

Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church
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Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer Elected as Council's Next President

Iowa Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer was elected to a two-year term as the Council of Bishops next president. His term will begin during the 2008 General Conference in Houston.

A native of Philadelphia, Bishop Palmer has presided over the Iowa Conference since 2000, when he was elected to the episcopacy. There are nearly 194,000 United Methodists in 840 congregations in Iowa.

Bishop Palmer succeeds Bishop Janice Riggle Huie of Houston, whose two-year term expires in May.

The council elected Bishop Robert Hayes, Jr. (Oklahoma Area) as its secretary. His four-year term begins in September. He will succeed Bishop Ernest Lyght (West Virginia Area).

Retired Bishop Donald Ott was elected as the next executive secretary. He will succeed retired Bishop Roy I. Sano in the position in September.

The council's new ecumenical officer will be retired Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader. She will take the place of retired Bishop William Oden.

At the recommendation of the Discernment Team, the council did not elect a president-designate. That election will take place during the council's spring meeting in Fort Worth.

UMC Challenged to Take Next Step in Global Health Leadership

The United Methodist Church has "incredible potential" to play a leading role in the global effort to eradicate diseases of poverty, a senior executive of the United Nations Foundation told the Council of Bishops.

Michael Madnick, senior vice president of the billion-dollar foundation, said the foundation hopes its experience with the church and the Nothing But Nets malaria campaign is setting the stage for expanding the denomination's partnership.

With The United Methodist Church as a core partner in Nothing But Nets, “the overall results from our side have been nothing short of remarkable,” Madnick said.

Malaria is the leading killer of children in Africa. A child dies every 30 seconds from the disease that is spread by mosquitoes. Insecticide-treated bed nets protect children and their families while they sleep.

More than \$3 million has been raised across the church to purchase bed nets, a sum that is being matched by \$3 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Other partners include the National Basketball Association, *Sports Illustrated* magazine, and the Mark J. Gordon Foundation. Overall, the campaign has raised more than \$16 million.

Madnick said the next step in the partnership is for the 2008 General Conference to affirm the church’s commitment to the global health initiative.

“The UN Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and the Global Fund are ready to be your partners, philosophically and financially,” Madnick told the bishops. “We believe a partnership with The United Methodist Church can serve multiple, multiple aims.”

“We believe in alliances for larger scale problem solving... on a global scale,” he said. noting the church is a very large organization that is able to reach millions of people. The UN Foundation was established 10 years ago with a billion-dollar gift from entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner.

Bishop Thomas Bickerton (Pittsburgh Area), president of United Methodist Communications and a spokesperson for Nothing But Nets, said he continually witnesses the excitement the campaign is creating across the church.

“In a word, it is amazing,” Bickerton said.

Council President Bishop Janice Riggle Huie (Houston Area) said The United Methodist Church is being viewed as a leader from the faith community in the movement to improve global health.

At a recent meeting on global malaria initiatives in Seattle, The United Methodist Church was the only faith-based institution invited to participate.

“I came away with the clear impression that most of these folks simply did not expect mainline Protestant churches to play a significant role in changing the world over the next few decades. How sad,” Huie said.

It was out of that meeting that Madnick was invited to address the Council of Bishops, Huie said.

“We are hoping to see... that out of this partnership... faith has a more clearly defined place at the table,” Madnick said.

Plan Team Offers Realignment of Council’s Organizational Structure

The Council’s plan team has proposed a number of bylaw changes to streamline the council’s organizational structure. This would be the first realignment of the Council’s structure in more than 20 years.

Bishop Bruce Ough (Ohio West Area) said the team focused most of its 2007 work on finding ways to align the structure to take advantage of the Council’s vision pathways. The current structure includes four committees, four standing committees, 17 subcommittees, 24 ad hoc or special committees and special assignments.

The realignment proposes four committees – executive, finance, leadership discernment, and vision coordination; continuation of the four standing committee – administrative, relational, teaching, and pastoral concerns; teams representing each of the vision pathways; and special or quadrennial task forces similar to the Katrina Church Rebuilding Task Force and the Episcopacy Study Committee. Retired bishops will continue to be members of committees, although the number of members on each committee will be reduced.

The leadership discernment and vision coordination committees are new organizational expressions, as are the teams representing the vision pathways, Bishop Ough said.

Vision pathway teams will be open to members outside the Council of Bishops, such as seminary and general agency staff, and annual conference leaders who have special expertise in those areas. Bishop Ough said the new structure emphasizes “bishops as presiders at the sacramental table of conversation, while our (general) agencies bake the bread and stomp the grapes.”

Path One Team Beginning Movement to Plant Churches

Bishop G. Lindsey Davis (North Georgia Area), accompanied by the Rev. Tom Butcher, updated the council on the work of the Path One Team, the organization created to focus on congregational development under the General Board of Discipleship.

“Collaboration is beginning to jell,” Bishop Davis said as he introduced Butcher the executive secretary of the team.

“Our goal is to lead a movement... introducing people to Jesus, looking for faith, looking for hope,” Butcher said. By 2012, he said the team hopes to equip 1,000 church

planters, enabling annual conferences to start 650 churches averaging 300 in worship each week.

“We want to find the best church planters, equip them for fruitfulness... plant for faithfulness... network for success... working cross-conferences, and cross-jurisdictions,” Butcher said.