

Proceedings of the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

Thursday Morning May 4, 2000

(Morning Session)

BISHOP WALTER KLAIBER (Germany Central Conference): Order of the day. I can welcome them on behalf of the General Conference. It is the prelate, the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Nigeria, His Eminence Bishop Sunday Mbang. The Bishop of the Methodist Church in Cuba, Ricardo Perreida, and the General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Bishop Elmer M. Bolocon. Please greet them on behalf of the conference.

(Applause)

I trust here is a Bishop [Efrain] Yanapa [Hunanca] from Bolivia is also here. If he is some where in the room, I can not see him. Oh, greeting to you, yes, greeting to you.

(Applause)

BISHOP KLAIBER: I have one announcement or a concern for our marshalls. They have watched that some of you have drinks on your tables and, of course, they have knowledge that the air in this room may be may something a little bit dry, which has nothing to do with the debate, but, uh, they have the concern that if the liquid is spilled, the voting machines will no longer work and not only your own voting machine, but all the voting machines of your tables. So they want you to be very careful and maybe it's possible not to put the drinks on the table, but near your feet, or whatever it is. So it's not just, not just to give you what you need, but to protect these voting machines, which are, of course, very, very costly and we need them to work. So we look at the order of our day, at the agenda. You have it on the first page of our *Daily Christian Advocate* of today. You see that we are already 15 minutes late and we have several agenda items. Some of them deal with our different roots, different heritages. Some of them we will just celebrate, some of them we will struggle how to be our common heritage or some we will be moved to have an act of repentance or reconciliation this night. So, the first will be— Yes? Oh. The agenda commission has something to say to us, thank you.

MARY ALICE MASSEY: Good morning, your agenda is found on the first page of

your DCA this morning. And I lift up only that it is as printed, but please note at 8:30 the Act of Repentance for Reconciliation will be an order of the day. I move the agenda be accepted, Bishop Klaiber.

BISHOP KILABER: I think we can do this by lifting up our hands. Who is in favor of this, please lift up your hands. Thank you. Any opposed? No body. Thank you very much. So now we come to the first topic, United Brethren in Christ and Evangelical Association 200th Anniversary Celebration. Bishop Bashore.

EUB 200th Anniversary Celebration

BISHOP GEORGE BASHORE (Pittsburgh Area): As we begin this celebration we want to express our appreciation to the United Methodist Publishing House for producing for this time of festive celebration a very beautiful book, a historical sampler of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Each of you has received a copy of that book and we want to acknowledge their generosity and kindness in producing this. The other thing that we need to know prior to beginning is that when we conclude you will need to have Hymn No. 191, unless you think you know it from memory. I have a contingency here. It's *Jesus Loves Me*, but we're going to do it in German. (Laughter) And you'll see why as we talk about our heritage as the Evangelical United Brethren Church. If you can be ready at the bottom of 191, there is the section there for German. Let me go through it, if you have that.

Jesus liebt mich ganz gewiss,
Denn die Bi ble sagt mir dies,
Alle Kinder schwach und lkein,
Läd't Er herzlich zu sich ein.

And then surely you can all join in with the other, which is

Ja, Jesus liebt mich,
Ja, Jesus liebt mich,
Ja, Jesus liebt mich,
Die Bi ble sagt mir dies.

Now you all be ready when we arrive at that point. All right. Today we have a very unique opportunity to note and to mark the foundation in 1800 of the two bodies that united in 1946 to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. The United Brethren Church tradition ally celebrates its birth on September 25, 1800, with its first annual

conference. The Evangelical Association observes 1800 when Jacob Albright formed his first three classes as its founding. Although these events are quite different, both churches celebrated their Golden Jubilee in 1850 and their centennials in 1900 and then in 1950 the Evangelical United Brethren Church observed shared sesquicentennials. This morning, the year of our Lord 2000, the United Methodist Church at its general conference marks the bicentennial of these precious parts of our common heritage, as we strive to comprehend the treasures and the tasks that they have left to us.

(Music-Amazing Grace)

NARRATOR: Our United Methodist Church has DNA too. Together we share a sort of spiritual gene transporter on which the footprints of all our forbears can be traced. As we prepare to build upon this heritage we must implant those spirit-shaping footprints in our conscious memory so that we do not forget who we are and whose we are. Let us recall a sometimes forgotten and little understood genetic imprint on our United Methodist DNA. Today we remember and celebrate the founding events of our Evangelical and our United Brethren forbears two centuries ago. The year was 1800, the DNA is yours.

(music)

The ebb and flow of desperate peoples and massive migrations is the stuff of human history. True to their promise, the French had made a waste land of the German provinces on their border after the Thirty Years War. Desperate from this ethnic cleansing, German refugees found their way to America. The poorest were relegated to stony high lands where they eked out their meager living, aliens in language and largely deprived of means to appropriate and celebrate their rich physical and spiritual culture. Having no churches and but few neighbors, a resourcefulness born of desperate longing and occasional joy led our immigrants to a new religious invention called *eine grosse Versammlung*. This German mother of the camp meeting, this great or big meeting, provided precious opportunities for these bereft German refugees to enjoy, at least for a few hours, an almost forgotten blessing; benefit of clergy, preaching, prayer and religious instruction wrapped in a social occasion long hungered for.

(music)

Whether we speak of a Wesley in England, an Asbury among English-Americans or of the German-Americans of a Boehm, Albright or Otterbein, all our founding forbears shared a mission to these European exiles. Like the Hebrews in Babylon, these refugees lost not only their place but also their self, and even their God. Their profound lostness reveals itself in the violence of their experiences of being found. Such folk, our forbears, were often entirely spoiled for the rich routines of conventional Christianity. The great sound of their singing was only exceeded by the thunder of their shouting. It is hard for us to grasp the wretchedness of their lostness and their utter amazement at being found. Just how, whereas they were blind, now they can see.

(music-Amazing Grace)

Isaac Long's huge barn overflowed with just such a great meeting that spring day in rural Pennsylvania. Pentecost, 1767. Speaking was a slender man, long of beard but short of stature and clothed in the plain garb of a Menonite preacher. His words were of faith and assurance. His hearers were profoundly moved. In the crowd was a hulking fellow, in the distinctive dress of a German Reformed clergyman. As the speaker poured forth his message, joy overtook this sturdy listener.

When the discourse ended, he pressed through the crowd and gathering the preacher in his strong arms, jubilantly exclaimed, "Wir sind bruder, We are brothers!" Thus met the two men who would be led, step by step, to found a church known as the United Brethren in Christ. Preaching was Martin Boehm, American born and selected by lot as a Mennonite pastor. The clergyman embraced Brother Martin was William Otterbein, born, trained and ordained in the fatherland he came in 1752 as a missionary to clergy-hungry congregations in America. Both pastors in recognized churches, they were never content to confine their ministry to the church but shared a mission to the countless Germans lost in the hinterlands.

During the decades that followed, these spiritual brothers became the core for an ecumenical group to provide Germans destitute of spiritual advantage with gospel and church. Known as the United Ministers they often recruited preachers with no church credentials and as a result of their combined efforts, many unchurched Germans were awakened. Preachers without credentials plus converts without churches led to a creation of a new church, whose bicentennial

we celebrate today. After several such gatherings, a meeting was called for September 25, 1800, at the Kemp home in rural Maryland. This meeting became the first annual conference of a new church. A name was taken and our two embracing brothers were chosen as bishops by a still ecumenical movement. Thus, with no apparent intention to do so, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ was founded 200 years ago.

(music)

Our story thus far is of a group begun among ministers of various churches. But for our other bicentennial, we must turn to a solitary voice preaching under a divine vocation and forced by dreadful sanctions. Still, that was not how it began. The pilgrim preacher, Jacob Albright, baptized and confirmed a Lutheran, was a typical artisan farmer. Following service in a revolutionary army he desperately searched for a gracious God. After years of struggle, marked by terrifying intimations of his lostness, Albright experienced pardoning grace. This in 1791. During the next five years he found nurture in a Methodist class. Yet his solitary struggle continued. Since his own conversion, Albright felt a deep compassion for his fellow Germans and their lost condition. At first he prayed for them but in his praying it came as a blinding light that his concern was no accident but was a specific calling to share what he had received. But what God commanded was impossible. Utterly unequalled for such a mission he also saw no hope of finding others to share it. Was he really required to take up an impossible task? And eternally alone?

Driven step by bitter step toward this mission, at last, in October of 1796, his objections finally broken, Jacob Albright set out to offer healing of spirit to the exiled Germans around him. This was the crucial moment of his life. Albright set out alone, meeting cruel persecution but his Germans responded and he found open doors and friendly faces. So two hundred years ago in 1800, his followers now requiring a sort of nurture he had found with the Methodists, Albright established his first three classes. With this act the cry of a lone voice became a tiny religious body. A fellowship first identified as Albright's people, then as the newly formed Methodist Conference, finally becoming the Evangelical Association and the Evangelical Church.

(music)

These two movements, each in its own way, sought out God's lost children. Like other Protestants, missions, publishing and

higher education shaped in institutional function through a century and a half, the church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church, virtual twins in their origins, history, and size, made their way in America, not just German-America, and beyond America to the world. Then in 1946, they found their way together as the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Glory to God and building up the faithful was all they ever intended. Goodness, not greatness, their goal. Meanwhile the humble ambitions of these sturdy folk bore rich spiritual fruit in lives and communities. Finally, in 1968 they came together with the Methodist Church to pursue a common mission to the lost in America and throughout the world in the United Methodist Church.

(music)

It is right to remember the centuries that have passed and celebrate the deeds and motives of our forebears. Still, we ponder the meaning of all this for today and tomorrow. Our peoples today still driven from their place and set adrift in a seemingly shoreless sea, exiles, refugees, fugitives, displaced persons. Do we still have among us rootless folk who, in their bewilderment with change, are lost, having lost health, place, and God? If such lost ones are still among us, we know a wretchedness that requires a truly amazing visitation of grace. In that case, we can yet make some use of the heritage left to us by those hardy souls whose mission took them to the back country Germans of the American Middle Colonies two centuries ago.

BISHOP GEORGE BASHORE:

(Prayer)

(Singing of "Jesus Loves Me"
in German)

BISHOP WALTER KLAIBER: Thank you very much for this presentation. I think that in the Sixties when we came to the union of The United Methodist Church some people thought and others feared that this tradition of the EUB will be vanished in 30 years. This presentation told us that that is not the case. That this is a living heritage among us and that's one of the good things about our church that we can include traditions without swallowing them up. And I as one of those that come from the EUB tradition I'm really glad to know now our common Wesleyan roots, to have learned about them. So, you know the thing to honor our heritage does not mean to guard the ashes, but to carry on the ember. I hope we do this as ember of evangelical love and zeal. (Applause) And I hope that in 30 years ago, there will be no body who claims, "I come

from this or this tradition." They are still these genes in our common heritage. Thank you. Now we come to our next presentation. It's the Millard Fuller Address and Reverend James Perry from the Welcome Committee of the General Conference Commission will introduce the speaker.

JAMES M. PERRY: Bishop Klaiber, sisters and brothers. Almost 20 years ago, I was building a porch on my mother's home and at that time my young son was 5 years old and my mother asked him as grandparents are wont to do of grandchildren, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" Will thought a moment and he said, "Maybe I'll be a minister and a part-time carpenter like my Dad." Well, that has not happened yet. However, there are lots of part-time carpenters who find fulfillment in the ministry of Habitat for Humanity. Some of them like myself even wear badges of honor, such as blackened nails from miss-aimed hammers. In 1967, Millard Fuller along with his wife, Linda, founded Habitat for Humanity. It has since grown to exist now in over, in 67 countries, approximately 2600 locations. They have built 90,000 homes for over 400,000 people. (Applause) I hadn't planned to do this, but I'm curious. How many of you have either personally participated in Habitat for Humanity or your congregations have been a part of that? Raise your hands. Wonderful. Wonderful. The *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal* both named Millard Fuller one of the 20 most influential Georgians of the 20th Century. He is author of several books. The most recent of which is entitled *More than Houses*. It is available for purchase in the Cokesbury display down stairs and I hope you will avail yourselves of that opportunity. Without taking any more of Mr. Fuller's time, I would like to present to you, Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat for Humanity International.

(Applause)

Millard Fuller Speech

MILLARD FULLER: Thank you very much, Jim, and I can tell you even before the hands were raised I knew I was among friends. I feel at home among United Methodists and I am so honored to be here this morning and to have this wonderful privilege of addressing you. The first word I want to say this morning is an incredible word of gratitude. We did a survey a few years ago and found that among the denominations—and Habitat for Humanity is supported by all denominations—from the very beginning we have seen ourselves as a servant of the church—but we did a survey and we found that United Methodists stood

number one among those participating in Habitat for Humanity.

(Applause)

And right here in connection with your General Conference, the Cleveland District, Julius Trimble and Roger Skelley-Watts and other leaders of the Cleveland District are currently building three houses here in Cleveland and they had built seven more before these three. And you know Habitat for Humanity is in good hands in Cleveland when a United Methodist is in charge. Steve Fry is the Executive Director of Habitat here in Cleveland and does an outstanding job. In fact, in this book that was mentioned, *More Than Houses*, there is a big section in one of the chapters about creating neighborhoods in the United States about the wonderful work that has been done here in Cleveland. And I asked Steve yesterday as he was driving me in from the airport. I said, "The Cleveland District is building three houses now and this is, with these three and the seven previous ones that will be ten houses that the District has built in addition to individual churches sponsoring houses." I said, "Who is ahead of them, in terms of best support?" And he said, "No body, they are number one." So it's just wonderful to be here among those who have helped to make Habitat for Humanity what it is to day.

I see my good friend Diane Nunnelee sitting over here from Missouri. She was on our staff at Habitat for Humanity headquarters in Americus, and she helped us start Habitat in the Cape town area of South Africa. Diane, thank you and God bless you and all that you do. Luther Millsaps is here. He is 'Mr. Habitat for Humanity' in Mississippi and he's put this ministry to try all over the state of Mississippi. And, Luther, we appreciate you and all that you have done. From the very beginning United Methodists have been a part of Habitat. Some of you know Harry Haines who was head of United Methodist Committee on Relief in the 1970's. He was very much a part of launching this ministry. And then in 1979 he asked me if we were working in Latin America and I said no and he arranged a tour for me to go through Latin America. And one of the places that I went to was Guatemala and I had the privilege of planting the seed for Habitat for Humanity there and that trip was arranged by our own Harry Haines of UMCOR. And I went there in 1979 and planted that seed and I've been back several times since. But in November of this year I had the wonderful privilege of going back to Guatemala, 20 years later. And in those 20 years, work has been launched in 140 different locations throughout Guatemala.

And I was there to celebrate the 5,000th house being built in that country and that was such an exciting thing.

(Applause)

I can tell you, it was not only exciting for me but it was so exciting for the homeowner of that 5,000th house that during the service she fainted, and I thought to myself, "We've killed the homeowner." But she revived, she was just so overcome with emotion. But that is what Habitat does. And I said to the people there in Guatemala, "I want to come back and dedicate your 10,000th house." They said to me, "We will see you in two years."

It is incredible what is happening. Your own Norma Kehrberg who came after Harry Haines, became the head of UMCOR. She came on the international board of Habitat for Humanity, went to Nepal, helped launch the work of Habitat in Nepal. I was there in January. Built the first house in Nepal 2 years ago, and for the dedication of that first house, 5,000 people came out to see that house dedicated. It was such a symbol of hope and now we are working in three different communities in Nepal. I was there to dedicate the 111th house and the king of the country received me. It is seen by officials at that level, as such a symbol of hope that, that kind of recognition is given to this work.

But all across this country—I know that Tom and Barbara Mitchell are here from Lakeland, Florida. They are very active in Habitat. I could go on naming so many people. Mel West served on the Habitat International Board from Missouri and he and thousands upon thousands upon thousands of others in The United Methodist Church have been faithfully working in Habitat for Humanity to make it what it is. Our own First United Methodist Church in Americus, Georgia, where Habitat for Humanity is headquartered, is faithful, is supporting this ministry and building houses there locally. I speak in United Methodist Churches all over the world. I had the privilege of speaking in the Kwanglim Church, the largest, I believe, Methodist church in the world in Seoul, Korea, and in July 1998, the Highland Park United Methodist Church. I'm speaking at St. Luke's United in Indianapolis on Sunday. So I feel at home among United Methodists and you are incredible in terms of what you have done for this ministry. From day one when Habitat was started at a small Christian community near Americus, Georgia, a place called Koinonia Farm, we have seen this work, as I said earlier, as a servant of the church. The need for housing, the need for shelter is so enormous that it can not be done by one de-

nomination. It's too big and it's one of those things that the church ought to get together and do it together. It was interesting yesterday when we celebrated those three houses that are being built here in Cleveland by the Cleveland District. Immediately after that service we went down the street a couple of blocks and we dedicated a house that was jointly built by the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians. Right next to that house was one being built by the Women's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Church. I mean Habitat has a way of bringing people together who normally don't get together. It's what we call the theology of the hammer.

You know Jimmy Carter is our most famous volunteer and he goes out every year and builds Habitat houses. And a couple of years ago we were in Pikeville, Kentucky, building houses and I walked in the room and there was Jimmy Carter putting up dry-wall. And about four feet from him, nailing on the same wall, in the same room, in the same house was Newt Gingrich and I thought to myself, that is the outer limits maybe of the theology of the hammer.

(Applause)

Speaking of the theology of the hammer, I was telling the folks with whom I had breakfast this morning, Mollie Stewart, my wonderful fellow Alabamian and Jim Perry and others who were there—I was telling them about the first really big Jimmy Carter project that we did in Charlotte, North Carolina. And we got 86 churches to cooperate on building 14 houses in a week. Eighty-six churches in that city had never cooperated on anything. And they came out and they worked together and we thought it would be a neat idea to find the most liberal preacher in town and put him on the same house with the most conservative preacher. And we did that, they didn't know each other, they didn't like each other by reputation. But after the end of the week, after they've worked together building a house all week together, they were big friends and it was an emblemment to both of them.

(Applause-Laughter)

But that is what Habitat does. We bring people together. Every year we have Building on Faith Week. That is a week in September, it's the week that leads up to the 3rd Sunday of September. And last September in Selma, Alabama, a place known for racial division, we had 46 churches, black and white, working together, building together, and they put up 20 houses for 20 families in need in Selma, Alabama.

(Applause)

We all know about the tragic division in Northern Ireland. Habitat for Humanity has the Protestants and the Catholics building houses together. The director is a Protestant, the building superintendent is a former member of the IRA and we are building houses together in the name of Jesus to bring about reconciliation in that country. We have not only Catholics and Protestants and black and white and we invite people of whatever persuasion to come out and help us build. We have an open door in Habitat Humanity. We are openly and unashamedly a Christian ministry, but we welcome whoever wants to come out and to be a part of it. An other chapter in that book, *More Than Houses*, tells about the wonderful stories of people who have found Jesus on Habitat work sites and in other ways in participating in this ministry. So we proclaim the gospel, Matthew 28 says that we should proclaim the gospel. One way to do it is in church services. An other way to do it is at church conferences. But an other way to do it is to be side by side with a person who does not yet know Jesus Christ and nail nails with that person, drive nails, saw boards, and let them understand what Christian love is all about.

(Applause)

Many of you know, I will be going to Sonoma, California in August to participate in Jubilee 2000. I was in Humboldt County, California about 4 years ago for the Jubilee Conference that brings together all the United Methodist Churches from Nevada and Northern California. And there we built a house with a family who had not been a part of the church and many of you know that story. We were sharing again at breakfast this morning. But the homeowner of that particular family was so touched by this outpouring of love toward her. She said, "Is this what it means to be a Christian, to love strangers? You didn't even know me. I'm not even a fellow Christian, but here you are out here working for me and my two boys so we can move out of a garage and move into a decent place in which to live. Is that what it means to be a Christian? I want to be that kind of person. Could I join the church? Could I be a Christian? Could I be that kind of person? Could my boys be those kind of persons?" And that is the kind of witness that we make when we go out into the highways and the byways and the slums in our cities and in our rural areas and build houses in the name of Jesus. That's what this ministry is all about.

We are a reconciling ministry, reconciling people to one another, reconciling people to God, helping to bring about a closing of the gap between the rich and the poor. We

know in this country today that we have unprecedented prosperity. But so many people are being left out, even in this country. And in other countries, especially the so-called developing world, the gap is growing even wider. I have heard Jimmy Carter say on numerous occasions that in his opinion the greatest discrimination in the world today is the discrimination of the rich against the poor. And it's not that the rich wake up in the morning and say I will go out and beat up a few poor people today. It's the discrimination of not caring. It's the discrimination of building walls, of separating our selves from those who are less fortunate. And the gospel of Jesus as I read it, says we should not be building walls but we should be building bridges. We should be going over to our neighbors, we should be going out to our neighbors and saying, "We love you so much, that we are going to do what we can to be a part of helping you come into the fullness, of the abundance of Christ." And that is what we seek to do in this work.

I am from Alabama, now live in Georgia. Those of us who have the good fortune of living down in that part of the country know that's where God lives. He visits Cleveland occasionally, but

(Laughter-Applause)

we know that that's where God lives. And we're all into religion in the South. We know the first and great commandment of Jesus, and that's this: Thou shalt go to church. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt get others to go to church. And if you want to be a totally devoted disciple of Jesus, work on your ministerial tone and learn how to say "Gaawd" and "Je eesusus."

(Applause)

And if you can do that, then everybody is just so happy with you. You don't have to go help any poor people to do anything, just go to church. Now, now, the Bible does say, "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together." But that's the beginning of the religious expression. You've got to go out, "Let your light so shine," God's word says, "that others will see your good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven." And building a house for a needy family, building a house with a needy family, using the Bible finance plan is what it's all about. In inviting people to be participants with us. To come and to say to them, "I care about you."

I want—the bishop of Pittsburgh, a while ago, talked about knowing people's names. We need to go to the other side of town and know the names of our neighbors. So much of religion, especially Southern religion

where I come from, is what I call “generic religion.” That is about loving generic neighbors and, you know, if you don’t know your neighbor’s name, you don’t know what your neighbor needs and you don’t need to do anything. Just squint up your eyes and, “God would you take care of that?”

(Laughter)

But what we need to do is to learn our neighbors’ names and where they live and what their needs are. And if we are able to deal with those needs to get busy and to do something about it. And another thing we believe in Habitat for Humanity is that God is a hundred-per cent God. That’s why we have the goal in Habitat for Humanity of eliminating poverty housing. The Bible says, “With God all things are possible.” It does not say it’s easy, but it says, “With God all things are possible.” And down in our county, Sumter County, Georgia, one of the poorest counties in Georgia, you know what’s going to happen this year? Something historic’s going to happen this year. In September, our annual Building on Faith Week, I’m going with my wife, Linda, and Jimmy Carter, Jack Kemp, who’s a big support of Habitat on our board of directors. We’re going to New York to Harlem to 233 West 134th Street, and we’re going to build the 100,000th house. The 100,000th family is going to move in the house, which means at that point we have housed half a million people.

We’re going to be there the first two days, September 11 and 12, of that week. Then we’re going to Jacksonville, Florida, where several thousand people are building a hundred houses. We’re going to finish a hundred houses that week in Jacksonville. On Wednesday we’ll be there. Then we’re coming to Sumter County, Georgia, where several thousand people are building thirty-five houses in a week, one of which ends poverty housing in our county.

(Applause)

We’ve eliminated all of our slums and torn down the bad houses or renovated them so that all of our families have been invited in. All of our families have been invited to have at least a simple, decent place in which to live. But, you know, how do you do that? That’s giving birth to what we call the Twenty-first Century Challenge, which asks other communities by what date—whether you live in Paducah, Kentucky, or whether you live in Rochester, New York, or Cleveland, Ohio, or whether you live in Boston, Massachusetts, or whether you live in Jackson, Missis-

sippi—by what date are you going to end poverty housing in your town and in your county? And the Twenty-first Century Challenge is asking a date, asking that question. And we now have more than a hundred communities that have come into that program, and six of them have set a date, and others are in process. It’s an exciting challenge.

But I want to conclude my remarks this morning with a story, and this story I’m going to tell you holds the key. It contains the secret for how you do it. It’s a story from the Philippines. I told you earlier that Jimmy Carter goes out every year and builds Habitat houses. In June of 1998, we went to Houston, Texas, and built a hundred houses in five days. As I was recruiting volunteers for that event traveling all over the country, I told people, “Come to Houston. Help us build a hundred houses in a week in June. It’ll be a religious experience. Because if you’ll do that, you’ll never consider going to hell.”

(Laughter)

And the people came and the coolest day was a hundred degrees, and people went home much more righteous.

(Laughter)

But last year in March we went to the Philippines. We had four thousand volunteers in the Philippines from thirty-two countries, and we built 293 houses in five days. It was an amazing miracle of God. We built in six locations. One of the places we built was Madagundan, just south of Manila. If you know your World War II history, that’s where the Death March started in World War II. That’s where Jimmy Carter worked. We built a hundred and thirty houses in that location.

The particular house that Jimmy Carter worked on was the house for the Salas family. Leonista Salas, her husband, their children, and one little granddaughter named Sunshine. This family, by the world’s standards, was a very unimportant family. They lived on the back side of a no-name slum in a mud and stick house. They were chosen to have the house built by former President Jimmy Carter. Probably in their whole lives they’d had their picture taken maybe two or three or four times, and now they were in the glare of all of this publicity.

Not only was Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter out there, former Philippine President Corazon Aquino was there, other former presidents were there. The current president, Joseph Estrada, came in with his helicopter, and he landed and he came over and laid a few blocks. Six members of the Phil-

ippine senate were there. Practically every CEO in the country was there laying blocks.

A small house, 350 square feet. A very modest, simple house. But as we always do at the end of the week, we had a dedication service. We had speeches, we had songs, we had prayers of dedication. Keys were given out to the family. A Bible was presented. And then Leonista, the mother of that family, had been chosen to be the speaker, and she stood up, and here’s what she said. She said, “All week I have been thinking that this is a dream. That it’s not really true that all these famous people are out here building a house for us and with us. And I keep thinking I’m going to wake up.”

But then she said, “I put my hand out and the house is actually there. I can feel it; I can touch it. We’re going to have a good place to live. And we’ll always be thankful to you, and we’ll always be thankful to God for this happening in our lives.” But then she said this: “The thing that is going to mean the most to us is that on Monday, when it was blazing hot and there was no shade, I looked over at President Carter in the late morning, and I saw that he was wringing wet with sweat. There was no dry thread on him, and he was mixing up more mortar to lay more blocks. And I noticed that his sweat was dripping into our mortar. So knowing that his sweat is in our house is what’s going to mean the most to us for the rest of our lives.”

Friends, that’s the secret. If we are willing to put our sweat—our physical sweat, our emotional sweat, our intellectual sweat, our psychological sweat—into God’s work, then the miracle occurs. And is that asking too much? Did not Jesus give not only his sweat, but his blood for us that we might have an abundant life on this earth and life eternal in heaven?

(Applause)

Let us put our sweat into our work, and God will multiply it beyond our wildest expectations. Thank you and God bless you.

(Applause for Millard Fuller)

BISHOP KLAIBER: Thank you so much for this inspiring speech. The only thing I thought the translator will have a hard time to translate this speech, but thank you for the speech and not only for the speech, but for the work which is behind your words. You really work for poor people. Thank you so much for sharing all these stories with us. I hear that there is an approved offering its....

JIM PERRY: I wanted to say to you that before you sat down you should put your hand in your pocket. We want to give every-

one an opportunity to participate in this ministry in another very tangible way by participating in the offering which we are prepared to receive at this time for the work of Habitat for Humanity. One-half of the offering that is received will go for the work of Habitat for Humanity International. The other half will remain here in the Cleveland District for the work of Habitat here in Cleveland. So I pray that you will be generous in your contributions today that this ministry might continue to flourish both with our gifts and with the gifts that we have as individuals to be able to work for Habitat. I would like to, while the offering is being taken, offer a prayer of dedication for the offering, Bishop.

BISHOP: You're welcome.

TERRY: O gracious God, we thank you for the work of Habitat that has been talked about here today and for the vision of Millard Fuller and his wife, Linda, and the literally thousands upon thousands of individuals who have demonstrated that it is, in deed, more blessed to give than to receive. We pray not only for the work of Habitat, but we pray that truly we might have within us the vision which compels us to move forward to eliminate all poverty housing throughout our land and around the world. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Christ, Amen.

BISHOP KLAIBER: Amen. We need a little bit of time to collect his offering. Let me tell you that it happened that the first time I heard from Habitat for Humanity, it was in Burundi. There I heard of your work. I feel that houses which I saw then are destroyed now, but I am really convinced you will build them up again, if it is at all possible. Thank you, again, for all this work. I see a person that wants to be recognized. Mic #2.

NANCY DENARDO: Yes, Bishop, Nancy Denardo, Western Pennsylvania. Could we know who to make a check out to, please, for these different offerings?

BISHOP KLAIBER: Please, repeat your question.

DENARDO: Could we be told who to make a check out to for these offerings?

BISHOP KLAIBER: Okay. Who can do this, to tell the people?

JIM PERRY: I believe you can make the check payable to the General Council on Finance and Administration because this money will be deposited and then sent in two different checks. So if you make it payable to GCFA, marked Habitat for Humanity it will be used in that way.

BISHOP KLAIBER: All right, I think we have to finish this business. Thank you,

again, for being with us and telling the story and I would call us to our next topic, "The Native American Comprehensive Plan." The people may be ready to present this topic while the offering is still being collected. You may already be in your places.

BISHOP KLAIBER: Yes, I think we should go ahead. Yes. Now the next topic, the Native American Comprehensive Plan, will be introduced to us. Thank you very much.

*Native American
Comprehensive Plan Introduced*

ANN SAUNKEAH (Oklahoma Indian Missionary): Good morning. My name is Ann Saunkeah. Good morning bishop, members of the Council of Bishops, delegates, officials, visitors, friends and families in The United Methodist Church. On behalf of the Native American Comprehensive Plan, I would like to thank you for this time. The Native American Comprehensive Plan is an interagency structure that was affirmed by General Conference in 1992 and in 1996. The interagency structure has proven to be the most effective means of ministry to native people while allowing the facets of the church to participate in financial accountability. At its annual meeting, the Native American Comprehensive Plan task force overwhelmingly reaffirmed the present structure as an interagency task force. The present make up of the 16-member task force includes 12 Native American United Methodists. I would like to thank the church for its support and would like to share with you how you accomplish, through grass roots communities, the Native American Comprehensive Plan. Through this video we are about to see, and the report found on pages 837 of the DCA and 895, you will see the impact the plan has had on the lives of Native American United Methodists.

*{Video shown on the Native American
Comprehensive Plan}*

Into the next quadrennium, we have many areas that we want to focus on. Among them are the youth and young adults, creating and developing new leaders, nurturing the present ones we have, working with our elders as resource people. One of the areas we also want to touch on is salary among Native American pastors.

(Native American Video Continues)

(Applause)

ANN SAUNKEAH: Again, thank you for your time, and thank you for your support, and thank you for your prayers.

(Applause)

BISHOP WALTER KLAIBER: Ann Saunkeah, thank you very much for this presentation, for reminding us on this part of our common heritage. When I went through the agenda this morning, I thought there was a certain tragedy in it, because these Germans which form the EUB came from Germany as very poor people, because the land could not carry them—wasn't enough space, not enough labor—and they thought it's an empty land where we can live. And they did not know, they did not want to know, that the land which they have here was taken away from other people, which already are here. So, that's the tragedy of our story, our history, and a hope that we will experience that this church can carry us all and give us a living space for us all—moral spirituality, that we have a future together. Thank you for your work, and thank you for all you are doing.

(Applause)

Our next topic will be the first report of GCOM, General Council on Ministries. I would invite the people . . . Bishop Woody Hearn will introduce.

Report of the GCOM

BISHOP WOODY HEARN: There are six of us who are members of the General Council on Ministries that will bring this first report to you, and we are privileged to come before you, the delegates of the General Conference of 2000 to report on the good work, the good news of what God is doing across our United Methodist connection. The United Methodist Church is a great church; we have a powerful tradition, an incredible presence around the world, and under God an unlimited future. Each of us in this room has a story to tell about the good news. The General Council on Ministries has glimpsed God's movement in many ways during this quadrennium, and you and I know that no one can comprehend what the United Methodist people are doing in mission and ministry in the world. Whenever historic events occur that affect people, and wherever there is some need, you can expect United Methodist people to be there. We have many reasons to celebrate.

WILLIAM HATCHER (South Georgia): Let me remind you that the General Council on Ministries works for our denomination between General Conferences and reports directly to you. Since 1972, the General Council on Ministries has played an essential role in the life of this church—a role that was originally derived from similar agencies in the former Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist churches. As you

know, the work of GCOM is to facilitate the church's program life, through encouragement, coordination, and support of the general agencies as they serve on behalf of the denomination. The council's responsibilities and knowledge has always been the appropriate place for collaboration across the church—in annual conferences, central conferences, and local congregations—to explore the missional direction for the denomination, to stay open to God's preferred future.

In 1996, General Conference delegates approved legislation that allowed for change. This interactive organizational model came from GCOM's four-year connectional issues study. I personally participated in that study, along with many of you. We listened to each other across the denomination. We shared our dreams for our life together as collaborative, non-competitive, holy work. The action in 1996 reaffirmed our historical concepts of holy conferring. That action has resulted in new energy, simpler structures, and greater emphasis on relationships, in both local churches and annual conferences.

DR. CAROLYN JOHNSON: What is this reality of our new context? Local congregations, annual conferences, and general church agencies are all finding that this need to change, and the ability to change, is essential to the future. This General Conference is held at the beginning of a new millennium, a new century, and a new decade. There will be no other time quite like this time. Let us claim the promise of Isaiah 43:19: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

As we all glimpse this new thing, we become aware of the struggle. Each of us is well aware of the dramatic changes in our places of ministry in the past decade. There's change, there's response, the church changes, the church responds. Our circumstances and our great desire to be of use to God demands new faithfulness. Swiftly the world has gone from a print culture to a visual culture, from snail mail to e-mail. New technology has allowed new ways of communication that makes global relationships more possible. From structures of hierarchy to team, flattened designs, work is being done in new ways. Decision-making power has been distributed and decentralized. Relationships are developed and valued over rules and structures. We've gone from the singularity of right-answer science to the complexity of chaos, quantum leaps, and the reality of a multiplicity of possibilities. As Christians, we remember that to change is to enter the biblical story. This break-in with a new orientation to the future is as ancient as the

spiritual journey recorded throughout the biblical story and the history of the church. Each transition in Israel's history reflects the struggle that results from change, as does the journey of Jesus—from wilderness to Calvary to resurrection.

As a church, we have responded with our own transformations. We have become more faithful to the ancient disciplines of prayer, worship, and waiting upon the Lord. There has been a reclaiming of the wonder and awe. We see new emphasis on lay ministries; new opportunities for each of us to have hands-on mission experiences; expanded use of electronic media, and new forms of worship; and intentional dialog across the issues that would tend to divide us. Together, we have increased funds available for mission and ministry through World Service and other funding sources. In each of the past six years, we have seen an increase in attendance at worship in United Methodist churches, with 17 annual conferences also reporting significant increases in membership. Certainly, this is a cause for celebration.

(Applause)

But you know, Conference 2000, we're on a wild ride of change in our desire to make disciples for Jesus Christ. And as we glimpse the future we know that our need to change will continue.

GCOM Sponsored Consultations

ROBERT HOSHIBATA: The commitment that the General Council on Ministries has made to this more collaborative, interactive, consensus-building style of relating makes it impossible to do business as usual. Meetings are an opportunity, believe it or not, for holy conferring. The General Council on Ministries has spent the time necessary to discern the spirit of God, as together we make decisions for our future. And as we work we are a worshipping community. We explore our Biblical story. We rehearse our Wesleyan tradition, as these two components are essential to directing the mission and the ministry of our denomination. We pay close attention to our environment, our need to give space to the Holy Spirit and to the soul work of caring for each other. We gather the pieces of our shared story from across the church to affirm the wholeness that can be made from the parts. What is more, the General Council on Ministries fulfilled our assigned tasks in a new style of openness and collaboration. For the first time in decades, leaders from across the church were invited to dream about our future together, God's preferred future for us. Joint discussion and joint decision mak-

ing assures shared ownership and mutual cooperation. The General Council and Ministries sponsored two church-wide consultations involving more than 200 persons from congregations, from conferences, from caucuses and from agencies. And many of those who participated in those consultations are here today. We gathered them to share stories of ministry. Prophetic voices challenged this gathered congregation and periods of prayer and discernment resulted in a clearer, common vision for a shared future. Our meetings are held in various locations within the jurisdictions and also within the central conferences. This allowed for interaction with the ministries in each context. In addition, voices from the central conferences helped us define our work with greater sensitivity to the issues in our church as it seeks to be the global church. The 1.3 million United Methodist laypersons and 6,000 ordained clergy and local pastors who live in Africa, in Europe and in the Philippines continue to have a powerful influence on those of us who live in the United States.

MARY SILVA: During these experiences the General Council on Ministries learned that change is hard work. Reaching consensus for decision making in a large body is time consuming. Eliminating the usual distinctions between groups creates new anxieties as well as new possibilities. Our suspicions and well-formed habits hang around in the midst of the new. The General Council on Ministries also found that all across the church in local congregations, in annual conferences and at the general church, our desire to make disciples of Jesus Christ is clarifying our shared vision. As a denomination, we are continuing to rehearse our essential Biblical character as we celebrate our mission story. This collaborative process has lessened the distance between men and women, young and older, lay and clergy. And dealing with our ethnic and racial differences has taken on new possibilities. When people gather at the common table to pray and discern and dialogue and make decisions together, communities of mission and new opportunities are formed with new clarity. When the church starts with mission and ministry, dreams and after that asks questions about funding and structure, new energy with limitless possibilities is obvious. Annual conferences and local churches have also been involved in this learning. Nearly every annual conference has exercised new freedom during the past four years. People representing ministries and mission and finances have come together to plan for the future. Let us hear just a few of many examples of what is happening in an annual confer-

ences including your own. The Desert Southwest Annual Conference has re-envisioned its future to anticipate the starting of 200 new congregations. The Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference is more empowered to be involved in new and innovative ministries to the deaf, the business world and the very poor. The Kentucky Annual Conference has a new structure that assures intentional leadership development and evaluation at the annual conference level. The Minnesota Annual Conference has moved into a team of stewards to lead the ministry that connects local congregations. The Central Texas Annual Conference has a new model for mission and ministry and has developed an increased emphasis on youth and mission. This year 2,400 youth will participate as volunteers in mission projects. As the General Council on Ministries related to the programs and ministry of over 20 annual conferences and to an annual conference leadership we glimpse the movement of God throughout.

BISHOP WOODROW HEARN: Taco Bell has an advertisement featuring their little Chihuahua dog. He has heard that there's a lizard in town and he wants to catch it, so he gets a box and he takes it down to a street corner. He gets a stick and props up one side of that box and puts a string on the stick, goes around the corner and then he says, "Here, Lizzie, Lizzie, Lizzie," and waits for the lizard to come. He's baited it with a taco. It's an appropriate bait and the lizard responds. But soon as the lizard comes the ground shakes and a big shadow falls across the corner. The little lizard that the Chihuahua dog had expected is Godzilla. And he says in his animated voice, "I think I'm gonna need a bigger box."

(Laughter)

Our experience in the General Council on Ministry during this quadrennium is such that we can say that our United Methodist Church is a church of a bigger box. There are two streams that cause us to come to this conclusion. The first stream is that we have experienced a new way of doing things. At the beginning of the quadrennium four years ago, we decided that we wanted to use a different operational style. One that would involve cooperation with all of our agencies, collaboration in our style, and also the opportunity to use an interactive process. And so as already been described, we invited on two occasions representatives from our church responsible for programming to come to two consultations. The first one was in Pittsburgh in 1997. The theme of that consultation was Exploring an

Emerging Common Vision for Mission and Ministry of the Church. The second one was in New Orleans in 1998, Making All Things New. These consultations focused basically on this idea: Let us search and share our vision to answer the question, "What is God calling the United Methodist Church to be in the 21st Century, enlightened by Biblical and theological understanding and in the background of the realities of the world in which God has placed us today?" As we had the presidents and the general secretaries, of Global Ministries, Higher Education, Church and Society, Discipleship, also GCFA, the commissions and caucus people, representatives of annual conference together in dialogue, to share their discernment and their vision around a common table, there began to emerge and powerful spirit of cooperation, accountability and a dream of God's preferred future. The values of this can be summarized in this way: The best for us to do our task is to collaborate and have an interactive style with all of the parties at a common table. With all the players in the room to gether cooperation and mutual support begins to develop, so that one agency says to another agency as they share their dream, "We can help with that," or "We can contribute this to that," and so a spirit of cooperation is present. But most important of all, as the vision from many unique perspectives in our United Methodist Church begin to emerge and are shared together, these dreams form a symphony and when the notes of that symphony are harmonized together there is a mighty sound about God's preferred future. And that sound is so great that you need a bigger box in order to hold it.

Stories of UM World Mission

The second stream which we have experienced in the GCOM this quadrennium is to witness the massive mission and ministry which United Methodist's undertake on behalf of people on a global scale. You need a bigger box to hold what the United Methodist Church does. I've had personally the unique opportunity to see our church at work. All the way from the small church that I served when I began to huge global gatherings of Christian people. Been in over 80 countries over my half century of ministry. This has convinced me of one fact. And hear this carefully: I have become convinced that there is no one mind that can comprehend all that the United Methodist Church does in mission and ministry in the name of Jesus Christ around the world.

I'm excited about telling the story of what God is using United Methodist people to do

in the world. One day I was on a boat off the coast of Maine with my six-year-old grandson. A whale surfaced nearby, rolled over in the water, and then, when it made its dive, you could see this huge part of God's creation from head to tail. And I turned to the little boy and I said, "What do you think about that?" He said, "Oh, Granddaddy, that was awesome." What The United Methodist Church does in its mission and ministry in different places of the world is truly awesome.

We've had the opportunity this quadrennium, in GCOM, to see it in operation. We had the fiftieth anniversary of the celebration of The Advance for Christ and His Church, and later in this conference you will hear a full report from that advance. It is awesome.

Another awesome experience is the story of United Methodist people and what they have done in old Russia. In 1991, negotiations were made for us to return United Methodist work to that land less than ten years ago. And now Bishop Minor reports to me that more than eighty-five churches and societies have been established, and there is a need now for greater theological education in order to train leaders for that work there. That is awesome.

Mozambique has recently been in the news because of the tremendous floods that have taken place there. This nation, in southern Africa, bordering on the Indian Ocean—a nation which suffered so greatly and many years of civil strife—has made such great progress. And those of us who know its story well will delight in the fact of its economic recovery. But now the flood has come. As soon as the word of that flooding spread around the world, the connective resources of the people called United Methodists began to respond. A church pastored by one of the delegates sitting on the floor of this conference, at this moment, had a United Methodist women's group who sent a check for \$15,000 with a note that it was to be used for the flood relief in Mozambique, and that half of it they wanted to go to pure water.

Bishop Machado has reported to us that the floodwaters have moved some of the land mines, and they have now gone into areas that were previously considered to be safe. As this conference closes, there will be a team of people leaving here to go to Tshuki in order to establish a center for the health of persons with artificial limbs in order to alleviate their suffering and pain due to the loss of limbs.

I have found that it does not matter how large a box you imagine the United Methodist people could fill with all of the works

that they do in the name and spirit of Je sus Christ in the world. What ever size box you im agine, you're go ing to need a big ger box than you have im agined, for no one mind is large enough to com pre hend it all. It is awe some. So celebrate what God has done through the peo ple called United Meth od ists and tell every day, with exciting thanksgiving, the things that God has en-

abled us to do in the name of Je sus Christ, for it is awe some in deed.

(Applause)

OYSTEIN OLSEN (Norway): Amen, Bishop. Through a continual process of collaboartion with leadership across the church, ev ery ef fort was made to make con nec tions and to fa cil i tate shared own er ship of our mision and min is try. The World Ser-

vice Fund Program and budget process gath ered all agen cies to hear the plans and dreams of each other. This has not hap pened in this way before. Together your elected leaders of fered mu tual support; they signed new paths of co or di na tion, and col laborated on the quadrennial budget that you will con sider in a few days.

Con tinued in the May 6th is sue