

**Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton**

Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference

**Bishop Marcus Matthews**

Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference

**Bishop Jane Allen Middleton**

Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference

**Bishop Susan M. Morrison**

Wyoming Annual Conference

Covering the Southern Tier of New York and Northeastern Pennsylvania

“They're not our kids.”

Dangerous words. Damaging words. Destructive words.

False words in the truth of our United Methodist tradition of advocacy on behalf of children and our witness to the Gospel of Christ, who said, “Let all the children come to me.”

What is the value we place on children?

In some community, in some school, somewhere in Pennsylvania:

- Children attend schools in buildings with leaky ceilings, crumbling walls, poor heating systems, and inadequate lighting. We ask children to learn in that environment.
- High school juniors open history text books dated 1980 and elementary children use encyclopedias that say, “Someday we will send a man to the moon.”
- Children are in classrooms where not every child receives a textbook and access to computers is limited to three times a year.
- Due to inadequate and unequal funding and the growing inequity between wealthy and poor school districts, we are creating a “cradle to prison pipeline” for many of our children.

Shocking. Embarrassing. We feel bad.

We must act. Every child is our responsibility and each precious, beautiful one is ours in the light of the Gospel of Christ.

The United Methodist Bishops of Pennsylvania join in the ongoing effort for comprehensive public education reform in Pennsylvania. The United Methodist Women's public policy issue for 2005 is public education. We have extended the "Bishop's Initiative on Children and Poverty" into this new quadrennium. Working with the Good Schools Pennsylvania Campaign, United Methodists around the Commonwealth have written postcards, have made phone calls, have driven miles and hours to participate in vigils and rallies, have engaged elected officials in conversation, and have walked with the "two feet of social justice" by providing for the needs of children and advocating for justice on behalf of every child. We thank you for your efforts and with you recommit ourselves to the mission of Good Schools Pennsylvania and the work still needing to be done by you and every United Methodist in the Commonwealth.

Children's Advocate, Marian Wright Edelman reminds us, *"If we don't stand up for children, then we do not stand for much . . . A lot of people are waiting for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi to come back . . . but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you."*

Every child deserves an equal opportunity to receive a quality education.

For the children: pray with us, weep with us, learn with us, labor with us, stand with us.

Only Connect,

Bishops Bickerton, Matthews, Middleton and Morrison