognize the delegate there.

CHAMUSA GOMER KASWESHI (South-West Katanga): Chamusa Kasweshi, Sud-Oeste Katanga. (*French*)

BISHOP HAYES: We'll wait for our translation.

(*pause*)

KASWESHI (translation): Translation. I move to close the nomination.

BISHOP HAYES: All right, it's been moved. Is there a second? No, no, I don't think not. It's not? Sir? Would he come back to the microphone, please, again and state his name?

KASWESHI: Chamusa Kasweshi, Sud-Oeste Katanga.

KASWESHI (translation): Chamusa Kasweshi, Sud-Oeste Annual Conference.

BISHOP HAYES: Could you please explain to him that we are receiving simply nominations at this time, and it would be improper for him to ask to close it on, at this point. It would be out of order.

(*translation*)

All right. OK. So my ruling would be out of order. I see cards in the rear. Here. I see, let's go with the orange cards in the very back; and then there will be two others in front. Yes, the orange card going to mic 8.

DANILO J. ROXAS (Bulacan Philippines): Bishop, good evening. I am Rev. Dr. Danilo Roxas from Philippine Annual Conference, clergy delegate. I respectfully nominate Antony Reynaldo Abdon from Bulacan Philippine Annual Conference, lay.

BISHOP HAYES: Repeat the name, sir. Repeat the name, please.

ROXAS: Antony Renaldo Abdon.

BISHOP HAYES: Antony Abdon. Thank you. If you would fill out the information. I see two white cards here. The delegate in the orange, would you go to mic 11? And would you follow her, the other delegate? Yes, mic 11.

JOAN EILEEN CARTER-RIMBACH (Baltimore-Washington): Bishop, Joan Carter-Rimbach, Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference. I'd like to nominate Laura Easto, clergy from the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

BISHOP HAYES: Please repeat the name.

CARTER-RIMBACH: Laura Easto.

BISHOP HAYES: Laura Easto. Thank you. Thank you very much. There was also another delegate who was in the same vicinity. Yes, if you would go to the same mic, mic 11.

*Qualification for Judicial Council
Nominations*

CARLOS SANTOS CAO JR.
(Rizal Philippines): Carlos Cao Jr., lay delegate from the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference. Bishop, this is a procedural matter.

BISHOP HAYES: OK.

CAO: And before we precede any further with the nominations from the floor, may we—may this representation ask if there is a minimal, or a set of minimum qualifications, for nominees to Judicial Council, being the highest judicial body within the General Conference of The United Methodist Church?

BISHOP HAYES: I would like to call your attention then to the paragraph that governs the election of the Judicial Council. And that paragraph will be

(pause)

should be here. Let me read for you what this, what the *Book of Discipline*, and what is stated there in terms of qualification: “Members of the council shall be nominated and elected in the manner following: At each quadrennial session of the General Conference, the Council of Bishops shall nominate by majority vote three times the number of ordained ministers and lay persons to be elected at such sections, sessions of the General Conference. The number to be elected shall correspond to the number of members whose terms expire at the conclusion of succession, such session. Each of the jurisdictions and the central conferences as a group shall be represented by at least nominee, but it shall not a requirement that each of the jurisdictions or the central conferences as a group be represented by the elected number. At the same daily session at which the above nominations are announced, nominations of both ministers and lay persons may be made from the floor but at no other time. The names of all nominees identified with the conference to which each

belongs and a biographical sketch that does not exceed 100 words shall be published by the *Daily Christian Advocate* at least 48 hours prior to the time of election, which shall be set by action of the General Conference at the session at which the nominations are made, and from the nomina—these nominations that General Conference shall elect without discussion by ballot and majority vote the necessary number of ministerial and lay members.” It simply specifies in Paragraph 2602 that “lay persons shall be professing members of The United Methodist Church and or clergy.” These are the only requirements that are listed in your *Book of Discipline* under Paragraph 2602.

OK. All right. In response to the first inquiry of how many are we electing, there will be two clergy and two lay members to be elected at this session of the General Conference. And I hope that that helps. Are there any other nomination from the floor? I see one orange card here in the middle of the auditorium and going to mic 7. State your name and conference.

JAMES STANLEY COSBY
(Northwest Texas): Stan Cosby, Northwest Texas Conference. I’d like to nominate Karl Baumgardner, laity from Northwest Texas Conference.

BISHOP HAYES: Repeat the name.

COSBY: Karl Baumgardner.

BISHOP HAYES: Karl Baumgardner. All right. Thank you very much. Are there other nominations? Seeing no other cards, I declare that the nominations for Judicial Council are now closed.

University Senate Nominations

Let’s move now to the nominations for University Senate. For those of you who might be interested, the University Senate paragraphs in the *Book of Discipline* are Paragraphs 1414.2, and let me give you some basic requirements. “The

senate should be composed of 25 voting members who at the time of the election are actively engaged in the work of education through an employ—through employment in an educational institution and are fitted by training and experience for the technical work of evaluating educational institutions. There will be four by the General Conference, two of whom shall be chief executive officers of the United Methodist-related educational institutions at the time of their election. The other two holding positions relevant to the academic or financial affairs or church relationships.”

Now of those 25, you need to know that nine members are elected quadrennially by the National Association of Schools and Colleges of The United Methodist Church. Four are elected by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Four by the senate itself. And then the other four shall be appointed by the Council of Bishops. So our task tonight is to place into nomination the names of those that you will nominate for the University of—the University Senate, which will be an election of four. I would remind you that one of the requirements is that that person be employed and actively engaged in the work of education. That is the requirement. So we now open the floor for nominations for the University Senate, which will be governed the same way that we did the Judicial Council by coming to the mic, stating the name at least twice, and then we will record the name. I see three—

IGMEDIO DOMINGO (Southern Tagalog Provisional): I would like to nominate Dr. (*unintelligible*) Samamelia.

BISHOP HAYES: Repeat the name.

DOMINGO: I would like to nominate Dr. Samamelia.

BISHOP HAYES: Samamelia. OK. If you would fill out the card. I see an orange card. If you would go to mic 7.

EDUARDO RIVERA (Northwest Texas): Eduardo Rivera, Northwest Texas, to nominate Dr. Hugo Magayanes.

BISHOP HAYES: Hugo Magayanes.

RIVERA: Magayanes.

BISHOP HAYES: Hugo Magayanes. Thank you. There's a white card in the center here. If you would go to mic 6, I would think would be the closest.

DAVID J. ABBOTT (New England): David Abbott, New England. Mary Elizabeth Moore.

BISHOP HAYES: Say the—

ABBOTT: Mary, Mary Elizabeth Moore.

BISHOP HAYES: Mary Elizabeth Moore. Thank you. If you would fill out that information. I see a green card here on my left, your right. If you would go to mic 2, please.

ERADIO VALVERDE JR. (Southwest Texas): I am Eradio Valverde, Southwest Texas Conference. I would like to nominate Elaine Robinson. Elaine Robinson.

BISHOP HAYES: Elaine Robinson. Thank you. I see no other card. I see one card that just came up, orange card. If you would go to mic 7.

KARL LELAND BAUMGARDNER (Northwest Texas): Karl Baumgardner, Northwest Texas Conference. I would like to nominate Dr. Tim Tennant. Dr. Tim Tennant.

BISHOP HAYES: Dr. Tim Tennant. Thank you. We are endeavoring to try to get the other names that you are seeing there. So as soon as we get those cards here, we will supply you with that information as well. Seeing no other cards, I will declare that the nominations for University Senate be closed at this time. Thank you.

As we are trying to pull together the names of those who have made nominations, it is our hope that you have filled out the cards for that and

we will get that information up on the board right away. Yes, I see a card here at mic 10.

Point of Personal Privilege

MARK A. MILLER (Greater New Jersey): Mark Miller, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. I am rising for a point of personal privilege.

BISHOP HAYES: Go right ahead.

MILLER: As an elected, credentialed member of this General Conference, I am offering my voice to say that the attempt at holy conversation about human sexuality yesterday was incomplete. The need for authentic conversation about human sexuality is so important; however, the process that we attempted yesterday failed us. It failed because of a lack of leadership and oversight, because the process did not respect people and didn't plan for the care of those who were hurt by the process. So we are standing here as gay and lesbian delegates. Yesterday the church did us harm but when we are harmed, the church is harmed. We serve at every level of the church, though very few will admit it. We were bullied emotionally, spiritually, and physically and it didn't seem like anyone did anything. We abide by Wesley's rule of do no harm and we feel the rule is broken. So we stand here because we can't wait for broken promises to fix themselves. It is time for our church to live our resurrection faith and I know that there are other delegates who are gay or lesbian or bi- or transgendered, and delegates who have family members and colleagues who are GLBT. We invite them to stand with us at this moment.

BISHOP HAYES: Mr. Miller, Mr. Miller, you asked for a point of order. I recognize your point of order.

MILLER: I appreciate.

BISHOP HAYES: I cannot, I cannot condone at this particular point

where you are going with your point of order. I would appreciate.

MILLER: Anyone who would—might believe, Bishop, that bullying should not be allowed at our General Conference, should stand with us.

BISHOP HAYES: Mr. Miller, this is not the time or the place. We will have an opportunity to discuss this. I will acknowledge to you that on yesterday there were a lot of things that were not right. The time frame in which legislative committees had to be elected was not right. It was a sincere attempt to try holy conferring and I respectfully acknowledge your point of order; however, at this particular point, I will have to rule what you are doing out of order. Please be seated.

MILLER: Bishop, would you pray for us before . . .

BISHOP HAYES: I will certainly do that. Let us pray.

(prayer)

Thank you. We will move now because we have a worship service to follow and I know that there are announcements to be made and I am going to turn to—OK, all right, Bishop Streiff. I know that Bishop Streiff has been working with a standing committee and Bishop Streiff, would you please come and present to us what you have.

Seating Provisional Annual Conference Delegates

BISHOP PATRICK STREIFF: I bring another petition which asks that two delegates from a provisional annual conference are granted seating in the General Conference and are duly recognized. Unfortunately, the petition did not make it into the DCA this morning. So I will read the petition and then it would need that we . . . Is it OK to read?

BISHOP HAYES: We're thinking that it is printed in the DCA. Let me find the p. and, OK, 1931, would you?

BISHOP STREIFF: OK. So the petition that the Southern Tagalog Provisional Annual Conference was established by the Philippines Central Conference in November 2008, prior to the Judicial Council Decision 1180 which states, thank you, which states that “The General Conference in consultation is the body which whom the authority rests for the establishment of provisional annual conferences.” The Southern Tagalog Provisional Annual Conference shall be considered as formally established by action of the General Conference 2012 in compliance with the *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 581, and the duly elected delegates shall be seated with full voting and other rights to the General Conference 2012 in compliance with the *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 582.4, with immediate effect. Yes, you find it on p. 1931.

BISHOP HAYES: So you are making that, you are presenting that to us as a part of the standing committee.

BISHOP STREIFF: As a part of the report of the standing committee. Yes. It would need a, probably a suspension of the rules.

BISHOP HAYES: Yes, it will. We will require a suspension of the rules for us to move on this particular standing rule petition here and I need to recognize someone who will move for the suspension of the rules. Yes, I see a white card there. If you will go to mic 11. It is nondebatable.

CARLOS CAO (Rizal Philippines): Bishop, this Carlos Cao Jr., laity from the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference. It is my recollection, Bishop, that there was already an action on this particular matter because precisely upon the advice of the reporter, this representation rose and precisely made a motion to suspend the rules to give way for the General Conference to act on this particular matter with respect to the admission of the Southern Tagalog Provisional Philippines Annual Conference.

BISHOP HAYES: That action from last evening, is that what you are speaking of?

CAO: Yes, Bishop.

BISHOP HAYES: Yes.

CAO: So I wonder why we still have to act again on this particular matter at this point.

BISHOP HAYES: All right. Bishop Streiff.

BISHOP STREIFF: Yesterday evening we took action on a different provisional annual conference, if my memory is correct, the Southwestern Philippines Provisional Annual Conference which had seating already in earlier general conferences and was missed out of the text of the former petition. Now, this is a separate petition which comes separately to you because this provisional annual conference, the Southern Tagalog Provisional Conference, has never had seating in General Conference before. It was created in 2008 after the last General Conference and therefore, it comes as a separate item.

BISHOP HAYES: All right, it’s—

CAO: Thank you, Bishop, for that clarification. In that case, this representation would now like to make a motion to suspend the rules so that we can act, the same way we acted yesterday with respect to, this time to the Southern Tagalog Provisional Annual Conference.

BISHOP HAYES: There’s a motion for suspension of the rules. Is there a second? All right, I hear a second. This is not debatable. It needs a two-thirds vote. If you would vote to suspend the rules so that we could vote on this action, would you please lift your hands? Hands down; oppose. The suspension of the rules is carried. Now we will vote on the—would you please read the petition once more so that we will know exactly what we are voting on?

BISHOP STREIFF: On p. 1931, the Southern Tagalog Provisional Annual Conference was established by the Philippines Central Confer-

ence in November 2008 prior to the Judicial Council Decision 1180 which states that “the General Conference, in consultation, is the body with whom the authority rests for the establishment of provisional annual conferences.” The Southern Tagalog Provisional Annual Conference shall be considered as formally established by action of the General Conference 2012 in compliance with the *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 581, and the duly elected delegates shall be seated with full voting and other rights to the General Conference 2012 in compliance with the *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 582.4, with immediate effect.

BISHOP HAYES: You have heard the petition from the standing committee. Are you ready to vote? All those in favor, please lift your hands. Hands down; oppose. It is carried. Thank you.

BISHOP STREIFF: Thank you very much.

Announcements

BISHOP HAYES: All right. Yes, I’m going to call on Zedna Haverstock to come to mic 6 to represent the Committee on Presiding Officers.

ZEDNA HAVERSTOCK (Susquehanna): Thank you, Bishop. The Presiding Officers Committee has three plenaries that we would like to announce the presiding officers for this evening. The first one will be Sunday evening and that will be Bishop Nhanala. And then moving on to Monday morning, it will be Bishop Dyck and Monday afternoon will be Bishop Schol.

BISHOP HAYES: Thank you. Thank you. Gere, other announcements?

FITZGERALD “GERE” REIST (Secretary of the General Conference): The Philippines Central Conference delegates are urged to come forward immediately after the worship session for a gathering at the front of the stage. Philippines Central Conference delegates are

urged to come to the front of the stage immediately after the worship service this evening.

Bishop John Innis of the Liberia Area and his colleagues will be meeting with heads of delegations from Africa today right after the evening worship for 15 minutes in front of the seating area for Bishops' spouses. Bishop John Innis of the Liberia Area and his colleagues will be meeting with heads of delegations from Africa today right after the evening worship for 15 minutes in front of the seating area for Bishops' spouses.

We have several motions of nomination which were filled out either illegibly or incompletely. I would urge each person who made a nomination to please come forward after the worship service so that we can get the correct information and have it compiled properly. I would ask each person who made a nomination this evening to please come forward after the worship service so that we can make sure that we have the correct information. That concludes my announcements.

BISHOP HAYES: Thank you very much. I have enjoyed working with you tonight. I want to thank Bishop Janice Huie from the Texas Conference for having my back and Bishop Dan Solomon as well. We prepare now to go to worship. If you don't mind, let's bow our heads for a moment of silence as we center ourselves and prepare for worship.

(pause)

Amen.

(music)

MARCIA MCFEE: The Lord be with you.

DELEGATES: And also with you.

MCFEE: As the bishops are making their way to their seats for worship, I want to thank Salmudia Choir from Cote d'Ivoire for being here

with us, blessing us with their music.

(applause)

And we will also be blessed by the McFarlin Memorial UMC choirs from Norman, Oklahoma.

(applause)

There's a hymn, a well-beloved hymn, that will help us enter into worship tonight. It is a hymn that was born at sea, written at sea, and it is called "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."

(music)

Tonight we find Jesus with his disciples at the sea once again but the shoreline has become a place of chaos. Swells of people, like swells of the sea, reach out in desperation for healing. To keep from being crushed, Jesus gets into a boat. This is the liminal place between life and death, between what feels like destructive forces at work and the healing presence of God. This presence is palpable. The unclean spirits shout out recognition of Jesus Son of God.

(music)

So Jesus appoints disciples to proclaim the message and to exorcise and to heal, offering the power of the Spirit in place of the powers of chaos. Even now we can hear the sounds of disciples proclaiming healing grace coming from the distance.

(music)

(applause)

MCFEE: I invite you to stand for our affirmation of faith. Your response, when indicated, is "Hallelujah, amen."

BETHANY LIN AMEY (Greater New Jersey): We belong to God, eternal and infinite, creator of all things and all that is to come.

DELEGATES: Hallelujah, amen.

ADRIAN HILL: We follow Christ, who comes to us from God, and reveals God to us. He heals people and transforms lives and calls on us to join in his ministry. He was crucified, died, and was raised again by God and reigns over all creation. And he bids us to die and rise with him in the service of the healing of the world.

DELEGATES: Hallelujah, amen.

NEFFIE CONNIE LOCKLEAR (Western North Carolina): We live by the spirit together with the communion of saints as members of the body of Christ, God's holy universal church.

DELEGATES: Hallelujah, amen.

HEASUN KIM (Greater New Jersey): We are confident in the forgiveness of sin, the power of resurrection, and the reality of eternal life.

DELEGATES: Hallelujah, amen.

JANE DENISE HONEYCUTT (Virginia): In all things, it is our desire to follow Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit for God's glory.

DELEGATES: Hallelujah, amen.

(music)

LUIS F. REYES (Northern Illinois): *(Scripture reading)*

(music)

HERMANCE IPHIGENIE AKPES EPSE AKA (Côte D'Ivoire): *(Scripture reading)*

(music)

BISHOP ROBERT T. HOSHIBATA: The Lord be with you.

DELEGATES: And also with you.

Episcopal Sermon

BISHOP HOSHIBATA: Let us pray. Gracious God, almighty creator, all loving redeemer, all present sustainer, we praise you and thank you for this evening. We ask that

you would fall upon us with your spirit, to bless our time together as we worship you. And, my gracious God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, for you are our rock and our redeemer, our salvation and our hope. Amen.

There are many, many accounts in the Gospels of the healing miracles of Jesus. This is one of them. Jesus is at the seashore. Throngs of people are following him, because they have heard the incredible news: Jesus heals. They have heard that he can heal the sick, cure diseases of the body and the soul, and even raise the dead to new life.

The crowd is so large that Jesus tells his disciples, "Go and get a boat. Make a boat ready," so that he can be preaching the good news to the masses from the lake. Mark adds that even those evil spirits recognized the power of Jesus . . . the power of our Lord. And they fall down before him and shout, "You are the son of God." Stories such as these remind us of the power of God to heal us, and that God's hope for all of creation is that we all, all live abundantly and have healthy lives.

Raise your hand with me if you have ever prayed for healing in your life. Raise your hand if you have prayed for a friend who has found out that she or he has a terminal illness, and the only thing you can do is go to that friend and pray, "Jesus, heal this friend of mine." How many of you have prayed for yourself? You've just come back from a doctor, perhaps, with the bad, bad news that something is terribly wrong, and all you can do is get on your knees and pray. Jesus, if it be your will, take this cup away from me. It's a privilege, is it not, because of our faith that we can turn to Jesus for healing in our time of need? Praise God! Jesus heals!

From the early days of the Methodist movement, John Wesley was a strong proponent of healthy living. Did you know he even wrote a book about—that was filled with

advice for us? Some of his advice today seems like common sense. For example, Wesley urged his people to exercise regularly. And Wesley encouraged his disciples to get a lot of fresh air. Obviously, he wasn't at General Conference 2012.

(laughter)

Jesus also suggests that it was important to eat right and to abstain from alcoholic drinks. Now, that's something that I think I've said a number of times to my children. But then Wesley warned coffee and tea are extremely hurtful to persons who have weak nerves. Oh, now, now, now, wait. That's kind of meddling with our church fellowship time, isn't it?

(laughter)

But these are some of the suggestions Wesley had for us, encouraging us to take excellent care of our bodies. But more important to John Wesley, he counseled the early Methodists to maintain a healthy soul, a healthy spirit, and so when he gathered in those wonderful class meetings, he asked the question, "How is it with your soul? How is it with your soul?" He wanted each person there to prayerfully look at her or his own life, honestly reflecting with God about what was missing or what needed improvement. Wesley, as we might expect, even listed some of the characteristics of a person who was not spiritually well. To name just a few: Wesley said, "If you have sin, you are not spiritually well. If you constantly think more highly of yourself than you ought, you are not spiritually well." This, this is not in the general rules of General Conference, folks. This is John Wesley speaking. He said, "If you hate anyone, if you are envious, if you're angry or bitter, or if your conversations are marked by profane, untrue, or unkind words," these are the things, among the things, according to John Wesley, that in his words will cleave your

innermost soul and make you spiritually unhealthy.

Let me ask that Wesleyan question of you today. Let me ask that question of you, General Conference. How is it with your soul tonight? How is it with your soul tonight? How is it with your soul tonight? You and I are blessed in many, many ways; but we're not yet perfect. And we experience times when all is not well in our soul. We all stand in need of the healing that Christ offers from time to time. And if you had an honest conversation with God, what would you lift up in prayer to Jesus for healing in your life? Is there sin in your heart? Lift it up for healing. Are you one who constantly thinks more highly of yourself than you ought? Lift it up for healing. Do you harbor hatred for anyone? Are you envious, angry, or bitter? Have you today spoken unkind or untrue words about someone? Lift it up to Jesus for healing. Whatever the situation, we can be bold to turn to Jesus in confession and repentance, asking him to heal us and make us whole again. We need to do this difficult work. We need to do this, this difficult work of self-reflection and prayer with God because we must be spiritually healthy before we can be fully engaged in ministry that proclaims the good news of Jesus to the community and the world. We've got to be whole ourselves. We cannot be in ministry if our souls are not well first. Let's get our own house in order before we try to clean the neighbor's home.

And my Lord, there's so much out there that we need to be doing. Lots of people who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Lots of people out there who are yearning for that healing touch of Jesus in their lives. We know hard-working people who have lost their jobs. There are persons right in your congregations, sitting in your pews, who are hungry and homeless. Perhaps they are among the millions who have lost everything they owned in

the—this economic downturn. We also know hatred, prejudice, and fear of those who are different from us continue to injure and divide us and keep people away from our congregations and ministries.

Deep grief envelops so many people who have lost loved ones, and there are many people who have hit absolute rock bottom and need the healing that we can offer in the name of Jesus Christ. If you were really connected to—with someone else, I mean really connected with someone else, maybe the person sitting right next to you tonight, you might discover that that person is among the many who just need that healing that we can give them in the name of Jesus Christ. And when we become aware of another person's struggles, God calls us to reach out to the other person, offering hope and healing in the name of Jesus.

I'd like to tell you the story about one person who did exactly that. Phyllis Stelson was a pastor of two small rural churches in Oregon. One day, Phyllis met a man named Michael. But they met at a most unlikely place—the garbage dump in the town of Camas Valley in Oregon. You see, Michael had run afoul of the law and as part of his sentence he had to work for 45 days at the dump in this small rural town, where he was on display, where he was ashamed of what he had done, where he felt others looking at him with judgment. His job at the dump was to move tons and tons of garbage. And he said that as he did his work, his punishment, he began to feel like garbage himself, as if he had thrown his life away. There was no hope for him. On that day, when Pastor Phyllis and Michael first met, Phyllis drove up in her car and Michael greeted her. He offered her, "May I take your garbage for you?" And she said to him, "I'm not here for you to take my garbage. I'm here for you." And they talked; and at the end of their conversation, Phyllis said to Michael, "I don't care what you've done, you are a good person, and

Jesus loves you." And, what's more, Phyllis kept coming to that dump. For the 45 days that Michael was there, Phyllis made dump calls. Now, you and I, pastors and laity, we might make house calls or pastoral calls. Phyllis made dump calls. What do you think of that? For 45 days, she made dump calls to a person whose life had crumbled under the weight of shame and guilt and the judgment of others bearing down on him. Michael needed the healing that comes when someone, even a complete stranger that he did not know, when someone cares about you enough to accept you unconditionally because you are a child of God, in spite of where you have been, in spite of what you may have done.

You notice, Phyllis didn't wait for Michael to come to the church. She took church to Michael, and, and isn't that like a precursor of our Rethink Church movement? In time, Michael started to come to church. He attended and found there a caring, caring congregation; and now he's a member of that church, that small rural church in Oregon. He's grateful for the pastor that dared to reach out for him and brought him new life through faith in Jesus.

I forgot to mention that I first met Michael and talked with him and heard his story at Pastor Phyllis's memorial service. You see, all the time that she was reaching out to Michael, she herself was suffering from cancer. Pastor Phyllis was battling a very, very aggressive form of cancer. And when I first heard about her cancer, I called her. And as we talked, we also prayed together; and in that prayer, I said, "Jesus, please grant the miracle of healing for your servant Phyllis Stelson." But that miracle was not to be. She died not long afterwards. But you notice that her cancer, although her prayer for healing was not answered, her cancer did not stop her in any way from spreading the love of Jesus to heal, heal the brokenness of people like Michael. And as a result, Michael knows that love heals. Love heals.

Can this love heal The United Methodist Church? We know our church is not healthy and that the prognosis is grim. We are a church that in many instances have lost touch with our mission and our core purpose. We have not as a denomination yet fully embraced a compelling vision of who we are or what God is calling us to be. We continue to see the decline in worship. The decline in our attendance figures continues and in the number of new disciples and new faith communities. We know that decline continues, and we are battered and bruised by conflicts that divide us and prevent us from being able to focus on our ministry. This must change so that we can concentrate on growth and vitality in our churches and ministry settings. If we do not have the courage to make changes now that are truly missional, The United Methodist Church, I'm afraid, will disappear from many communities where people sorely need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Some people think that we are dying, talk about triage for us. When I hear that, I can't help but think, *People where is your faith?* I know we're struggling, but we aren't dead yet.

(applause)

Remember that we are a church whose faith is in a mighty God of resurrection; God of the empty tomb; God of the risen Christ, who heals and can bring new life to our United Methodist churches. The healing power of Jesus, the healing power of Jesus is right here in this very room. At this time it is here, the healing power of Jesus Christ. We have the opportunity, fueled by that power, to make a new thing happen. But this is our challenge. We may say that we are people of deep faith. Oh, we say that so quickly. If we do not live our faith by reaching out into Christ, to everyone, and I mean *everyone*, with Christ's love, then we are, in the words of 1 Corinthians, nothing but a noisy gong or a clanging symbol.

(*applause*)

On the other hand, if we are people of genuine faith, our faith should stir all of our hearts and inspire us to care for all others, every single one. And when that happens, we will become instruments of the love that heals, made known in Jesus Christ. Or, let me say it another way, if you have deep devotion and with faith reach out in an outward motion, your love becomes God's healing potion. Will you say this with me?

(*applause*)

If you have deep devotion,

DELEGATES: If you have deep devotion,

BISHOP HOSHIBATA: No, no, no. Let's try that again like you really mean it. If you have deep devotion,

DELEGATES: If you have deep devotion,

BISHOP HOSHIBATA: and with faith reach out in outward motion,

DELEGATES: and with faith reach out in outward motion,

BISHOP HOSHIBATA: your love becomes God's healing potion.

DELEGATES: your love becomes God's healing potion.

BISHOP HOSHIBATA: Imagine a church that believes and lives the power of resurrection and hope, where spiritually healthy disciples of Jesus Christ are inspired by passionate worship, drawn closer to God and closer to one another, connecting us in genuine love. That's a church where disciples are healed and strengthened in faith and empowered for evangelism and ministry. Imagine a church for all God's children intentionally opening heart, mind, and doors to everyone, everyone. Where disciples of Jesus Christ proclaim and practice acceptance of all, of all others without regard for who they are, what they look like, or even whom they love.

(*applause*)

That's a church, that's a church, that's a church that is healed of mistrust and fear. Imagine a church that refuses to be static, instead chooses to be active, in movement, launched by God's holy Spirit, venturing out of its steepled walls into the world, moving out (*unintelligible*) moving out into neighborhoods and communities in grace-filled ministries of justice and reconciliation with the hungry, the homeless, and those that we've marginalized.

(*applause*)

That's a church. That's a church that's afire with new life for mission and ministry. A church that changes lives and transforms communities. That's a church that cares for one another and proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ to all. That's a church that knows that love heals. Amen.

(*applause*)

(*video*)

Worship Continues

MCREE: Our symbol this day has been salt, salt that is for—forever had healing properties. When I was born, my mother got a staph infection in the hospital; and the doctor gave her a prescription: Go to the sea. Get in the salt water. Salt. Also in biblical times, a sign of covenant-making, healing, keeping promises, healing, covenant-making, healing—two sides coming together of a wound. Salt in the wound, they say, hurts like Hades; heals like heaven. What is your story of healing? What is your need of healing this night? I invite you to turn, if you wish, to someone near you and share with them a need for healing, a prayer for healing. Is there something you need healing for? Is there something you pray for the church in its healing? I invite you, if you feel comfortable, to share that with each other. And on your tables was a cloth bag with a little vial of healing balm, anointing oil in it, a gift from JustPeace for the well-being of our souls. And so if

you're comfortable as you pray with each other, I invite you to anoint one another with this healing balm—perhaps the sign of the cross on the forehead, an ancient gesture. If you're visitors who are in the stands that don't have the healing balm, simply make the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads with your thumb. Friends, let us share. What is your prayers for healing?

(*music*)

BISHOP HOSHIBATA: Dear friends, my dear friends, my sisters and brothers in Christ, following our service, as some of you are retiring to your rooms, your places of rest, some of the members of the Council of Bishops, your bishops, will be present here at the front of the stage. If you would like to have a prayer one-on-one with a live bishop—

(*laughter*)

—a prayer of healing, a prayer of hope, I invite those of you who would like to do that following the benediction to come forward and to meet in prayer your God with a bishop. So those of you who would like to do that, I welcome you to this time of prayer. Some of you have, have planned to have meetings here. May I ask that you, you locate to another place in case people are wanting to come, come forward to see the anointing of the healing balm that we know in Jesus Christ.

And now my sisters and brothers in Christ, you've come to this worship place because you are faithful disciples. And I hope that as you leave from this place you know that in spite of things that bother you, churning in your heart and soul, you know without question that God loves you, everyone, and that God who created you, God who gave you the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, God who is your constant companion each day of life, goes with you now and always. Amen.

(*music*)

**Friday Evening,
April 27, 2012**

*Act of Repentance toward
Healing Relationships with
Indigenous Peoples*

HARRY ASKIN (East Ohio): Four years ago, the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns began the journey toward repentance by forming a team to plan and to determine the best way to begin the healing process with indigenous peoples. I wasn't asked to be a part of that very committed team, so I asked if they would include me. You see, I didn't really understand why we needed an act of repentance. I didn't really see what I had done to Native Americans, either as a young boy or as an older adult. I asked the group to include me so that I might understand why.

As the team began to plan for this General Conference, I gradually was able to understand intellectually that there is still significant continuing injustice towards the Native American community as well as with indigenous peoples around the world. But I still didn't feel that I needed to repent. Members of the team were participating in listening sessions and working with an advisory group to learn how best to approach repentance. We learned it needs to be ongoing, not just this single service, which can only start the healing process.

About two years ago, I was privileged to visit the Sand Creek massacre sight in southeastern Colorado. It is the sight of one of the worst unprovoked attacks and slaughters on innocent Native Americans in American history. It was there that I learned that one of our own, Methodist district superintendent and pastor Colonel John Chivington, led the attack. Afterwards, I listened as Reginald Killnight Sr. and Otto Braided Hair told the story of that infamous day in 1864.

(presentation)

I felt that tension in Otto Braided Hair's voice, just as you did a moment ago, as he recalled hearing the story for the first time as a nine-year-old and how he got up and left the room, not being able to listen any more. I could see the pain in his face as he tried to tell us how his great-grandfather and grandmother miraculously escaped on horseback when nearly everyone—women, children, and elderly men—were slaughtered.

(presentation)

It was in that moment my understanding began to go from my head to my heart, and in that moment, my entire perspective changed. I could no longer claim that I wasn't involved. I've learned from this experience that repentance means to turn around. As we consider the act of repentance and the healing we seek, it's important that we don't just do this one act. We need as nonindigenous people to understand the real beginning of our history as Methodists. We need to have an understanding of the horrible acts like the Sand Creek massacre; but perhaps just as important, we need to understand some of the ongoing injustices happening to indigenous peoples around the world yet today.

As United Methodists, we need to be looking at how we can educate ourselves as well as others. It isn't going to work if it's just an educational experience. We must acknowledge how important repentance is to the people we have hurt and make turning around our personal commitment. It took some time for me to take it from my head to my heart as it may for some of you; but we can't afford to just take it for granted and move on. We need to be truly repentant. I invite each of you to join together on this journey.

(music)

BISHOP ROBERT E. HAYES JR.: Tonight, the purpose and intent of this act of repentance is to come face-to-face with an untruth that has been perpetuated for over 500 years. History itself has written us a bad check, and now only can we acknowledge and confess that it has been returned to us marked insufficient. We were taught in 1492, a man named Columbus discovered America; but we never stopped to ask ourselves, how can someone discover a new world when there were people already living in it? What Columbus discovered was indigenous people who had settled this land long before his arrival. And with the discovery of these indigenous people, the violent history of conquering and destroying began. Not only here in America but around the world and in every place where original inhabitants were found. They brought their diseases. They brought their weapons of mass destruction, and what was not given to them was taken by force.

We are not here tonight to reenact a romanticized Hollywood script where cowboys ride off into the sunset and everyone lives happily ever after. No, we are here to confront the violent history of peoples whose families, communities, and sovereign nations were destroyed by aggressive powers, lusting for land and riches, seeking domination at the expense of their own existence. And more importantly, we are here to repent The Methodist Church's role in cooperating with and entering into those relationships with political forces that result in the men, women, and children.

In just a few moments, we will sing our songs, and we will utter our prayers. But until we confess in our hearts our deep anguish over our participation in the events of history, our words and our songs will have little or no meaning. It is only when we acknowledge our manifold sins and wickedness in sincerity and truth will repentance find us. Beginning with the Council of Bishops, it

is our prayer that tonight, this very night, can be a sufficient and significant turning point in our relationship to God; to Native and indigenous people; and, finally, to ourselves.

(music)

MARCIA MCFEE: The song says “Who is my mother? Who is my brother? All those who gather round Jesus Christ.” And so I invite you to stand and turn and face the center of the room where the Christ candle resides in our midst, for when we turn toward Christ, we see each other; and when we face one another with honesty, we see Christ. So “bound by one vision, met for one mission, we claim each other round Jesus Christ. Here is my mother. Here is my brother. Kindred in spirit through Jesus Christ.”

(music)

You may be seated.

(music)

The shoreline—places of invasion, conquering, confiscating, colonizing, trespassing land that led to conquering, confiscating, colonizing, trespassing of our bodies, of our spirituality, of home and family systems, the eroding of sacred relationships for indigenous people.

(music)

REV. DR. THOM WHITE WOLF FASSETT (Upper New York): And these are the words of the real people, the Omahawe.

And this from Seneca Chief Red Jacket, responding on behalf of the Council of Chiefs of the Six Nations in 1805 to missionary Cram, who had come to speak with them: “Brother, this council fire was kindled by you. It was at your request that we came together at this time. We have listened with attention to what you have said. You requested us speak our minds freely. All have heard your voice, and all speak to you now as one. Our minds are agreed.

“Brother, listen to what we say. There was a time when our forefathers owned this great island. Their seats extended from the rising of the setting sun. The Great Spirit had made it for the use of Indians. He had created the buffalo, the deer, and other animals for food. He had made the bea—the deer and the beaver and the bear. Their skins served us for clothing. He had caused the earth to produce corn for bread. All this he had done for his red children because he loved them. But an evil day came upon us. Your forefathers crossed the great water and landed on this island. Their numbers were small. They found friends, not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men and had come here to enjoy their religion. They asked for a small seat. We took pity on them, granted their request, and they sit among us. We gave them corn and meat. They gave us poison in return. The white people, brother, had now found our country. Tidings were carried back, and more came among us. Yet we do not fear them. We took them to be friends. They called us brothers. We believed them and gave them a larger seat; and at length, their numbers had greatly increased. They wanted more land. They wanted our country.

Our eyes were opened, and our minds became uneasy. War took place. Indians were hired to fight against Indians, and many of our people were destroyed. They also brought strong liquor among us. It was strong and powerful and has slain thousands. Brother, our seats were once large; and yours were small. You have now become great people, and we have scarcely a place to left, left to spread our blankets. You’ve not—you have got our country but are not satisfied. You want to force your religion upon us. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his mind and if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right

and we are lost. How do we know this to be true?

We understand that your religion is written in a book. If was intended for us as well as you, why has not the Great Spirit given it to us, and not only to us, but why did he not give to our forefathers the knowledge of that book with the means of understanding it rightly? We only know what you tell us about it. How shall we know what to believe, being so often deceived by the white people? Brother, you say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree, as you all can read from the same book? Brother, we do not wish to destroy your religion or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own. Brother, we are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while and see what effect your preaching has upon them, and if we find it does them good, makes them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will consider then again what you have said.”

Chief Joseph Nez Perce: “We do not want churches because they will teach us to quarrel about God as the Catholics and the Protestants do. We do not want to learn that. We may—might quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God.”

Waheenee, a woman from the Hidatsa: “I’m an old woman now. The buffalo black-tailed deer are gone, and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I ever lived them. My little son grew up in the white man’s school. He could read books, and he owns cattle and has a farm. He’s a leader among our Hidatsa people, helping them to follow the white man’s road. He is kind to me. We no longer live in an earth lodge but in a house with chimneys, and my son’s wife cooks on a stove.

But for me, I cannot forget the old ways. Often in summer, I rise at day-break, steal out to the cornfields, and as I hold the corn, I sing to it as we did when I was young. No one cares for our corn songs now. Sometimes in the evening, I sit looking out on the big Missouri. The sun sets; the dusk steals over the water. In the shadows, I seem again to see our Indian village, with smoke curling upward from the earth lodges, and in the river's roar I hear the yells of the warriors and the laughter of little children as of old. It is but an old woman's dream. Then I see but shadows and hear only the roar of the river, and tears come to my eyes. Our Indian life, I know, is gone forever."

And then this one we learn from Africa. When the modern African reflects upon his fundamental experience, almost intuitively he grasps historical events, which have exercised profound influence on his cultural roots and values, says Chukwudum Okolo—namely, slavery, colonialism, and Christianity. Indeed, at the first congress of independent African states in Accra, Ghana, its first president, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, spoke these words with obvious pride: "In the last century, the Europeans discovered Africa. In the next century, the Africans will rediscover Africa."

Chief Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Lakota: "The attempted transformation of the Indian by the white man and the chaos that has resulted are but the fruits of the white man's disobedience of a fundamental and spiritual law. Civilization has been thrust upon me since of the days of the reservations, and it has not added one wit to my sense of justice; to my reverence for the rights of life; to my love for truth, honesty, and generosity; or to my faith in Wakan Tanka, god of the Lakotas.

For, after all, the great religions have been preached and expounded, or have been revealed by brilliant scholars, or have been written in fine

books and embellished with fine language with even finer covers, man—all man—is still confronted with great mystery. The White man does not understand America. He is too far removed from its formative processes, the roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and the soil. The White man is still troubled by primitive fears. He still has in his consciousness the perils of his frontier continent, some of it not yet yielding to his questing footsteps or his inquiring eyes. But in the Indian, the spirit of the land is still vested, and it will be long time until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be born of the dust of their fore-fathers' bones.

FASSETT: Bishop Desmond Tutu: "When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible, and we had the land. And they said to us, 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible, and they had the land."

Chief Dan George: "Can we talk of integration until there is integration of hearts and minds? Unless you have this, you have only a physical presence, and the walls between us are as high as the mountain range."

And finally, Ohíye S'a Charles Alexander Eastman, Lakota: "It is not so easy to overlook or excuse national bad faith. When distinguished emissaries from the Father in Washington, some of them ministers of the gospel and even bishops, came to the Indian nations and pledged to us in solemn treaty the national honor with prayer and mention of their God, such treaties so made were promptly and shamelessly broken. Is it strange that the actions should arouse not only anger but contempt?"

"I confess I have wondered much that Christianity is not practiced by the very people who vouch for that wonderful conception of exemplary living. It appears that they are anxious to pass on their religion to all

other races but keep very little of it for themselves. I have yet seen the meek inherit the earth or the peacemakers receive high honor. It is my personal belief, after 35 years' experience of it, that there is no such thing as Christian civilization. I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and (*unintelligible*) irreconcilable, and the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is, essentially, the same."

(*music*)

YOLANDA MAVUMB: (*unintelligible*) This is the word of the Lord to the people's God.

DELEGATES: Thanks be to God.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (*unintelligible*)

REV. DR. GEORGE E. TINKER (Osage Nation): (*unintelligible*) to my relatives. I'm so pleased to be here with you this evening, to be able to talk to you a little bit about this act of repentance and to tell you straight out how much I respect The United Methodist Church for engaging this process, for beginning this process, because it is fraught with danger, takes a great deal of courage, and it's so difficult and complex.

I want to start with a short story. The Navajo reservation is a wide-open place—arid desert land, and the roads go forever, with long distances, 20-30 miles in between buildings. White businesswoman was driving home from a business trip, getting really lonely and tired on that road because you have to stay awake, and it just goes straight forever and ever. And, finally, she saw an old Navajo lady walking down the road. So she pulled over, thinking it would be good to have some company. The old lady was glad for the ride but didn't seem to be up to having much conversation. And every time the woman would try and talk to her, the old Indian woman would simply say softly, "Uh-huh, huh, huh," never respond-

ing. So, finally, the businesswoman gave up, decided just to dig in and drive the long highway . . . until finally the old woman looked up at the woman, the White woman, and said, “What have you got in the sack?”

The woman was glad for conversation, so she jumped right into it. She said, “Oh, it’s a bottle of wine. I got it for my husband.”

The old woman was quiet again for a little bit, and, finally, she looked up and said, “Good trade.”

(laughter and applause)

I know that not everyone in The United Methodist Church is equally committed to this act of repentance or the ongoing repentance that has to follow it. In fact, when Cathy Gilbert posted the news article about this evening’s worship service, there was immediately a long list of comments, most of which were pretty negative. The one that caught my eye was someone who said, “It’s really too bad we killed all those Indians and stole their land, but look at the bright side of it: We brought them Christ.” My relatives, that’s a bad trade. I’m sorry, but we’d rather have our land, and then, maybe, we could negotiate the other part of the equation.

Let’s talk about how this happened, because the difficulty is that it doesn’t get taught in our schools. You’re to be excused if you don’t know this history, because it’s been carefully concealed from Americans. It barely gets taught in schools on Indian reservations. We have to learn it at home from our grandparents and parents. You see, the United States and American Christians have a vested interest in not knowing that history, because it puts the lie to what American Christians say about themselves. American Christians are wont to say, “We’re the good guys. We wear the white hats.”

You’ve heard Fox News talking about American exceptionalism. Well, the lie was stated clearly by

President Harry Truman 60 years ago at a press conference in New York City, repeated by one of Ronald Reagan’s top administration officials in 1987. The quote from Truman goes like this, “This is the only democracy in the world established without recourse to conquest or violence.” Yeah, somebody forgot to tell American Indians that part of the story, because the conquest of Indian land starts with the very first Christian invasion of North America. In 1620, it was the Pilgrims, who stopped on Cape Cod before they got to Plymouth Rock and stole one village’s entire winter corn supply of corn. It was Episcopalians the next year down in Jamestown who signed a peace treaty with Powhatan Indians, and invited them to a big feast to celebrate the peace, and then proceeded to kill some 300 Powhatan leaders with poison wine, and those who were left standing were slaughtered with knives.

A peace treaty: That’s only the beginning. It goes west from there until it reaches the West Coast. It happened again in Hawaii, where Hawaii was stolen by U.S. military, businessmen backed by the U.S. Marines, from the native Hawaiian peoples. If we can talk about what happens when the United States finally finishes its conquest of Indian peoples, because then they turn their eyes across the waters to expanding their empire. The Philippines was one of the first to go. And, of course, it was a Methodist president who signaled the start of the slaughter in the Philippines, who told a Methodist mission group who came to visit him in the White House that he had gone down on his knees to pray for help in how to deal with the Philippines, and it finally came to him. He said that we must civilize them and bring them to Christ, which he did at the end of a gun barrel, slaughtering about one million Filipinos in the process “without recourse to conquest and violence.”

See, this is hard stuff. It’s hard to find fertile ground to plant these

seeds, because the news is not good; it is so overwhelmingly bad that it might be better just to let the seed fall on the dry path and shrivel up in the sun or let it fall in the weeds and let it be choked to death. At Sand Creek you heard a little bit about the Rev. Chivington, a Methodist elder, a former district superintendent, who perpetrated the crimes at Sand Creek. What you haven’t heard yet is that Chivington’s boss, the second territorial governor of Colorado, only months after being appointed by Abraham Lincoln, is the one who ordered Chivington to proceed against this peaceful Cheyenne village. A really fine Methodist gentleman; such a fine Methodist that John Evans, for whom Evanston, Illinois, is named, started two Methodist universities, Northwestern in Evanston and the University of Denver in Colorado, and started a school of theology. Garrett-Evangelical has its roots back in 1855 when John Evans was still in Evanston and starting the university there.

But, being a fine Methodist didn’t stop this Christian gentleman from conceiving murder in his heart. Two months before Chivington set out to attack the village, he refused to receive a delegation of these Cheyenne peace chiefs that came from Sand Creek to press for peace—refused to even talk to them because he knew that he was in the process of conceiving murder. A month before the attack, even, the village surrendered to the U.S. Army at Fort Lyons. They thought they had all their bases covered. They were at peace until Chivington came over the hill at dawn and attacked their village, killing old people, women, and children.

See, that’s the history that we’ve somehow got to deal with. It’s not just Sand Creek, but it’s virtually every bit of the Christian conquest of North America. Some 30 years before Sand Creek, when Andrew Jackson was president and decided it was time to move Indians out of the southeast into Oklahoma (Indian

Territory back then), to move them wholesale, uproot them from their homes, and ship them west, the missionaries stood with the Indian people and decided to resist. That's one of the better stories of Christian history in North America, until the Tennessee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church ordered its missionaries to withdraw from Cherokee Territory and to quit standing in solidarity with Cherokee resistance to removal. You see, the Tennessee Annual Conference, where Andrew Jackson was from, the state of Tennessee, had put its political marbles in the hat with Andrew Jackson and were in favor of this removal. And the removal had one goal and that was to open up fertile farmlands for White Christian occupancy. So it was about land theft.

What are we going to do about it? How are we going to deal with this? How are we going to engage in any real repentance? What does repentance mean when such terrible things had been a part of our history up until now? Well, we can say a number of things about it. First of all, it's way too early to be thinking about reconciliation. You're not going to find Indian people sitting over here anxious to be reconciled, because reconciliation between two parties means somehow you've come to an agreement. And the only agreement open to us right now is to be reconciled to conquest and to say, "OK, you killed our ancestors and got our land, so, yeah, let's just be reconciled and live in peace and harmony with one another and let us be reconciled to what happened to us. That's like asking an abused spouse to be reconciled and to live with her abuser without any change in the behavior of that abuser. It can't be a mere apology. Apologies don't do anything.

I remember a cartoon in the *New Yorker* magazine some years ago pictured a big white, fat cat sitting behind a leather-embossed desk, glasses on his nose, a big cigar in his

hand. And down in the bottom corner was a little mouse. That little mouse in a janitor's uniform, with a dustpan and a broom, sweeping up the corner of this lawyer's office. And the caption had this cat saying, "I'm sorry for all the atrocities my ancestors committed against your ancestors and for all the mice that my ancestors ate. . . . There, that should settle things between us." Yeah, except the fat cat's still behind the desk, making all the money while the, the mouse is sweeping the floor.

And apology isn't going to cut it. How would that work? Y'all would come to Indian people and say, "Hey, we're really sorry our great-grandparents killed your great-grandparents and stole the land. We're really sorry. Now, can we keep your land?" Well, that doesn't quite cut it either. We've got to find a whole other way of being in the world, and repentance is about that other way of being in the world.

I'm reminded, 'cause repentance is a difficult concept. It's one little understood, I think, and we need to begin to understand it very quickly now. But I'm reminded that in the book of Acts in the second chapter when Peter is giving his Pentecost sermon, and all the people heard that sermon, and the text says, "They were cut to the quick." And then they came up to Peter and the others and said, "Brothers, what should we do?" And he made me remember the text. What was Peter's answer? Remember, they're already feeling sorry for their sins. They're already feeling the pain. So the answer is "OK, you're feeling sorry for your sins, now is the time to repent. After you feel sorry for your sins, now is the time to repent."

In the Gospel of Mark in the first chapter, we get another push down the road to understanding what repentance is. There the first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Mark have to do with repentance. 'Cause the "time has come around again. The kingdom is drawing near.

Repent and have faith in the gospel." But it always gets mistranslated in—even in the RSV, New RSV, in every version. None of these scholars pick up on the really intense meaning behind the Greek verb, the form of the Greek verb, 'cause, see, this is not a form of the verb *repent* that would say "Repent now! You repent. Start repenting. Repent once." No, it's something very different from that. It's what's called a present-tense imperative. And what it means is it has this iterative force. It means continue, keep on doing it, or keep doing it regularly so that, really, it has to be translated "Be repenting. Keep on repenting." Whatever repentance is, it's a process, something that we do again and again and again. It shapes our lives. We live out of this business of repenting. And we're told that the Greek word *metanoia* has its roots in the Hebrew and that it means something like "change your mind or turn around and go back." I like that motto myself. Be turning around and going back.

In going back to where you came from, then is going back, going back to the Creator instead of making yourself God, making yourself the power of creation. Go back and understand that you're no more than anyone else in the world. We're all a part of creation. And for Indian people, it means, repentance has to mean living in harmony and balance with all my relatives. Of course my relatives—I called you all my relatives—but, but, but my relatives includes buffaloes and squirrels, eagles and sparrows, mountains and rivers—all of that are my relatives. It means living in harmony and balance. Now maybe we can begin to talk about repentance in a slightly different way and begin to understand the force of this—keep on repenting. It is something that involves a change in lifestyle, a change in our whole way of being. If we're going to live in harmony and balance, we've got to give up some things that Americans hold dear. It's hard to be in harmony and balance

when you're constantly competing to see who can get the most riches out of the world. The problem is once we're competing to see who gets the most riches out of the world, we're making sure that some people get a whole lot less. Harmony and balance means making sure somehow we all have genuinely equal access to the riches of the world in order to sustain our lives and maintain our human community.

There's something else about that text, that verb in Mark. The verb is *metanoia*, "be repentant." But it's also not a singular verb, it's not pointing a finger to you and saying, "You, you be repenting." But it's a plural. It almost has to be translated from those who—those of you who are from the . . . the Southeastern Jurisdiction or from . . . from the state of Oklahoma, *Y'all*.

(laughter)

"Y'all be repenting." It's something we got to do together. It may not be time yet for reconciliation, but it is time to be repentant together.

(applause)

And at this point—

(applause)

at this point, we can say it, all of us two-leggeds need to be repenting—White and Black, Indian, Latino, Asian—all of us need to a part of this repenting, part of this coming back, part of this creating harmony and balance again. From an Indian perspective, that harmony and balance has to be done every day because everything we do as human beings runs the risk of creating imbalance, not just invading someone else's country and killing them. That's imbalance. But it also is imbalance to kill an elk in order to feed your family for supper because that elk is my relative as well. So there has to be a ceremony in order to create some kind of a relationship

between me and the elk so that I can eat and take that relative.

A Buddhist friend was vegetarian because he didn't want to hurt any sentient being. My response to him was "What is it about corn that you think is not sentient? That's our relative too." We call corn one of the mothers in the Indian world because it helps sustain us. That's what we need, that kind of harmony and balance that gets disrupted by eating, that somehow we have to restore. We got more work to do than just that. But you'll find a lot of Indian people when they eat take a little bit of food and put it aside for their ancestors, for the spirits because they want to help restore harmony and balance. They want to keep balance and harmony in their lives, and it's about finding fertile ground in order to keep that balance going. It's about plowing the ground, removing the rocks, pulling up the thorns, together, so that we can live in that harmony, live in balance.

My friends, there's a lot of history to be owned. And there's a lot of this stuff that has yet to be learned, and it's being concealed from you. You have to do the work now to go dig it up, spade the ground, and make fertile soil for the seed of the Gospel to grow. That's your job now. Together, all of us repenting, all of us restoring balance to the world. It's not just about making disciples for Jesus Christ; it really is about transforming the world, because the world we have inherited is in bad, bad shape. The political system that we're a part of continues to find new excuses to invade other people's lands, new rationales, new laws, new reasons to create more and more imbalance. If we're going to change that, it's going to take your heart and my heart working together in order to dream a new world, in order to envision something different than the world we've got. That's where we are with this act of repentance. It dare not stop here today, but it must continue. Your repentance towards indigenous people, whether it's in

Hawaii or in Australia or in the Philippines or with American Indian people on this land, it's got to be a long, long process that you're willing to commit to and to live out of and to let it change your whole way of being in the world. These people up here, they want to be a part of that process with you, these Indian people up here, indigenous people. We don't think you ought to do this alone. In one sense, we're the victims, but we understand it's not going to happen until we all work at this together.

As my prayer for you this evening and in the foreseeable future, you'll be in my heart, you'll be in my thoughts. And I'll say one more time how much I respect The United Methodist Church for an—beginning this process. (*unintelligible*)

(applause)

(music)

(video)

(applause)

(music)

DR. BEAUTY MAENZANISE (Zimbabwe): As a Black child, as an indigenous person, there are some places such as shops we could not be allowed to enter and buy anything there so we had to stay in the places they called locations that is the high-density areas. That's the area I grew up in Harare, in the capital city, of which even my teachers used to tell us that, to tell me, that as an African I would never be able to accomplish anything in life. So that's the kind of environment I grew up in where as an indigenous person I was always looked down upon as somebody who cannot make it in life. The church as a whole where it has done wrong I think we are here to send the people to wherever the people—we need to show people that even as a body we need to recognize where we have done wrong. And apologize because if we don't repent as a

denomination that means even those people we have been preaching to and we are telling them to repent of their sins, how then can they say now I want to be part of this church which they know it still has its baggages behind it?

I think what is important now for the church to do in order to show our sympathy, to show our repentance—what we need to do is to work with those indigenous people. Let's say they have programs they are running—not to come in and impose because that's one of the sins which the church has been doing—is to go in and impose that we think your people—let's say your people from the indigenous Zimbabweans—this is what you need. They have not even talked to us to see what we need, what is our cry, what is our—what are our passions, what do we need to grow in? So what is needed is to have a two-way partnership—the church and the indigenous people. You come and you talk to us; we tell these are the things which are our priorities. Then you work with us in there equipping us so that when we remain behind we will say if it's a project, “this is *our* project with the churches working with us,” than to say this is a project of the church. If we say this is a project of the church, it will end when the church moves out but let the community say this is our project and be part and parcel of that. So if the church can have a listening ear of what the indigenous people are saying, they need the church to partner with them. I think we have a stronger partnership between the church and the indigenous people.

(music)

REV. YNGVAR RUUD (Norway): Hello, my name is Yngvar Ruud, I am a United Methodist minister in Oslo, Norway. I have been a minister for 44 years and I belong to two people—the Norwegian people and the Sami people. The Sami people is the indigenous people of Norway. Today they are about 60 to 70

thousand living in the northern part of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola peninsula of Soviet—of Russia.

There is a lot of things to say about this Sami people and first of all I will share my own story. I am a Sami through my grandfather. He was a Sami who spoke the language. The Sami people have their own language, their own culture, and their own way of living. And traditionally they have hunters and fishers. My Sami experience is coming from my grandfather—he was a Sami and spoke the language. He grew up not far from my hometown and I remember people coming for visiting us when I was a kid in the Sami outfit and it was very colorful and I hope that none of my friends would see them coming to our house. So apparently I got this sense that I had something to be ashamed of. So I ask, what can we learn? We can learn, I think, that no one, no state, no church, has the right to shame people by oppression of any kind. It destroys people's self-esteem and identity. In the Gospels, I see the Christ shows us another way. He is on the oppressed people's side. He is not on the Pharisees' side. And I think if we can have that attitude as Christ had, we will meet the future in a much better way in our relation to the indigenous people—also the Sami people.

(music)

REV. ANITA PHILLIPS (Oklahoma Indian Missionary): If your greatest hope was also your greatest fear: I hope to start new ways of thinking, new circles, new hoops that roll down the hill and create new and better things as they go. There are some hurtful and negative and painful inheritance that all of us have—and indigenous people in particular. Native people in my native tradition, we are taught to remember and honor those who came before us. And remember and respect those who will come after. There's an obligation both in terms of where we

came from and where we're going. My hope is that my brothers and sisters within The United Methodist Church faith communion would hear that this hope can be brought to life by their response, by their reaction, by their opening that door. And when I speak to people about this there—there is—there is a door that is either open or closed to me and I can feel it. I can feel it. And my fear is that my brothers and sisters will turn their back to this issue. And, and in fact then, continue to do harm to my people. And the idea that I might be leading my people into a place where they will suffer more harm is intolerable. I can't bear the thought of that. I am genuinely stepping out in faith with my church. I am believing that there is a piece of every person in our United Methodist connection who can relate, who is connected to, being part of that horrible relationship of oppressor and those oppressed. We're all in that dance—all of us. And my great hope is that my brothers and sisters—European Americans—will not turn from this moment.

(pause)

(prayer)

BISHOP MARY ANN SWENSON: Today as the Council of Bishops, on behalf of The United Methodist Church, we stop to listen to our own hearts and our own voices.

History is not only a body of information stored in the archives for reference and study, waiting to be mined by scholars and researchers; it is a living, breathing phenomenon that resides in us and among us, framing our understanding of ourselves and each other. The history we recall in this moment continues to weigh upon all of us. Together we grieve the history which still weighs upon indigenous people around the world and Native Americans in The United States.

This is not a romance of discovery or pioneer life of settlement and

tragedy. It is about a violent history of peoples whose families, communities, and sovereign nations were destroyed by aggressive powers lust- ing for their lands, riches, and seek- ing domination at the expense of their own existence. This is a story about the church's role in cooperat- ing with and entering into collusive relationships with political forces, resulting in the killing of native women and children and men; the removal of native nations from their homes, forcing them to march along death-defying distances, to live on lands unsuitable for habitation; destroying peaceful villages; mas- sacring helpless innocents; stealing tribal lands and resources; breaking sacred treaty agreements; removing children from their homes to imprison them in schools that would steal their heritage and make them "civilized"; and in tragic intentional and inadvertent ways sharing and implementing the goals of native extermination, resulting in genocidal policies and programs and actions that are designed to vanquish forever whole native and indigenous nations and people, communities from the families of the earth.

BISHOP LARRY M. GOOD- PASTER: As the Council of Bishops we are here to repent and express remorse for the church's past conduct in its relationships with native and indigenous peoples in all places where we have extended the mission of the church for over 200 years. We're here to commit ourselves to addressing the wrong and asking for forgiveness of those who've been wronged by failing them so pro- foundly. We confess to God, acknowledging our guilt, resolving to cease the harm, pledging our- selves to live differently, reversing the damage that has been done through our participation in the vio- lence, the maltreatment, the neglect of native and indigenous peoples so that we may bring about healing and restoration to all. It is time to free captive native and indigenous peo- ples from institutional church oppression and learn from them spir-

itual values that will see us through our own current spiritual emergen- cies, save our embattled earth, and enable humankind to live as one with creation and all living crea- tures, including ourselves. The ques- tion is whether the church is strong enough to bring about the change in the United States and around the world where indigenous peoples have been decimated, assimilated, abused, left victims of dominant Western economies and the imposi- tion of oppressive, materialistic, cul- tural values. Our work in healing broken relationships must be spe- cific, actionable, and accountable. Morally, it must be part of our denomination's discourse, program- ming, and policies.

BISHOP ROBERT E. HAYES JR.: To our native and indigenous brothers and sisters, we say we have destroyed your way of life, dehu- manized your people, and degraded your cultures, along with your dreams, your peace, and your great love of the land. We acknowledge the pain of your nation, people, and all sinful behavior in these events. We know that past history has been filled with violence against you. We have confiscated your land. We have recklessly destroyed your cultures. Today we acknowledge that all this is not in the past. Assaults continue on your cultures, continuing the his- toric patterns of abuse, the demean- ing of your spirituality, the questioning of your leadership, the neglecting of the critical issues of hunger, health, employment, and sovereignty. We must not yield to historical amnesia. We pray to God to give us a new heart and a new spirit through Jesus Christ who breaks down the dividing walls of hostility so that we may truly repent of our grave sins, petition for for- giveness, and work towards healing.

BISHOP ROSEMARIE WEN- NER: The Council of Bishops will affirm commitment to empowering the presence of native and indige- nous people in the life of the denom- ination, support Native American

Ministries Sunday in the U.S. annual conferences, strengthen communi- ties of Native American ministries in the United States and native min- istries in the central conferences, support General Advances and church-wide funding for native min- istries, commit ourselves to the development of new native and indigenous ministries, and strengthen our support for existing community entities, create a theo- logical statement that demonstrates the respect for the diversity of theol- ogy and ecclesiology that is found in the context of native and indigenous ministries, commit to host acts of repentance in annual conferences, commit to develop relationships of mutuality with native peoples in local contexts, initiate programs of education for non-native people about why the act of repentance is important.

In partnership with native min- istry leaders and resource people throughout the connection, the Council of Bishops will support developing new native and indige- nous leaders across the connection, including an increased number of people nurtured for service in con- gregational, annual conference, jurisdictional, and central confer- ence and general church ministries, including the episcopacy, initiating a blend of advocacy related to land and treaty rights, support for tribal sovereignty and cultural preserva- tion, better health care and education for native people and the safety of native and indigenous women and children.

(music)

MCFEE: Stories have been told, promises have been made. This night is but the beginning of a jour- ney. To listen is to begin to care, much more than simply hearing. To promise to hold, to tell, to learn. We cannot do all of this here in this moment, but we can begin. It is almost inconceivable that we could think of a simple gesture that would offer a response to what we have

witnessed tonight. But Jesus said that even the stones would cry out if injustice was hushed up and so tonight in a ritual of commitment to continue this journey, we will come to the river, to the river of tears, the river of life, and we will get a stone. And we'll take these stones back to our areas as a promise to continue the journey. Stones that were once hurled in ways that hurt can become listening stones that lead to life. We can take these back. We can multiply these in our own places, multiply the stories, dig the stuff up. We can be repenting and repenting and repenting, y'all. And so I invite you to the river. Delegates inside on the floor come to the center aisle, and visitors, there are rocks around the baptismal font in the back. We'll take our time. We don't all have to come at the same time. Come when it feels right. If kneeling is difficult for you, then we have people here who will kneel on your behalf to get a stone so that you might have that act of kneeling on your behalf. I have no idea if we have enough stones, but if you come to the river and there are no stones, simply do the action anyway and I am sure a stone will cross your path and you will know that this is the stone you must take back to your area. So come, my friends, let us come to the river of life.

(music)

MCFEE: I'm going to take a chance and invite visitors to come and get stones in the middle that are left because I know there are many more visitors who need stones. So I invite you to come through and get stones that are left in the middle. I invite you to come.

(music)

BISHOP SWENSON: Holy Spirit, come. Let these stones go with us as a reminder to continue our listening, continue our repenting, continue our movement towards the future. Give us wind at our backs for the journey. Be with us, brother Jesus, so we might walk gently, carefully, lovingly, with our God in the healing journey that is ahead. So that we might eventually fly on your eagle wings. And now all of my brothers and sisters in the Council of Bishops are going to take one step forward from where they are surrounding you here in the floor tonight, take one step forward as a Council of Bishops, holding our stones, so that you might know that this for us too is a sign that as a Council of Bishops, we commit ourselves to this journey. To the generations before us, as a cloud of

witnesses to this act; to the generations of the people who are living now; and to the next generation who will hear of our promise this night; and to the seventh generation and beyond, we offer our commitment this night to the journey to walk hand in hand with the indigenous and the native peoples of the world, with the strength that we have through Jesus Christ our Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God.

(music)

BISHOP HAYES: Listen. Listen. Can you hear the sound of it? The very rocks themselves cry out for justice and righteousness. Listen. Do you hear it? And if you do and the rocks can cry out, surely our hearts can cry out for repentance and forgiveness. The journey begins tonight, and it begins with one step. But if you're willing to make that step, know that the Lord God, who created all things in harmony with one another steps with you. And as you go with him, go in peace. And may the peace of God go with you and your brothers and your sisters and, yea, even the rocks themselves go in peace. Amen.

(music)