

Information for all Pastors from Bishop Keaton

Council of Bishops Adopt "God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action"

Lake Junaluska, NC: In a statement that says, "We cannot help the world until we change our way of being in it," the bishops of The United Methodist Church announced a significant call to all United Methodists, ecumenical and inter-religious partners and people of goodwill around the world.

"As bishops, we know that critical issues of the day have left people feeling fearful, cynical, hopeless and overwhelmed," said Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the Council of Bishops. "God's *Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action* contains our pledges to work in hopeful and robust ways for transforming change as God's stewards of creation. We invite the church and our partners around the world to join us."

Stating that they "cannot remain silent while God's people and God's planet suffer" the 69 active bishops of The United Methodist Church addressed the pastoral letter and foundation document to the 11.3 million global members of the denomination.

The bishops recommend that the pastoral letter be read aloud in worship during the season of Advent in each of 42,600 congregations worldwide. A liturgical setting for the letter offers responsive elements for congregational participation. These are a "lament for God's people and God's planet," confession of "failure to embody the image of God" and call to action inviting everyone to join the bishops in their own nine pledges for urgent, effective action.

The final documents will be available online by November 9, 2009 and in French, Portuguese, German, Spanish and Korean as soon as possible. Study guides for adults and leaders with children are being prepared for Lenten studies in 2010.

The focus of the bishops' message is three interconnected global threats to God's good creation:

- pandemic poverty and disease;
- environmental degradation, and
- the proliferation of weapons and violence.

"We spent many months listening to the concerns and hopes of over 5400 United Methodists worldwide of every age and status," said Bishop Timothy Whitaker of Florida, Chair of the Task Force that brought the proposal to the Council. "We are building on a strong church tradition of seriously engaging public policy issues that most affect the human race-especially our young people."

Feedback from United Methodists and interreligious partners in Europe, Africa, Asia (especially the Philippines), and the U.S. asked the bishops to share words of confession, prophetic reminders of biblical and Wesleyan heritage, and some ways to respond to specific calls to action.

God's Renewed Creation is the evolution of action taken 20 years ago when the bishops issued a pastoral letter called, "*In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace.*" The 1986 letter reminded all people that this world is God's creation, a sacred gift to be received and nurtured with respect, declaring an unconditional *NO* to the policy of deterrence and any use of nuclear weapons.

In 2004, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church authorized the Council of Bishops to update the 1986 document for our time by "educating and encouraging the church, citizens and governments to seek things which lead to a just peace."

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