

IX. PETITIONS TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NOTES:

The petitions to the 2007 session are printed here in the form in which they were approved or referred by the conference, which is not in every case identical to the form in which they were originally submitted. In the interest of clarity and economy, the texts of petitions which were not adopted or referred by the conference are not printed.

Whenever the text of a petition is printed elsewhere in the journal, as in the case of proposals from the agencies of the conference, the reader will be referred to the appropriate section.

PETITION 1 Subject: 2007 Conference Funds and Financial Policies

Submitted by: Council on Finance and Administration

Text: See Proposals 1-23 in the report of the Council on Finance and Administration (Sec. VIII.A, pp. 215-225).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 2 Subject: Advance Specials for 2007-2008

Submitted by: Commission on Outreach Ministries

Text: See the proposal on this subject in the report of the Commission on Outreach Ministries (Sec. VIII.B.2.b, pp. 229-230).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 3 Subject: Golden Cross

Submitted by: Commission on Outreach Ministries

Text: See the proposal on this subject in the report of the Commission on Outreach Ministries (Sec. VIII.B.2, p. 231).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 4 Subject: Directors of Wesley Community Development Corporation

Submitted by: Board of Directors, Wesley Community Development Corporation

Text: See the nominations of directors of the Wesley Community Development Corporation in the report of the Commission on Outreach Ministries (Sec. VIII.B.2.b, p. 234).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 5 Subject: High Point University Trustees

Submitted by: Board of Trustees, High Point University

Text: See the nominations of High Point University trustees in the report of the Council on Higher Education Ministries (Sec. VIII.D, p. 245).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 6 Subject: Campus Ministry Boards

Submitted by: Council on Higher Education Ministries

Text: See the nominations of campus ministry boards in the report of the Council on Higher Education Ministries (Sec. VIII.D, pp. 245-246).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 7 Subject: Aldersgate Boards

Submitted by: Board of Advisors, Aldersgate United Methodist Retirement Community

Text: See Proposals 1-2 in the report of Aldersgate United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc. (Sec. VIII. E.1, p. 247).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 8 Subject: Arbor Acres Directors

Submitted by: Board of Directors, Arbor Acres United Methodist Retirement Community

Text: See the single proposal in the report of Arbor Acres United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc. (Sec. VIII.E.2, p. 248).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 9 Subject: Children's Home Board

Submitted by: Board of Trustees, The Children's Home, Inc.

Text: See the single proposal in the report of The Children's Home, Inc. (Sec. VIII.E.3, p. 249).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 10 Subject: Givens Estates Directors

Submitted by: Board of Directors, Givens Estates United Methodist Retirement Community

Text: See the single proposal in the report of Givens Estates United Methodist Retirement Community (Sec. VIII.E.4, p. 250).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 11 Subject: UMAR Trustees

Submitted by: Board of Trustees, UMAR-WNC, Inc.

Text: See the single proposal in the report of UMAR, Inc. (Sec. VIII.E.5, p. 251).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 12 Subject: Methodist Counseling and Consultation Services Board
Submitted by: Board of Directors, Methodist Counseling and Consultation Services
Text: See the proposal on this subject in the report of Methodist Counseling and Consultation Services (Sec. VIII.E.7, p. 252).
Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 13 Subject: Pensions Programs and Policies
Submitted by: Board of Pension and Health Benefits
Text: See Proposals 1-3 in the report of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Sec. VIII.K, pp. 258-259).
Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 14 Subject: Conference Insurance Program
Submitted by: Health Benefits Committee, Board of Pension and Health Benefits
Text: See Proposals 1-12 in the report of the Health Benefits Committee of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Sec. VIII.K., pp. 260-261).
Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 15 Subject: The Annual Conference Meeting
Submitted by: Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting
Text: See Proposals 1-7 in the report of the Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting (Sec. VIII.M, p. 264).
Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 16 Subject: Equitable Compensation Policies
Submitted by: Commission on Equitable Compensation
Text: See the entire report of the Commission on Equitable Compensation (Sec. VIII.U, pp. 268-270).
Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 17 Subject: Cole Foundation Trustee
Submitted by: Board of Trustees, The Eugene M. Cole Foundation
Text: See the single proposal in the report of the Trustees of the Eugene M. Cole Foundation (Sec. VIII.BB, p. 277).
Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 18 Subject: Parsonage Furniture
Submitted by: Conference Cabinet
Text: Be it resolved that in the Western North Carolina Conference:

1. Churches will continue to furnish parsonage kitchens (major appliances, including washer/dryer), dining room, and formal living room, if applicable.
2. In parsonages with a great room instead of a formal living room and den/family room, the great room will be left unfurnished.
3. Churches will furnish the pastor's study, whether located in the parsonage or in the church.
4. Clergy will provide their own furnishings for den/family room or great room, if applicable, master bedroom, and two other bedrooms. If there is a fourth bedroom, that bedroom will be furnished by the church.
5. The committee on staff-parish relations, the board of trustees, and the parsonage family appointed for the 2007-08 conference year will negotiate the disposal of the present furnishings that will best meet the needs of both the congregation and parsonage family.

Rationale:

History

In 1995, the conference appointed a study committee to explore changing from a system of fully furnished parsonages to a system of unfurnished parsonages. The committee gathered additional information through the help of The J. M. Ormond Center at Duke University. This included a questionnaire sent to a sample group and interpretation of the findings. The conclusion of the committee at that time was there is no clear-cut choice regarding parsonage furnishings. Any solution will leave some dissatisfied. But there did seem to be a recurring theme through the study: Approximately 71% of the respondents at the time did have an interest in something different from the policy of totally furnished parsonages.

Legislation was passed in 1996 that did the following: The master bedroom and one other bedroom (if the parsonage had four bedrooms), and the family room or den be left without furniture. Within individual churches, the committee on staff-parish relations, the board of trustees, and the parsonage family appointed for the next conference year would negotiate the disposal of the present furnishings. The churches would also be encouraged to assist with moving expenses.

At the 1997 annual conference, new legislation was presented which stated that only the master bedroom be unfurnished. If the family wished to use their own furniture in other rooms, they could negotiate this with the church. The result was a statement in the *Parsonage Guidelines* that one unspecified bedroom be left unfurnished (Section II.A.4).

The issue was raised again at the 2005 annual conference with a new petition (No. 25), submitted by an original source (i.e. someone not previously involved). This petition was referred to the cabinet, which appointed a study committee and made a recommendation to annual conference the following year.

2006 Cabinet Recommendation

The cabinet's recommendation to the 2006 annual conference was for a change in the current policy to partially furnished parsonages, whereby den/family room and all bedrooms would be left unfurnished. This legislation was referred back to the cabinet for further clarification about several questions and concerns. The questions heard are the following. The responses of the committee are in parentheses.

- The cost of the furniture may be prohibitive for some young clergy. (While this is true, the burden would be no different than that of other young couples starting out. Also, it is more fiscally responsible to purchase furniture

as needed throughout one's adult life than to purchase an entire household upon retirement, acceptance of a special appointment, or appointment to a church without a parsonage.)

- Questions about what we do with existing furniture. (The individual churches would make this decision. Some suggestions are as follows: The church could give the furniture to the pastor, sell it to the pastor, or sell it to anyone and put the money back in the parsonage fund or donate the furniture to Habitat for Humanity or other local Christian ministry. If the pastor does not desire the change, the church could leave the furniture as is until the next minister comes to live there. We agree with 1996 legislation that this is a local-church issue to be negotiated with the parsonage family.)
- Questions about the increased cost of moving. (Moving costs will increase, depending on how much furniture a family owns. Those who own—and have previously moved—a small amount of furniture will face a greater increase in moving expenses than those who already own most of what their families need. As it is now, some churches will choose to supplement moving expenses that exceed established conference reimbursement; others will not.)
- Some pastors have second houses and already have furniture. (While this is true, it is no different from non-clergy families who choose to have a second home.)
- Some churches have spent a lot of time and money fixing up their parsonages and it does not seem fair to change the system after their hard work. (Unfortunately, the quality and care of parsonages and furnishings varies greatly, from excessive attention, which could interfere with the privacy of the family, to outright neglect, which could leave the parsonage unfit for healthy and dignified living. Additionally, churches cannot, and should not be expected to, accommodate the unique needs of every clergy family, most often due to differences in number and ages of children. The importance of furnishing a family's needs, rather than furnishing a house, is paramount.)
- What about furnishing the pastor's study if it is in the home? (The church will furnish the pastor's study, whether it is located in the church or the parsonage.)

2007 Proposal

These questions and concerns confirm the conclusion of the 1996 study that there is no way to please everyone or to create a perfect system that will be equally fair or equally convenient to all. Even so, the cabinet acknowledges that clergy families need to feel a sense of "home" in houses that are not their own, and that a having their own furniture in the den/family room and bedrooms will contribute to a feeling of stability for these families. The cabinet also warns against the unhealthy dynamic of entitlement by clergy and paternalism by churches with regard to parsonage expectations.

Consistent with the findings of the previous study and the unlikelihood of universal acceptance of any recommendation, the cabinet makes the proposal stated above.

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 19 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Change Name of Committee

Submitted by: Claudia G. Harrelson, Pastor, Stokesdale Church, Stokesdale

Text: I propose that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference petition the 2008 General Conference to amend ¶ 259.1 as follows:

¶259.1. There shall be elected annually, by the charge conference in each local church, a committee on lay-leadership **nominations and leadership development** that is composed...

a) The committee on lay-leadership **nominations and leadership development** shall serve throughout...

c) ...A layperson elected by the committee on lay-leadership **nominations and leadership development** shall serve as...

d) ...from the floor of the charge conference and/or through the recommendation of the committee on lay-leadership **nominations and leadership development**. Retiring members...

This amendment, if approved, will require the changing of the name of the committee in the following related paragraphs: 244, 249, and 251.1c.

Rationale: The 2000 General Conference changed the name of what had been the Committee on Nominations and Personnel to the Committee on Lay Leadership in order to reflect a broader understanding of the work of that committee. Since then, the name change has been a source of some confusion in many churches. Frequently, the name of the committee has to be explained, and is often not used, but instead the committee is simply referred to as "nominations." This petition proposes that the name be changed in order to clarify the dual purpose of making nominations for church offices and developing lay leadership in the church.

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 20 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Retain ¶ 161(C)

Submitted by: William E. Greene, Lay Member, Central Church, Asheville

Conference Action: None; objection to consideration sustained

PETITION 21 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Retain Sentence in ¶ 161(G)

Submitted by: William E. Greene, Lay Member, Central Church, Asheville

Conference Action: None; objection to consideration sustained

PETITION 22 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Retain Sentence in ¶ 304.3

Submitted by: William E. Greene, Lay Member, Central Church, Asheville

Conference Action: None; objection to consideration sustained

PETITION 23 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Retain ¶ 341.6

Submitted by: William E. Greene, Lay Member, Central Church, Asheville

Conference Action: None; objection to consideration sustained

PETITION 24 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Retain Sentences of ¶ 806.9
Submitted by: William E. Greene, Lay Member, Central Church, Asheville
Conference Action: None; objection to consideration sustained

PETITION 25 Subject: Support for Judicial Council Decision 1032
Submitted by: William E. Greene, Lay Member, Central Church, Asheville
Conference Action: Did not adopt petition

PETITION 26 Subject: Protecting Children from Mercury-Containing Drugs
Submitted by: Monica L. Humpal, Minister of Education, and Beth Fields, Lay Member, Huntersville Church, Huntersville

Text: Whereas, As indicated in its Social Principles, The United Methodist Church affirms:

It is imperative...that governments and the medical profession carefully enforce the requirements of the prevailing medical research standard, maintaining rigid controls in testing new technologies and drugs utilizing human beings. The standard requires that those engaged in research shall use human beings as research subjects only after obtaining full, rational, and uncoerced consent (*Discipline*, ¶ 162L).

And,

We encourage wise policies relating to the availability of potentially beneficial or potentially damaging prescription and over-the-counter drugs; we urge that complete information about their use and misuse be readily available to both doctor and patient (*Discipline*, ¶ 162J); and

Whereas, Mercury, a known poison, is the second most toxic element on earth, after plutonium; and

Whereas, Thimerosal (synonyms include Thiomsenal, Merthiolate, Thimerasol) is a severely toxic organic mercury compound (approximately 50% mercury by weight) that has been added to some vaccines and pharmaceutical products since the 1930s; and

Whereas, There are some presently marketed vaccines and pharmaceutical products that use safe, effective, and economical methods to eliminate the need for Thimerosal (mercury) preservatives; and

Whereas, Despite numerous peer-reviewed scientific/medical studies published over many decades, at least since the 1940s, that have recommended removing or restricting the use of Thimerosal in medicinal products, the recommendation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1982 that Thimerosal be banned from topical over-the-counter products, and calls for its removal from all childhood vaccines by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and United States Public Health Service in July of 1999 and by the Institute of Medicine of the United States National Academy of Sciences in 2001, Thimerosal (mercury) still remains in some vaccines (including childhood vaccines and the flu shot), and many other pharmaceutical products; and

Whereas, The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the State of California has officially declared that Thimerosal is a developmental toxin, meaning that it can cause birth defects, low birth weight, biological dysfunctions, or psychological or behavior deficits that become manifest as the child grows, and that maternal exposure during pregnancy can disrupt the development or even cause the death of the fetus, and the State of California has banned administration of Thimerosal-containing vaccines to children and pregnant women; and

Whereas, The Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, Government Reform Committee, United States House of Representatives, following a three-year investigation into Thimerosal, issued a report, *Mercury in Medicine*, on May 21, 2003, that concluded [emphasis added]:

Mercury is hazardous to humans. Its use in medicinal products is undesirable, unnecessary and should be minimized or eliminated... Manufacturers of vaccines and Thimerosal have never conducted adequate testing on the safety of Thimerosal. The FDA has never required manufacturers to conduct adequate safety testing on Thimerosal... Studies and papers documenting the hyperallergenicity and toxicity of Thimerosal (ethylmercury) have existed for decades.

And,

Whereas, Counsel Scott Bloch of the United States Office of Special Counsel (OSC) has called for a Congressional inquiry into the use of Thimerosal in vaccines and published on May 20, 2004 [emphasis added]:

I have recently received hundreds of disclosures from private citizens alleging a widespread danger to the public health, specifically infants and toddlers, caused by childhood vaccines which include Thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative... **I hasten to add, however, that based on the publicly available information as discussed briefly below, it appears there may be sufficient evidence to find a substantial likelihood of a substantial and specific danger to public health caused by the use of Thimerosal/mercury in vaccines because of its inherent toxicity.**

And

Whereas, Pregnant women and children are advised not to consume excessive levels of fish due to possible mercury exposure, yet are given no opportunity of informed consent as they incur comparable or greater levels of mercury exposure through mandated injections and from many other pharmaceutical products; and

Whereas, The Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom have already removed Thimerosal (mercury) from their pediatric immunizations, citing, among other things, the risk of Thimerosal-induced autism; and

Whereas, The mercury content of vaccines intended for use in developing nations, as well as those vaccines manufactured there, has not been reduced and remains well in excess of Federal Safety Guidelines; and

Whereas, It is a violation of the sanctity of human life to inject poison into any being, especially a pregnant woman or a newborn baby; and

Whereas, John Wesley modeled a faith lived out in good works and advocated for social justice and the reform of the nation and the spread of scriptural holiness across the land; and

Whereas, Jesus Christ told his disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for to such as these belongs the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16); therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby call upon the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to come quickly to the protection of the people, especially the unborn and the children, by:

- **Immediately** advocating that mercury-free stocks of vaccines and other pharmaceutical products be prioritized for pregnant women, newborn infants, and children,
- Providing an opportunity of informed consent to individuals about to receive mercury exposure through their drugs/pharmaceutical products/biologics/vaccines, detailing the known risks of its toxicity and Federal Safety Guidelines for Exposure to mercury,
- Moving to ban the presence of any mercury compound in a drug/pharmaceutical product/biologic/vaccine, prescribed or over-the-counter, **unless** the presence of that mercury compound has been proven clinically to have **no** adverse effects.

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference refer this resolution to the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society for further action, the Interfaith Center for Public Policy for further action, and the Council of Bishops for their examination.

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference direct that a copy of this resolution be sent to George W. Bush, President of the United States of America; Mike O. Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services; Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control; Dr. Lester Crawford, acting commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Dr. Jesse L. Goodman, director of the FDA's Center for Biologic Research and Development (CBER); Dr. William Egan, deputy director of the Office of Vaccine Research and Review (OVR) in CBER; Dr. Marie McCormick, former chair of the Institute of Medicine; and Michael Easley, Governor of North Carolina.

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 27 Subject: Single-Payer Universal Health Care

Submitted by: Fifty-three Members of Local Churches of the Asheville, Charlotte, Marion, North Wilkesboro, and Waynesville Districts

Conference Action: Did not adopt petition

PETITION 28 Subject: Amend ¶ 14

Submitted by: Fifty Members of Local Churches of the Asheville, Charlotte, Marion, North Wilkesboro, and Waynesville Districts

Conference Action: Did not adopt petition

PETITION 29 Subject: The Iraq War

Submitted by: Fifty-two Members of Local Churches of the Asheville, Charlotte, Marion, North Wilkesboro, and Waynesville Districts

Conference Action: None; did not deal with petition

PETITION 30 Subject: Amend ¶ 341.6

Submitted by: Lynn Holaday, Lay Member, Deerfield Church, Boone

Text: Whereas, Paragraph 341.6 of *The Book of Discipline* does not permit our ministers to conduct ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions but does not forbid their participation in such ceremonies; and

Whereas, Any participation in these ceremonies by our ministers would misrepresent the position of The United Methodist Church; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Annual Conference petition the 2008 General Conference to amend ¶ 341.6 of *The Book of Discipline* as follows;

6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be ~~conducted~~ **participated in** by our ministers **in any way** and shall not be conducted in our churches.

Conference Action: Adopted petition, with adjusted language proposed by original petitioner

PETITION 31 Subject: Trustees of Duke University

Submitted by: Board of Trustees, Duke University

Text: See the nomination of Duke University trustees in the report of the Council on Higher Education Ministries (Sec. VIII.D, p. 245).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 32 Subject: Sustainability Study

Submitted by: Committee on Church and Society

Text: See the proposal on this subject in the report of the Committee on Church and Society (Sec. VIII.B.3.f, p. 238).

Conference Action: Adopted petition, with adjusted language as proposed by original petitioners

PETITION 33 Subject: Rural Life Sunday

Submitted by: Randy L. Wall, Chairperson, WNCN United Methodist Rural Fellowship

Text: Whereas, Paragraph 266.3 of *The Book of Discipline* (2004) states that:

Rural Life Sunday shall be observed on a date to be determined by the annual conference.

Rural Life Sunday shall call the Church to celebrate the rural heritage of The United Methodist Church, to recognize the ongoing crisis occurring in rural areas of the nation and world today, and to affirm the interdependence of rural and urban communities. The observance of Rural Life Sunday shall be under the general supervision of the General Board of Global Ministries. Anyone who desires to recommend a Rural Life Sunday theme for a given year for this Sunday may do so one year prior to the observance for which the recommendation is made. Recommendations are to be made to the General Board of Global Ministries, and the voting members of the board shall determine the annual theme of this Sunday;

and

Whereas, The rural crisis has led many rural residents of our country to suffer the loss of self-esteem and their way of life, due to the closure of farms, businesses, schools, and health-care facilities; and

Whereas, North Carolina alone has lost more than 6,000 farms and 300,000 acres of farmland since 2002,

resulting in a great loss of food production and jobs; and

Whereas, The state of North Carolina continues to suffer the loss of rural and open land; and

Whereas, The good citizens of North Carolina in rural and urban areas face growing environmental concerns about the quality of our land, water, and air, due to what is commonly called "urban sprawl"; and

Whereas, Rural Life Sunday has traditionally promoted themes related to health and wholeness, conservation, and stewardship of our natural resources; and

Whereas, *The Book of Discipline* gives authority to the annual conference to set Rural Life Sunday on the date best for the annual conference; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church designate the sixth Sunday after Easter, or another Sunday where needed, as Rural Life Sunday in 2008; urge the clergy and laity of its member congregations to observe this day; and encourage its member congregations to utilize resources for this observance from such sources as the General Board of Global Ministries, the conference *e-News* (including downloadable bulletin inserts), the United Methodist Rural Fellowship, the Rural Chaplains Association, and county soil and water conservation offices located across the region.

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 34 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Ruling on Use of Trust Fund

Submitted by: Administrative Council, Mineral Springs Church, Mineral Springs

Text: Whereas, From Wesley until today, the longstanding Methodist stance on the problems of alcohol and other drugs has been consistent, culminating in the present-day Social Principles, which contain the statement, "We affirm our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God's liberating and redeeming love for persons" (*Discipline*, ¶ 162J); and

Whereas, The horrible consequences of the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs demand a strong response from the church; and

Whereas, In 1965, the now-extinct Board of Temperance set up a trust fund, from which all funds and proceeds were to be used exclusively on temperance and alcohol problems; and

Whereas, Paragraph 1008.2 of the *Discipline* states, "Funds vested in any of the predecessor boards shall be conserved for the specific purposes for which such funds have been given"; and

Whereas, The General Board of Church and Society has not followed either the letter of the trust or the spirit of its founders as it has expended a large portion of the funds from the trust (approximately \$2 million annually) on items and programs not in accordance with the requirements of the trust; and

Whereas, Accountability in the use of all funds should be a guiding principle within the church; and

Whereas, A request has been lodged with the Attorney General in Washington for a ruling; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Western North Carolina Conference call on the General Board of Church and Society to honor the guidelines of the *Discipline* and the purpose stated in the trust and use the restricted funds for work on temperance and alcohol-related problems.

Conference Action: Adopted petition, with substituted language as proposed by a representative of the petitioning group

PETITION 35 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Relationship of Science and Theology

Submitted by: Administrative Council, Mineral Springs Church, Mineral Springs

Text: Whereas, The General Board of Discipleship, at the express direction of the General Conference, has been engaged in meaningful dialogue and study on the relationship of science and theology; and

Whereas, As a part of this study, and in an additional petition, directing the board to bring together and publish a present-day comparative viewpoint on the origin of life, the board has published a study which outlines four possible viewpoints on this matter, entitled, "In The Beginning"; and

Whereas, In today's culture, both inside the church and outside, there exist widely different beliefs around how life began; and

Whereas, The implications surrounding this issue are foundational to our church and have profound influences on our Biblical doctrine and theology; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference petition the 2008 General Conference to direct the General Board of Discipleship to continue its ongoing dialogue on the relationship of science and theology, keeping within this study the latest input from the scientific field and theology in the matter of the origin of life.

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 36 Subject: Mental-Health Reform

Submitted by: Doris B. Hill, Lay Member, Chestnut Grove Church, King

Text: Whereas, Jesus commanded us to love one another and to stand in the gap for those who are oppressed and for the weak and sick among us, so that we must show our love for those persons with mental illness, addictive diseases, and developmental disabilities, by making sure there is adequate treatment available; and

Whereas, In 2001, the North Carolina legislature passed a mental-health reform bill that has not provided for adequate treatment services for the mentally ill, those with addictive diseases, or the developmentally disabled; and

Whereas, State mental hospitals in North Carolina have increased admittance by 80% since this bill was passed, Medicaid has limited reimbursement for services, and the service providers have stopped delivery of mental-health care to these clients in some counties; and

Whereas, Mental-health services are not offered inside each county, and the managed-care company denies treatment that is available within counties and causes the client travel long distances to be served; and

Whereas, The management of care by insurance companies is a direct conflict of interest, causing undue burdens on clients for travel; and

Whereas, The managed-care companies, sitting in offices, think they know better than the local psychiatrists and mental-health professionals about what treatment is needed; and

Whereas, The managed-care companies profit from not using the insured's benefits and using a small group of providers, which is not in the best interest of the insured; and

Whereas, There is a bill in the United States House of Representatives (Paul Wellstone Bill HR1424) which would

require insurance companies to provide parity to consumers with mental illness, addictions, and developmental disabilities; and

Whereas, There are similar bills in the North Carolina legislature, namely, the Senate Health Parity Bill (S14340) and the House Mental Health Equitable Coverage Bill (H973); therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference call upon all United Methodists of the conference to write the commissioner of insurance of the state of North Carolina and their own national and state legislators to ask them to take mental health, addictions, and developmental disabilities from managed-care review and control and to pass the Paul Wellstone Bill (HR1424), the North Carolina Senate Parity Bill (S14340), and the North Carolina House Mental Health Equitable Coverage Bill (H973).

Conference Action: Referred petition to a committee to be appointed by the bishop, which is to bring back its recommendations to the 2008 annual conference as two separate petitions:

- (1) To petition the insurance companies to provide parity to mental-health services throughout the state of North Carolina.
- (2) To develop a plan that addresses mental-health reform as being implemented in North Carolina and how we, as United Methodists, might regain our role in the social arena by helping those who are poor and oppressed and lost in mental-health reform.

PETITION 37 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Six Special Sundays Observance and Offerings

Submitted by: Frank Greenrose, Lay Member, Jonas Ridge Church, Jonas Ridge, and Robert E. Roach, Superintendent, Marion District

Text: Whereas, Paragraph 264 of *The Book of Discipline* (2004) states: "Six churchwide special Sundays with offerings shall be celebrated in each United Methodist Church...."; and

Whereas, In reality, only a relatively small percentage of United Methodist congregations actually observe all or even some of these special Sundays, much less receive offerings to support their vital ministries; and

Whereas, The Marion District offered a successful alternative, called "Opportunity Sunday," to the observance of six separate special Sunday observances/offerings in 2006, which was approved by the bishop and cabinet as a test district for such an effort; and

Whereas, This unique approach recommends the observance of One Great Hour of Sharing to continue on the fourth Sunday of Lent, because that offering for UMCOR perennially receives funding that surpasses the combined total of the other five special Sunday offerings, and then the celebration of the other five observances/offerings on World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday in October; and

Whereas, The Marion District experienced a significant increase in giving for all six offerings, with the "two-in-place-of-six" special Sundays approach in 2006; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference:

1. Petition the 2008 General Conference to amend ¶ 264 of the *Discipline* as follows:

¶ 264. Six churchwide special Sundays with offerings shall be celebrated in each United Methodist Church. **However, the church council may choose to give their congregation an opportunity to observe five of the six emphases—Human Relations Day, World Communion Sunday, United Methodist Student Day, Peace with Justice Sunday, and Native American Ministries Sunday—as Opportunity Sunday on the first Sunday of October. Offering envelopes will provide opportunity to divide gifts among the five funds. With this alternative approach, the One Great Hour of Sharing (observed on the fourth Sunday of Lent) would remain a stand-alone observance.** [Remainder of paragraph unaffected.]

2. Invite the churches and pastors of the conference to use the Opportunity Sunday approach to the support of the six mandatory special Sunday observances/offerings, if the local church is not currently observing these six Sundays with their offerings. Educational materials and offering envelopes could be inexpensively developed by local churches, districts, and/or the conference office.

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 38 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Commitment in Unity in Mission and Ministry

Submitted by: Keys S. Pendleton, Pastor, Pleasant Grove Church, Thomasville, and Member, General Board of Global Ministries Directors

Text: Whereas, The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world; and

Whereas, The Council of Bishops has expressed a vision of mission and ministry that articulates the aspirations and ministries prevalent across The United Methodist connection, and the general agencies have responded by identifying four areas of emphasis that live out the vision for the current quadrennium and beyond; and

Whereas, The spirit of collaboration and shared ministry through the Council of Bishops, the Connectional Table, the general agencies, and the annual conferences is infusing new energy and recommitment to assure vitality and effectiveness across the connection; and

Whereas, The following four areas of emphasis provide crucial avenues for shared labor and witness:

1. Leadership development, with particular focus on leading the United Methodist way of discipleship,
2. Congregational development and new church starts,
3. Ministry with the poor, with particular attention to caring for and protecting children;
4. Global health, by confronting the diseases of poverty and health-care access for all; and
5. Sound environmental stewardship, with particular focus on the issues pertaining to global warming.

therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference petition the 2008 General Conference in support of, and commitment to, these five areas of emphasis for this quadrennium.

Resolved, That we, the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, commit ourselves to:

- Work in a spirit of unity with all across the connection and with our ecumenical partners to give form to new expressions of shared mission and ministry.
- Cooperatively foster "A Future of Hope," whereby United Methodist Christians are encouraged and equipped to perform mission and ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Intentionally and collaboratively address the five emphases of leadership development, congregational development, and ministry with the poor, global health, and environmental stewardship as we prepare for General Conference 2008 and in planning and budgeting for mission and ministry in 2009-2012.

Resolved, That each church in the Western North Carolina Conference be encouraged to prepare its budget and planning process to be in support of these ministries in 2009-2012.

Conference Action: Adopted petition, with amendments offered from the floor

PETITION 39 Subject: Camp Tekoa Trustees

Submitted by: Camp Tekoa Board of Trustees

Text: The Board of Trustees of Camp Tekoa proposes that the following persons be confirmed as members of that board:

Class of 2007: Jimmy Dowless, Ruth Hoyle, Emily New, Tom Patton, Elizabeth Crenshaw Rosenbaum.

Class of 2008: Shelton Dunn Davis, Brian E. Combs, A. Maria Edmonds, David Moore.

Class of 2009: Roland T. Barnhardt, David Speer, Candis Walker, Tim Walker.

Class of 2010: D. Michael Jordan, Daniel J. Lyons, Donald A. Newman, Charlotte Miller, Jerry Smith.

Youth Representative: Stephanie Langefeld.

Life Member: Bill King (non-voting).

Conference Action: Adopted petition

PETITION 40 Subject: Petition to General Conference: Witness Ministry Coordinators

Submitted by: Nancy Burgin Rankin, Conference Director of Congregational Development and Witness

Text: Whereas, Christ's Great Commission declares that we are to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20a); and

Whereas, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* states, "The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God" (§ 202); and

Whereas, *The Discipline* states, "The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; Lay Speaking Ministries; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ" (§ 252.2c); and

Whereas, The current church council structure of our *Discipline* places witness ministries as a part of the "nurture, outreach, and witness ministries"; and

Whereas, Many churches must attest that their nurture and outreach ministries far exceed the involvement and productivity of their witness ministries; and

Whereas, Witness ministry is the very reason for the existence of the church of Jesus Christ; and

Whereas, Having a witness coordinator in every area of the church's life and ministry, locally and beyond, will help in making the reaching and discipling of people for Christ the very heartbeat of all we do in Christ's name; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Western North Carolina Conference petition the 2008 General Conference to amend the following paragraphs of *The Book of Discipline* as indicated:

¶ 244. Organization—The basic organizational plan for the local church.... Each local congregation shall provide a comprehensive program of nurture, outreach, and witness, along with leadership training, and the planning and administration of the congregation's organizational and temporal life, in accordance with the mission of The United Methodist Church (see ¶¶ 120-124). **Where church size permits, a coordinator of witness ministries shall be elected by each local church and shall serve as a member of the charge conference and the church council and shall coordinate the work of those designated as coordinators of witness ministries in the other boards, committees, work areas, commissions, and councils of the church (see ¶ 252.5). In churches with few members, an existing officer may be designated as coordinator of witness ministries.**

¶ 252.2c The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; Lay Speaking Ministries; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ. **Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the church shall designate one of its members to work with the coordinator of witness ministries (see ¶¶ 244, 252.5c) as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the groups of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"**

¶ 252.5. Membership [of the church council] Insert a new item "c" and re-letter the section as necessary:

c) the coordinator of witness ministries;

¶ 527. [Jurisdictional] Agencies—The jurisdictional conference (See ¶ 710.9a-c). **Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the jurisdiction shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the agencies of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"**

¶ 547. [Central] Conference Agencies Add a new item 5:

5. Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the central conference shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the agencies of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and,

in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"

¶ 609. The annual conference is responsible ... in the annual conference. **Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the annual conference shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the groups of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"**

¶ 659. Each district of an annual conference ... of The United Methodist Church. **Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the district shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the groups of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"**

¶ 701. [General-Church Agencies] Add a new .3:

3. Every board, standing committee, commission, council, and work area of the general church as defined in this paragraph shall designate one of its members as its coordinator of witness ministries. These persons shall help the agencies of which they are members to engage in witness ministries and, in particular, to ask, "How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?" and "How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?"

Conference Action: Adopted petition, with two amendments offered from the floor.