The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, a daughter of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, was elected as a bishop in The United Methodist Church on July 13 at the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

“My heart is so full,” said the bishop-elect as she stood at the podium. “I don’t have the words. All I can say is glory, hallelujah!”

Holding her husband’s hand – the Rev. Rafael Koikoi serves Sharp Street Memorial in Baltimore – Moore-Koikoi said that she knows being elected is a sacred trust. “I’m gonna need your prayers so that I can fulfill that trust,” she said. “I give each of you permission to pull me aside when I might be going astray. God spoke through you tonight, and that’s going to continue.”

Moore-Koikoi said that as a bishop, her job will be to point out places where she sees God at work. She mentioned two examples, including a singing group she was once in called “Tapestry.”

“Sometimes, God took all of the single chords and wove them together into something spectacular,” she said. “We need to show the world that God is more than just a...”
"Lead Like a Woman Not Like a Girl"

The Board of Ordained Ministry is calling to make history. We are called to stitch together all the pieces of the breach, restorers of streets to live in.” (Isa. 58:12).

We’re got to invest in the potential of the seed, and take time to nurture it, even before it gets large enough to do anything impressive at all.

As children “learn what they live,” a seed, at least most of the time, sprouts and grows as it is sown.

While those boys were out in the fields, in my imagination, there was other holy work going on. Perhaps a mother or a grandmother inside, stitching patches onto bitties or sewing quilt pieces together. In that work, she didn’t ask the patches or the pieces how they felt about the whole thing.

She worked with sharp eye and practiced hand to mend what was broken and to make scraps and pieces into one strong seam, or a warm covering for someone’s bed at night.

Our God is a sower and a sewer too. In Christ, we are called to sowed and sewed well. We the people, all the people, are sewn together and it is our problem.

Our nation is sewn together. Like every American flag that stitches together 50 stars and 13 stripes, we as a people are sewn together. No matter what we have sown in the past, we are now sewn together with a common future.

We the people, all the people, are sewn together and it will be the people, sewn together, that must begin to sow now the seeds of a better, brighter future for all of us. We must do this to repent of the things that were sown into our land. We must do this to continue in be sewn together. We must do this so that the next generation will not be faced with the same “whys” that we face today.
Easterling: New bishop comes with joy

From page 1

Jesus the Christ.”

The bishop, along with her husband, Marion, stood in the middle of a circle of BWCV clergy and laity gathered at the hotel.

“I am who you call a ‘baby bishop,’” Easterling said. “I am going to offer you the very best of myself. I hope that, as I’m learning, that if I misstep here or have a little problem there, you will offer me the grace to allow me to grow into the fullness, the full weight of this leadership position with you.

“And I will offer you grace,” she continued, “that will be necessary as we learn to walk this journey together.”

Easterling, who was the first female pastor of the last church she served in the New England Conference, said, “this is the first time in the history of not just the Northeast Jurisdiction, but the history of The United Methodist Church, that two African American females were elected together.”

The bar has been set high for us, she said, “and we have to keep making history. Do not think that it is lost on me that this is the strongest conference in the Northeast Jurisdiction. But God wants to take us higher and further. I am ready, with you, to run on to see what the end shall be.”

The new bishop was given gifts from the BWCV’s Episcopacy Committee and Episcopal Office staff, including a new, pre-loaded iPad with transition information about the conference.

Easterling most recently served as superintendent of the Metro Boston Hope District and was named dean of the Cabinet in June.

In introducing his newest colleague on the United Methodist Council of Bishops, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar called Easterling “a prophetess, a pastor who leads the church from her spiritual center, and above all, a beloved sister in Christ who always, always has a passion for the marginalized.”

Easterling told the member conferences of the Northeastern Jurisdiction that no matter where it is, “If God sends me there, I will never look back.”

“I always, always, always stand on the side of justice,” she said, and her peers asked what she was doing as she moved toward the front. “There was a hand that guided me down that aisle and I gave my life to Jesus Christ and I have never looked back.”

Easterling admitted that she “tried to run” from the call to ministry, “but God was faithful,” and for five days woke her at 3:33 a.m. to say: “Preach My Word.”

She said the Scripture that has carried her through the worst times is Ephesians 3:20 and Colossians 1:28, and comparing her gifts as a preacher, she said:

“Beloved, we got some horses we got to run with, because we have work to do. We have to come out of the safe places and get into the thickest that means we're gonna get bruised, that means we're going to get pricked, that means we’re going to bleed, but in the name of Jesus …”

Easterling was ordained a Deacon in 1993 and an Elder two years later. She graduated from the Boston University School of Theology summa cum laude in 2004.

She was a delegate to General Conference in 2011 and 2016, and served on the NEU’s Multi-Ethnic Center Board. She also served on the conference board of ordained ministry.

Easterling earned her bachelor's degree at Indiana University, and her law degree from the university’s School of Law. Before entering full-time ministry, she worked as a mediator and as a Human Resources Manager and Director. She is married to the Rev. Marion Easterling Jr., the pastor of Parkway UMC in Milton, Massachusetts. They are the parents of two sons, Garrett Walter and Miles Teronza.

When asked during the interviews about inclusivity, Easterling said, “I know what it feels like to be excluded. I know what it feels like to be present but ignored.”

But getting to know one another can change that, she said.

“Once we get to know each other, it’s almost impossible to hate, it’s almost impossible to continue excluding, it’s almost impossible to remain where you were. We are changed when we hear one another’s story.”

Beth DeCario, director of communications for the New England Conference, contributed to this story.

Moore-Koikoi: Called to authentic leadership

From page 1

The new bishop served as superintendent of the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan District immediately before her election, where she played a pivotal spiritual role in the city following the unrest in 2015 around the death of Freddie Gray while he was in police custody.

The daughter of a retired United Methodist pastor, she grew up in the church, worked for 27 years as a school psychologist, and was ordained as an Elder in 2010. She has served as a student pastor at St. Matthews UMC in Highlandtown; an associate pastor at Calvary UMC in Annapolis; a Discipler Guide, resourcing local churches; and as a superintendent of the Greater Washington and Baltimore Metropolitan districts.

She also serves as chair of the conference’s United Funding Task Force, which oversees loans and grants, and as the Cabinet’s spiritual director.

Moore-Koikoi sees herself, she said, “as a bridge-builder,” clear and confident about what she believes, while also respecting others who might not believe the same way.

Growing up as an African-American woman in an often discriminatory culture and church, Moore-Koikoi believes she has a unique voice.

“As a woman of color, I have learned the gift of perseverance,” she said, “being able to hold onto hope in the midst of oppression.”

“Our denomination needs that,” said Moore-Koikoi. “As our peoples become more enmeshed, as we experience more financial difficulties, we have to hold out hope. I’ve had to use my spiritual eyes.”

Her vision is one of a diverse church that embraces justice and the life-saving love of Christ.

When she was a child, she listened to her preacher father. He taught her the 1595 Psalm, “especially the beautifully and wonderfully made part.”

As a new bishop, it’s a vision of the church she’s committed to work for. It won’t be easy, and the “awesome responsibility” has her feeling a little scared.

“But I remind myself, God has got this. God is in control,” she said. “My role and the church’s role is to experience the reign of God here on earth and point that out to people.”

Bishop Moore-Koikoi was appointed to serve the Pittsburg Episcopal Area, which includes the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

The daughter of a retired United Methodist pastor, she grew up in the church, worked for 27 years as a school psychologist, and was ordained as an Elder in 2010. She has served as a student pastor at St. Matthews UMC in Highlandtown; an associate pastor at Calvary UMC in Annapolis; a Discipler Guide, resourcing local churches; and as a superintendent of the Greater Washington and Baltimore Metropolitan districts.

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Looking back, how would you describe yourself as a bishop?

I see myself as a program-centered bishop. I tend to get more energy when people are doing something, doing mission, doing programs. I can deal with administration, which comes to me in a natural way. But I get really high off of a seeing people put their faith into action.

For me, ministry is about building relationships. I feel that in order for us to continue to move this church forward, we have to first build relationships. What I've discovered is once you build a relationship with a group, then that moves you to a trust level, that moves you to a place you can do some things that you never thought you would do.

You've mentioned that Psalm 23 has great meaning for you. How, during your time as a bishop, has that verse influenced you?

I think mainly because I really do trust. On the night of the celebration of my ministry at annual conference, Bishop May said something that hit me – that I am a person of hope. I firmly believe that God is with me. Because God leads me, there's that hope always present even in the lowest moments. When I think that I'm down in the valley, there's that hope. If I didn't have that hope, I don't think life would have any meaning.

Does that thought transfer into the way you want the church to be? Have you helped to create a church with hope?

I'm always hopeful about the church. I believe we can do anything we want to. I think, for example, about how when the BWC first started its partnership with Zimbabwe, it was taboo for people to talk about AIDS. It was hush-hush, there were no signs, no education, none of that. But the church made a difference and found a way forward. Today, there are even billboards put up about it, there is education, and infection rates have dramatically dropped. And so, that's brought me hope. It's that hope that makes me know we'll find the best way to globally address the issue of homosexuality. We will find the path forward.

I also think of our conference's partnership with Zimbabwe. It's unbelievable the large number of people who have been involved since the issues in many more ways than I would have imagined. I was always hopeful that it would catch on. We started small. It was a dream. That's how life is. Life starts with dreams. Life starts with expectations. Someone took time to care about me when I was young, that's why I'm in the church. I can do no less. When I was very, very little, clergy and laypersons made space for me to be involved in the church. They helped me, they assisted me, they corrected me. I've always been persuaded I need to pay back.

The inclusion of young people in the church has been a priority for you. What words do you have to offer them?

There was a time when people were saying, “Okay, we've done it; we've got that done.” And so hope is just in my DNA. This, you can do that.” And so hope is just in my DNA.

In our conference and in our denomination, there was a point between the 70s and the 80s, in which we were on the cutting edge of inclusiveness and diversity. People from different denominations were trying to model us. We had started GCORR and other groups. But I think somewhere along the journey, we became comfortable. I think we thought we had accomplished our task. There are folks who are saying, “Okay, we've done something about a place that sounds easy need to be relevant. But I also think we lower our expectations of young people. Of meaning, of significance, that they can think we need to be apologetic about it.

Tell me about how, over the past 42 ye, God have changed? How are you different now? I've been profoundly changed by the journey of working with young people. I think people can go back home again. I always like to say, “it's the way you leave home that determines whether you return home.” Barbara and I met 32 years ago in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, 18 of which I sat around the Cabinet table as a superintendent and council director, were actually good years in the life of the conference. We were graciously welcomed back and been gone for only eight years, it wasn't like starting from zero.

I think, if there was a low point, for me, it was knowing the persons who faced illness or death. It was emotional, because I knew the people, some of them for all my ministry, and was close to many of them. So if there were any low moments coming home, it was around that issue.

The church made a difference and found a way forward. Today, there are wonderful efforts going on. They helped me, they assisted me, they corrected me. I've always been persuaded I need to pay back.

When I was growing up, Methodists went to Methodist churches. Today, people either go to the church that meets their needs or they hear something about a place that sounds easy need to be relevant. But I also think we lower our expectations of young people. Of meaning, of significance, that they can think we need to be apologetic about it.

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Matthews as he prepares to retire

A conversation with Bishop Matthews as he prepares to retire

12 years of ministry, your ideas about different today, spiritually, then you
people that I meet. And so, I would say
as if I have grown and been exposed to
the world. It’s become less complicated. He faces of others.

7, in the area of mission and ministry, at you’re still looking forward to?
did not take enough time to sit down
ways to. I’m committed to
to do. I have also not written my story
there are some things in my story
pretiyly to young people.

one that because I am a bishop; that

that, we’re inclusive.”
We may be inclusive at the
General Church level. But when
you get to where the rubber
hits the road, which is the
local churches, I think we have
not done a good job. That is a
troubling thing for me to leave.
Although I think we have a good
number of what I would consider
to be diverse congregations, we
still don’t have enough. We have
no work at that. We still need to
find ways in which we can make
differences so that the it’s a
look to not be the most segregated
in America.

What kind of things have you done, during the past four years, but also
during your entire ministry, that you look back upon as highlights?
What will your legacy be?
Well, outside of the prayer piece, I’ve been thinking about this... stship. I’ve always enjoyed having that as part of my ministry for some
reason. It probably started in my second appointment at Jones Memorial.
I followed a pastor who was known as someone who got churches to do
things financially. I was kind of thrust into this expectation. I was told they
wanted to build a sanctuary. And I realized we didn’t have all the income.
The blessing came during those very same years. The General Board of
Discipleship was looking for people to be, what they called, Stewardship
Associates. I became one and was able to apply those gifts and those skills to
my local churches.

What kind of enjoyed was stship education; but not from the
sense of hitting people over the head with “give, give, give,” but looking at
our stship as a spiritual issue, and not necessarily just the dollars. That
I thoroughly enjoyed. As a matter of fact, my DMin was kind of on that
area, dealing with the spirituality of stship, that whole piece.
As I look back over my time as a bishop in the Eastern Pennsylvania
Conference, they were weak in stship. When I got there they were
in the bottom five in terms of General Church giving. I used to do
stship workshops as a bishop in that conference and I thoroughly
enjoyed it. When I would stand, people would tell me, “oh, they’re going
to beat you up on that, they don’t want the bishop telling them about their
money.” But those sessions became like revival services. They became a
platform for preaching. It was a teaching moment but it was also a moment
for them to see that stship wasn’t about me scolding people. It was
something to look at it spiritually – why do we give?

This year, the BWG reached a 15-year high in apportionment giving. I think
this reflects well on our stship, Baltimore-Washington has always been
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kind of strong dollar-wise, but we still need to be working at our spirituality.

What about Barbara, your wife? How has she been having her as a partner throughout this ministry?
She’s been pretty steady. She’s been there as a presence when I need

Every time you’re with a group, you seem to say,
“thank you.” What words of thanks or gratitude
would you want to share with the people of the
conference?
I say that, the thank you, because I don’t think
people hear it enough. I don’t think that we affirm
what people do enough. What I’ve discovered is that
something as simple as saying thank you to a group,
thank you to an individual, the blessings you get in
return are just unbelievable. What it does is it makes
people think they can do something that they may
don’t have thought of doing. It’s a simple two words,
but it tends to lift people in an unexpected way. I’ve
discovered. Even the people who don’t want to hear it,
it kind of calms the spirit, makes them a little bit more
gentle.

As you leave, are there things you’re grateful for?
I’m grateful for the people who have been in my
life. I’m grateful that God gave me these experiences. I
never thought I would have the adventures that I have gone on. The things
I’ve seen, the people I’ve met, the experiences, the challenges have all been
blessings.

In the big picture, when you look back over your ministry, what do you
hope your legacy will be? Can you share one or two things?
One or two things? That I tried to be an encourager, to help others to
reach their potential. I guess this may be kind of similar, I would say I was a
leader, but I was a leader who believed in sharing in the vision and decision-
making process with the people I led. I also believe in bringing other leaders
along with me.

I just simply love, I love people, but I have a high expectation of people
and my high expectations push people to do what they thought they
couldn’t do. I think if you have low expectations as a leader, you get low
results. So, I had high expectations of our conference. With Imagine No
Malaysia, for example, I had high expectations and we reached our goal of
$1.1 million. Because at least for me, if you don’t believe it, it just doesn’t
happen. I just have to believe it, feel it and know that God will help me get
it through.

As you prepare to leave, what’s your prayer for the people of the
conference?
I pray that the people will keep building relationships among themselves,
that the conference does not go back to being isolated into theological
camps, but that we always look at what we have in common and we start
from there. Our starting point is always Jesus Christ and our mission,
regardless of where we stand, is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the
transformation of the world.

I firmly believe there is room enough for all of us at the table. But I think
as an annual conference if we ever get caught kiting political ideologies

I think the hot button issue right now is human sexuality. The reality
is that there are LGBT persons in our homes, our churches and our
communities. The issue is how do we determine how we live together. I
think we can. Most of this is simply we’ve isolated ourselves, we’ve built
up walls. We have to talk to each other. Until you know me, you’re not going
to trust me.

As always, it goes back again to relationships. Until I have broken bread
with you and sat at table with you, or looked at you eye-to-eye, it’s hard for
me to feel your pain and begin to try to live into what you’re experiencing.
We are the church. I pray we live, in our sanctuaries and the world, as
beloved children of God.
NEJ calls to end church’s ‘discrimination’

By Erik Alsagaard & Maidstone Mulenga
UMConnection Staff

The Northeastern Jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church approved a restructuring resolution recommending the bishops’ study commission on sexuality include a plan to allow regional bodies, such as jurisdictions, to decide for themselves to adapt the Book of Discipline within their own ministry context.

On July 8, the youth of Sandy Mount UMC in Efland hosted a meal packing event in conjunction with Willet Missions and Stop Hunger Now. They joined in prayer and planted 49 rainbow flags in honor of each one murdered in the Pulse Nightclub, largely frequented by LGBTQ young adults.

On July 8, the youth of Sandy Mount UMC in Efland hosted a meal packing event in conjunction with Willet Missions and Stop Hunger Now. More than 10,500 meals were packed by a group of over 60 volunteers. Soy, rice, vitamins and dehydrated vegetables were measured, poured, weighed, sealed and packed in boxes. The goal of Stop Hunger Now is to provide daily nutrition to the hungry.

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Resolved, however, the resolution calling for the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church to stop church trials was deemed out of order before debate began by Bishop Thomas Bickerton, who was chairing the session. But he said he would allow the debate to continue to consider possible amendments that could make it in order.

Bickerton explained that the College had reviewed the resolution and that it needed to be more “aspirational” in nature. As printed, he said, it called for bishops to violate the resolution and that it needed to be more “aspirational” in that could make it in order.

After the final vote to approve the “Stop the Trials” resolution, Bickerton declared the motion out of order. “I can’t remember having a conversation at Jurisdictional Conference on this level,” he said. “The College felt it was important not to squelch this conversation. We recognize that there is pain around the issue. We acknowledge that in this room there are a variety of opinions. All of our hearts ache as we struggle. Regrettably, I must call this petition out of order, and we’ll move on.”

But after a discussion on the non-comformity resolution, the “Stop the Trials” petition was re-visited. Bickerton said the College of Bishops was aware that the United Methodist Judicial Council reviews petitions in their entirety. “We have looked at the ‘Stop the Trials’ resolution as it was amended,” he said. “Our finding is that the title is not compatible with the content of the present, and that if a motion is made to amend the title, the petition is properly in order.”

A motion to “strike the title” was made and approved, 111-53, allowing the final version of the resolution to be adopted.

However, Jeffrey Raaff of Eastern Pennsylvania made a motion for a decision of law regarding the “united” resolution, asking whether the approved resolution was in order regarding paragraphs 20, 521 and 525 of the Book of Discipline and the Judicial Council Decision 96 and 886. Bishop Mark Webb, who was presiding at that time, said he would issue a ruling within 30 days.

Bishop Peggy Johnson, supported by Bishop John Schol, initially ruled the petition on “non-comformity” out of order because it was calling for the jurisdiction’s annual conferences to not conform or comply with provisions of the Discipline that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and sexual persons. It also asked that the jurisdiction not participate in or conduct judicial procedures related to those prohibitions.

When Johnson ruled the resolution out of order after it passed, as amended, 91-74, some delegates invited the bishops to consider being out of order with them.

Vicky Flippin, New York Conference, was one of those delegates. After thanking the college for allowing the jurisdiction to have a time of sacred conversation, she urged the bishops to take a bold stance and join in non-conformity.

Johnson replied that the College of Bishops would, in fact, receive the invitation and have a conversation. She said that they would get back to the full body before the end of the conference.

“When Bishops Johnson and Schol returned to the stage following the dinner break, the College had not accepted the conference’s invitation. ‘We know that we are all not of one mind,’ said Johnson. ‘We honor the work of the body, where 60 percent were in favor of this,’ said Schol. ‘And, we also honor the 40 percent who disagreed.’

Dorothee Bena, New York Conference, then issued an appeal of the chair, seeking to have the resolution declared “in order.”

To help understand the parliamentary situation the jurisdiction found itself in, Schol spoke off-the-cuff from the podium. ‘We are all struggling,’ he said. ‘We recognize that there are annual conferences and individuals who have very different views of the Book of Discipline.’ Noting that the vote to maintain the current disciplinary language at General Conference is about the reverse of what it is in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, Schol said that the bishops are charged with looking at this issue from both places.

The vote to uphold the decision of the chair was affirmed by a vote of 94 to 73, which meant the non-comformity resolution remained out of order.
Bishops issue statement to address racism

A Statement By The NEJ College of Bishops

A W E gather for this jurisdictional Conference because many persons have been confronted and consumed with the overwhelming reports of shootings and violence. Life takes! Trust broken! Anger and fear growing! Precipitation and a looming. We believe that God’s heart breaks as our hearts break with these acts of violence – fed and complicated by fear, prejudice, racism and privilege. We pray for each family and each community affected by the profound loss and grief. We pray for the ripple effects of these acts of violence that strip away certainty of safety, sanctuary, value and trust.

The death of young black men in encounters with white law enforcement officers calls for response. The loss of life within our Hispanic/Latino community and among our brothers and sisters identifying with the LGBTQ community in Orlando, calls for response. The death of a police officer in Dallas, calls for response. The death of police officers protecting the rights of persons to peaceably protest, points to a destructive cycle of violence and retribution and calls for response.

We, the College of Bishops of the Northeastern Jurisdiction stand together to respond, and our response is rooted in the church’s roots as a movement! Our response is a commitment to acknowledge our participation in the sin of institutional racism and to have ongoing conversations within the College and beyond. Our response is to give leadership and develop plans to continue these conversations within and among the jurisdictions and the church the annual General Conferences to which we are assigned. The purpose of these dialogues will be to talk about our own racism and prejudices, to heal the wounds that have been caused by racism, privilege and oppression, to train our leadership and churches in intercultural competency, and lead them to celebrate diversity. We will lead and offer training for leaders in the craft of building bridges across cultures and ethnicity so that all whom we profess to acknowledge as made in the image of God and persons of sacred worth, will truly feel welcomed and find the safety, sanctuary, value and trust these recent and ongoing acts of violence have robbed from them. We in the church will hold one another accountable for this action, reporting to our Conferences at their annual sessions and providing a report to the 2016 Jurisdictional Conference. At the jurisdictional level we will partner with the Multi-ethnic Community and the Vision Table in our ongoing response.

Together, we the College of Bishops of the Northeastern Jurisdiction commit ourselves to caring for persons affected by the death of police officers and the death of police officers protecting the rights of persons to peaceably protest. To the extent that the death of police officers can be considered in the context of acts of violence that are fed and complicated by racism and privilege, we will also consider the procedures and policies that contributed to these deaths. We will work in collaboration with the appropriate agencies to improve the handling of situations that may lead to the use of force and to determine whether new policies and procedures are needed.

Third, what does it mean to be inclusive?

We used to retreat from inclusiveness. In an attempt to be inclusive, the General Church uses the formula of proportional participation based on numbers of conferences as the only criterion for representation.

In the U.S., for more than 40 years, we prided ourselves on an inclusiveness model based on diversity of language, ethnicity, culture and geography — not numbers. The ramifications are major. Left off the table of decision-making are large segments of the denomination, who lack large numbers but often bring unique and differing perspectives.

Meanwhile, small churches in rural or impoverished areas of the U.S. are expected to give sacrificially in order to support a global church, which may in turn set priorities and make the decisions for their ministry without their involvement.

Perhaps we need to review what a board might need to be from a global perspective and possibly have sub-committees working regionally.

Fourth, Autonomy versus Accountability

Many American churches are deeply involved in mission and support, but they do not always find that the funds raised for Africa are used appropriately.

In a few instances, some of the newer conferences have serious financial issues. In at least one conference in Africa, even GCFA and GBGM, after several audits, are unable to gain restitution for misused funds or accountability of hundreds of thousands of dollars given by U.S. churches. There seems to be no Disciplinary process for global accountability. Can we be global if part of the church is not accountable?

A similar concern is assessing membership statistics are accurate. How can we be assured that such statistics are valid without the resources and personnel to implement a membership audit? When I visited Africa, I had no doubt that the church was growing rapidly. However, even I knew the names of, many of the attendees. The pastor estimated the number present in what we used to call “a preacher’s count.” However, the General Church is using these soft statistics to determine representation on boards, agencies, committees and even the General Conference. I would hope that GBGM would offer a membership audit before 2020 to assure correct representation, before the implementation of new areas and the fair distribution of resources.

Fifth, how do we address cultural diversity?

To be a global church is to understand that the cultural and governmental systems are very different in a given continent. How does a global church fairly relate to multiple cultural and political styles and issues in its Social Principles or publications?

While I lift up a number of questions, my greater concern is that we are not addressing realistically how to be a truly global church. Diversity is important in the United Methodist Church, and Methodism Council, or regional bodies with some kind of semi-autonomy? Even the proposed Global Discipline is limited in scope. I would suggest that any Social Principles need to be concerned with the geographical/social/political climate to which it is addressed.

I am certain that absolute solutions will not be found in legislative action. We need to seek a methodology of living together in a diverse world and a diverse church. We might also help to study church history, and how the church has survived and thrived under different divisions of theology, culture, and race. And, as we await what the Lord will do, let us pray that all may be one in Christ Jesus.
During a moment in the plenary session, when parliamentary procedure and strict adherence to the Discipline seemed to be carrying the day, a young adult stood and asked the members to reclaim the “fire.” The BWC’s youth representatives, Erich Wildberger, left, and Nito Slack brought the fire. Their enthusiasm for God and the church inspires.

Amid the holy conferencing and voting, members remembered the reason we come together – to serve God by serving Christ in vital piety and social action. Above, the Rev. Evan Young, left, and Matt Sichel remember their baptisms.

The 24-member BWC delegation brought leadership and joy to the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference July 11-15 in Lancaster, Pa. As a group, they know: “You gotta dance when the spirit says dance.”

“Following worship, Charlie Moore spoke out for integrity amid social action as delegates earnestly participated in holy conferencing.”


The Rev. Joe Daniels introduced legislation about Black Lives Matter and dismantling racism that will move beyond rhetoric and put the Church’s hearts, hands and voices to work for justice. The first step was prayer. He joined hands with Rev. Charles Parker.

“We have heard the stories of our past. We come to create new stories for our future. We are an unfinished church.”

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