

Proceedings

Morning Proceedings for April 30

Worship

(music)

BISHOP SALLY DYCK: Good morning, church.

(audience response)

You may be seated. I'm Sally Dyck, the ecumenical officer for the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, and I want to say just a little bit about the hymn we just sang. The words to the hymn were written by Bishop William Grove, who was The United Methodist Church's first ecumenical officer. Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, formerly General Secretary of the Consultation of Church Union, which became Churches United in Christ, asked Bishop Grove to write a hymn to be used for the inaugural service in celebration of Churches United in Christ in Memphis in 2002.

For those of you who knew Bishop Grove, he had a vision for the church; The United Methodist Church and the church universal. And that vision was unity, meeting in full recognition in harmony with all Christians in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that needs good news. We give thanks for everyone like Bishop Grove and our ecumenical partners who seek to mend a broken church and a broken world.

Today is Ecumenical Day, a day to recognize all those who are ecumenical and interreligious partners. As United Methodists, we have a number of different categories of ecumenical, and tomorrow we will have Methodist Day, and we have many partners for that, too.

We have full communion, covenant, or conciliar relationships which we often call multi-lateral relationships like National or Regional Council of Churches, the World Councils of Churches, and then you'll discover we have many categories of the Methodist family. It's all one big family, and we're delighted to have everybody here.

So at this time, I would ask that the tech people would put up the PowerPoint that is going to give us the categories for Ecumenical Day. And I will just read out the categories, and my ecumenical friends, when you see your category and you'll see your name, then I want you to stand up and remain standing through the ecumenical partners review. So, if we can have that PowerPoint.

We have the World Council of Churches with Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay; the World Methodist Council, Bishop Ivan Abrahams; the China Christian Council; the National Churches of Christ in the United States, and Christian Churches Together. So if I've called your category, please remain standing.

(applause)

Ah, but we're not done.

The Moravian Church, Northern Province; the Moravian Church, Southern Province; the Episcopal Church in America; the International Council of Community Churches; the Christian Church or Disciples

of Christ; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; the United Church of Christ; the North Carolina Council of Churches; Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, which is an interreligious partner. These are our ecumenical partners, and I would ask that you greet them warmly. I promised wild applause.

(applause)

Thank you. And tomorrow we'll greet the Methodist family.

We thank each and every one of you, and may God bless each of your churches and organizations as you share the good news. You may now be seated.

Please stand for the call to worship.

We come before God in need of healing, repentance and reconciliation.

ALL: We come before God longing for restoration and wholeness in our relationships while we acknowledge our brokenness.

BISHOP DYCK: We come before God trusting and hoping in the salvation that only Christ can bring.

ALL: We come before God expecting new life in the midst of pain and death.

BISHOP DYCK: We come before God with our sorrows and joys, triumphs and defeats.

ALL: We come before God in the midst of work which is life giving, and work which weighs heavy upon our hearts and souls.

BISHOP DYCK: Come, Holy Spirit, Come. Renew us by your presence. Embrace us with the redeeming power of your love that we might live in relationship with one another and all of God's children in the spirit of that same love.

ALL: Come, Holy Spirit, Come. Amen.

BISHOP DYCK: You may be seated.

BISHOP JONATHAN HOLSTON: Let us pray together saying, New every morning is your love, great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors, and to devote each day to your son, our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

(music)

(applause)

BISHOP DYCK: Thank you, we have been blessed by you already this morning. Thank you so much. In 2016, the General Conference approved a new full communion relationship between our church and the Northern and Southern provinces of the Moravian Church. Today, we celebrate that with both provinces of the Moravian Church as they have also approved this full communion agreement. Yes!

(applause)

We give thanks for this new expression of unity in the Body of Christ and invite Rev. Dr. Neil Routh to come forward as we celebrate this milestone in our relationship and pray for the unity of Christ's universal church.

Our ties are deep. It's natural that we now find ourselves coming closer together. We United Methodists give thanks that we are joined together in one family with our siblings in the Moravian Church, both North and South, and their leaders, Neil Routh and Betsy Miller. The faith, joy, and confidence of the Moravians was a shining example to John and Charles Wesley of the possibilities of freedom through God's grace.

It is our joy to embrace you now in the bonds of full communion.

(applause)

REV. DR. NEIL ROUTH (President, Provincial Elder's Conference of the Moravian Church, Southern Province): Our ties are deep. It is natural that we now find ourselves coming closer together. We Moravians give thanks that we are joined together in one family, with our siblings in The United Methodist Church. We have long been joined together in the ministry of Christ, from the time of Zinzendorf and the Wesleys.

It is our joy to embrace you now in the full bonds of full communion.

ALL: Our ties are deep. It is natural that we now find ourselves coming closer together. We share historic roots and traditions. We share a commitment to mission and the centrality of Christ. We share a passion for building closer bonds of love among Christians of differing traditions. We have feasted together on the love of God. We have joined together in one voice, singing God's praises. It is our joy to embrace one another now in the bonds of full communion.

REV. DR. JEAN HAWXHURST (Kentucky, Ecumenical Staff Officer for the UMC Council of Bishops): As we join in one spirit and celebrate our unity as Moravians and United Methodists, let us pray together for the unity of God's entire church, using these words from the Moravian *Book of Worship*. Let us pray.

We thank you, gracious God, for establishing the church as a single body of interdependent members, each having a place and purpose.

ALL: We know that we need each other and are called to appreciate the great variety of gifts you have given us to use.

ROUTH: Help us to rejoice with those who are feeling joy and delight.

ALL: Help us to sing with those who are singing your love and praise.

DR. DAVID N. FIELD (Central and Southern Europe, Ecumenical Staff Officer for the UMC Council of Bishops): Help us to taste the agony of those who are hurting.

ALL: Help us to share the burden of those who are in distress.

REV. DR. BETSY MILLER (President, Provincial Elder's Conference of the Moravian Church, Northern Province): Take away jealousy and resentment from our hearts when we see others achieving success.

ALL: Fill us with the spirit of unity in Christ that lets us see and feel and know that we all belong to you through the grace we have received.

BISHOP HOLSTON: Dear God, as we your people gather in every time and place around this wondrous earth, may we be strengthened by our awareness of one another and united by our mutual prayers.

ALL: Hear us and help us all, we pray.

ROUTH: May the variety of traditions and customs of your whole church become a multitude of lights to reveal the good news needed by people everywhere. May the variety of our ministries and service convey your redemptive love and bind us ever closer to one another.

ALL: Grant us grace to unite in essentials, to accept diversity in non-essentials, and love one another in all things.

BISHOP DYCK, BISHOP HOLSTON, ROUTH, MILLER: And now may the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace.

(applause)

BISHOP DYCK: You'll want to stand as you are able, and certainly in spirit, as together we sing our response to continue to pray for the church.

(music)

BISHOP JUAN DE DIOS PEÑA (Methodist Church of El Salvador): We're going to read the scripture in 1 Samuel 3:1-21.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the Ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel! Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

Now Samuel did not know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." Then, the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not

restrain them. Therefore, I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice of offering forever."

Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

BISHOP HOLSTON: Hear the scripture from Ephesians 4:1-6:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

This is the word of God for us, the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

BISHOP DYCK: On June 17, 2022 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches elected Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay as the general secretary to lead the work of the World Council of Churches as chief executive officer. He began serving as the ninth general secretary in the World Council of Churches history since the Fellowship of Churches was founded in 1948.

Dr. Pillay is from South Africa and a clergy member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa. Prior to becoming the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, he was Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Religion at the University of Pretoria. His interest in ecumenism began as he was growing up in Sunday school, when different churches asked him to write, produce, and act in plays. I will remember that. That ecumenical interest carried over into working with youth, and then as a pastor bringing clergy together in whatever community he was serving.

As a leader in the Uniting Presbyterian Church, and after serving in many other regional ecumenical organizations, he was appointed to serve on the World Council of Church's Central Committee about ten years ago. I have known Dr. Pillay since he became a member of the Central Committee. My first memory of him—and I don't know if you remember this—was when we were on a bus from the Ecumenical Center in Geneva to our hotel, and I sat down next to him. I thought to myself, "What should I talk to him about?" Well, we chatted for a little bit and then I asked my burning question, "Do you know of Trevor Noah?" I didn't want to offend him or anything, but I actually wondered how Trevor Noah, a very popular comedian in the U.S. at the time, and who is from South Africa, was regarded in South Africa? Well, yes, he did know of Trevor Noah. And we were off and running, laughing and talking, and frankly I have enjoyed working with him ever since.

I have been delighted that he became our ninth general secretary. He actually knows no stranger, and he cares immensely for all the people of the world, whether they care for each other or not, and has a vast knowledge of the places and people that the World Council of Churches covers.

Please join me in providing a warm welcome to the Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay.

(applause)

JERRY PILLAY (General Secretary of the World Council of Churches): Thank you, Bishop Sally Dyck, for that wonderful introduction and for jogging me down memory lane of our first encounter.

I greet you sisters and brothers in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is indeed a real joy and privilege to be with you today and to have this opportunity to be able to share God's word with you. I bring you greetings from the World Council of Churches and joining me in these greetings to you today, 352 member churches with over 600 million Christians in 120 countries in the world; and they all join me in wishing you well in your General Conference. Our prayers and thoughts are with you in this time of discernment and deliberation, and we pray that you have wonderful conversations, honest and robust yet led by God's Spirit, that you will make decisions that will indeed bring honor and glory to God.

The World Council of Churches recognizes so many leaders you have provided for us over the years. So many in a long tradition of people who have served us with joy, with diligence and faithfulness. And I particularly have worked with two people: Bishop Mary Ann Swenson and now currently Bishop Sally Dyck, who serves on Central Committee. But also your church continues to support us in numerous ways, in providing people resources for different things and also in providing financial support in our work and ministry. And we are particularly grateful for Global Ministries and the work they do, ensuring that The United Methodist Church is very much involved with the World Council of Churches. And for that I say a very special thank you to Roland, the General Secretary of Global Ministries.

Let us pray together for a moment. Lord, as we join you and as you join us, help us to calm our thoughts and still our hearts, and, indeed, to be able to listen to and for your voice. Speak to us today. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sometime back when there were conflicts among Roman Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, a parson chaplain went to a hospital to visit some of the injured parishioners. The nurse said to the chaplain, "I'm a little bit busy right now, but if you will take a seat, I will join you in just a moment. And then I will take you and introduce you to the Protestant parishioners." And so the nurse was taking a bit too long, and the chaplain decided that he would rather do his rounds himself. And as he had gone and just about finished, the nurse reached out, and she said to him, "Reverend, I am ready to take you now to see your parishioners." And he said, "But that won't be necessary because I've already done that." And she said, quite surprisingly, asked the question, "How did you know who was Protestant and who was Roman Catholic?" And he responded, "That was very simple. Where at the bedside it said 'P', I stopped, I exchanged a few words, and I prayed. And where it said 'RC', I nodded, smiled and paused by the bed." The nurse looked at him and said, "Reverend, reverend... the 'P' stands for porridge, and the 'RC' stands for Rice Krispies."

(laughter)

This simple, and yet true, story puts into question the emphases and differences we make about denominational and confessional identities. While these may be important to some, and we should not be dismissive of that, yet we must ask if it is the core of our Christian calling. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 4 seems to indicate that Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith and not the distinctive elements of differences we have created. Our identity is in Christ and not in our confessional identities in as much as that maybe valuable to us. I wonder if Paul meant that as a prisoner in the Lord, he was making it clear that he was not a prisoner of the church. What really is the calling of the church? Talking about calling, I am reminded about the calling of Samuel recorded for us in 1 Samuel 3, which we have just read. This passage refers to God calling Samuel to a difficult task. The task that speaks against the house of the prophet of Eli, Samuel's priest and mentor. God was calling Samuel but he did not know or recognize the voice of the Lord. The first time when God called Samuel, he went to Eli thinking Eli was calling him, and then again the second time. The third time, on the advice of Eli, Samuel says, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." Samuel gets a message, a task from God that was not easy to deliver.

What is God calling Christians and the Christian church to do today? Whose and what voices are we listening to? So often we mistake our own voices for the voice of God. But we think that the voices of the powerful and the influential are the voice of God. Jesus teaches us that most times the voice of God is with the poor, the vulnerable, the orphaned, the marginalized, and powerless. Jesus establishes in his own ministry on earth, in Luke 4:18-19, where his priorities stand. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." The Christian church is called to follow the example and mission of its Lord as it proclaims good news to the world. As it goes into the world to 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 observe "everything I have commanded you," as we read in Matthew 28:19-20.

What is God calling us to do as Christians and church today? This is a question that the World Council of Churches has asked and continues to ask in the world today. As you know, we are living in very difficult times. The current global context has been described as a polycrisis, multiple threats such as accelerating climate change, COVID-19 and its impacts, injustices, poverty, diseases and health challenges, conflicts and wars, unprecedented levels of forced displacement, increasing hunger and food insecurity, rising inequality and marginalization, and wide spread economic instability, among others. And here in your local context, as we have discovered yesterday in Charlotte. Shootings and tragedy of people who have been killed. In such a context, we need to stop and ask, "What is God calling us to do?" The eleventh assembly of the World Council of Churches captured this very well for us when it said, "We live and witness in a world which is at the same time God's beautiful creation and broken by ecological crisis, war, pandemic, systemic poverty, racism, gender based violence, human rights violations and many other sufferings." In such a context, we need to listen afresh to what God is calling us to do. We need to listen to the voice of God in the midst of all the raging voices crying for our attention, staking each claim, and attempting recognition. We need to learn to be still and listen for the voice of God. We need to say as Samuel, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

The WCC speaks of a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity. A pilgrimage is an invitation, a direction and a methodology. As Christians, we are people of the way, we are also people on the way. We are on a journey together, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us and expecting God to surprise us. The WCC, as it proclaims Christ to the world, believes that God is calling us to one proclaimed justice. The cry

for freedom and justice is loud for many in the world today. We are surrounded by the need for economic justice, gender justice, climate justice, and even today, digital justice. God uses a number of instruments to reach and transform the world including, and especially, the church. Therefore the church needs to hear and respond to this painful cry in the world. The mission of the church is to follow in the footsteps of proclaiming Christ's love to the world. The church needs to stand where God stands and not get mixed up with the rich and the powerful. The language of love is best expressed in standing up for truth, in siding with the poor, and holding out hope in the midst of injustices and suffering. The God portrayed in scripture is the lover of justice. He calls us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with him. The task of the church is to maintain a consistent voice against injustices. In the face of unjust economic systems, increasing poverty, unnecessary wars, ethnic and racial violence, we need to say, "Enough is enough."

(applause)

Our cry for justice must be loud, clear, and prophetic. However, to do this well we must first address the injustices in the church: economic injustices, gender injustices, and ecological injustices. The God of justice calls us to stand up for justice and to live justly and to love mercy. Where is mercy when thousands of people are killed in Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, and in other parts of the world? Where is mercy when thousands of people go to bed hungry every single night? Where is mercy when thousands of people are denied access to humanitarian aid? Where is mercy when hundreds of migrants drown or die while fleeing from their country? Where is mercy when human rights and dignity are denied, deprived, and violated? Where is mercy when people are marginalized because of their choices? The God of justice and mercy calls us to stand up for justice. We cannot be silent. We dare not be silent.

(applause)

Christians need to stand up for justice. And we need to stand together. In unity is our strength. We are better and stronger together. Together we can shout, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Together we can make a difference in the world. Together we can live and fulfil God's vision for the world. Together, together, together. Christian unity matters! Won't you just say that with me?

ALL: Christian unity matters!

PILLAY: Christian unity matters. The second thing God is calling us to do is to foster reconciliation and peace. There is so much of brokenness and pain and suffering in the world. What is the message of the church in such a context? How do we work towards healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation? The Genesis story of the Fall in Genesis 3 tells us sin separated us from God and left us with doom, destruction and, death.

There was no way out. There was absolutely nothing that we humans could do to redeem ourselves, to save ourselves, and to get back into a reconciled relationship with God. But the great news is that God's love refused to leave us there. Instead, God sent his only begotten son to come into the world, to suffer and die for the world, and through his death and resurrection, Jesus saved. Jesus forgave. And Jesus reconciled us to the Father and to one another, breaking down the walls of hostility and giving us peace. Consequently, we are reconciled to the Father. God's forgiveness is all about love. Suffering love. Forgiving love. Reconciling love. We cannot say that we love God and hate our brothers and sisters. The

love of God forgives us and prompts us to forgive others and to embrace others who are different from us.

In the South African experience after apartheid, there was the call for forgiveness and reconciliation. The ability of those who have been wronged to forgive their oppressors and offenders is no easy task. Forgiveness is complex. The process of forgiveness is recognizing that we cannot change the event itself, but we can change the meaning we give to the event. Thus, victims are often unwilling to let go of the emotional tides associated with the hurt, bitterness, vengefulness, and hatred toward the perpetrators. Yet, many South Africans did ask for forgiveness, and many others forgave those who violated their rights and human dignity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with its many failures in reaching its full objectives, still provided a facility to help people to face their oppressors and to find healing and forgiveness.

Many churches today—or many churches at that point in time—appeared before the TRC and confessed to their own complicity, silence, and part in promoting apartheid in South Africa. It is a pattern that forgiveness is important to find reconciliation and healing. In the quest for reconciliation and unity, forgiveness becomes an essential part of departure. Forgiveness is an important part of reconciliation. You can forgive someone and still refuse to be reconciled with them. But to seek reconciliation, forgiveness is necessary.

Following the example of Christ's love, churches are to help people to be brought into spaces to forgive, to be forgiven, and to seek reconciliation. The love of Christ reconciles a lost and broken world, not only to God, but to the whole creational order, which is renewed by the sacrifice of Christ. The doctrine of reconciliation is a prominent theme in the New Testament, and the theological essence of the concept is expressed in 2 Corinthians 5, which reads: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. The old has gone, and the new has come. All this from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling to himself in Christ, not counting men's sin against them, and he has committed to us the message of reconciliation, and so we therefore as Christ's ambassadors, we do this as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you, on Christ's behalf, to be reconciled to God" (verses 17-21).

In this sense, reconciliation is God's gift to not only reconcile fallen humankind with God, but also with all humanity and creation. The church, as a reconciled community, must display unity, justice, peace, and love. The church should not perpetuate human divisions based on race, ethnicity, gender, etc. Instead, it ought to strive towards reconciliation and unity. If this is the case, then the church needs to articulate reconciliation and unity within its own life and witness, so that the world may know the love of Christ. The church must work toward the renewal of all relationships and the restoration of human relationships with creation. As reconciled people, they have to be the proponents of ecological concerns and the precursors of the restoration of the integrity of creation. Christians are called to do good to all people and to love their enemies. They are to be the promoters of peace in society and agents in the formation of a new humanity. The church is called to constantly work towards forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity, bearing in mind its agency in transforming society, so that all may have the fullness of life. Forgiveness ought to set the social condition for the process of reconciliation to restore and heal not only interpersonal relationships, but also constructively rebalance the political, legal, and economic injustices to our preventing the prospect of renewed conflict.

The World Council of Churches has, over the years, maintained the biblical imperative of reconciliation and unity to heal and restore a broken world. The love of Christ ought to move churches into visible unity, spiritual and social transformation, and justice. Programs such as combatting racism, justice, peace, and integrity of creation; and in the last few years, the pilgrimage of justice and peace; and now the pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity; have all indicated the WCC's endeavor to strive for reconciliation and unity in the world, starting with the churches as co-pilgrims on the journey.

The WCC has, over the years, worked for peace in the world. We spent a great amount of time, energy, and money to work for peace. Churches such as yourselves help us to do this constantly. I went to Ukraine and Russia, more recently to Israel and Palestine, and just returned from Sudan, where we engaged with church leaders, politicians, presidents and other groups trying to work for peace. It is no easy task. Even churches express different views. We are too caught up in religious nationalism, often being used as instruments of states and politicians—whether rightly or not, that is not the matter.

The truth is, that if we are to truly follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace, then we must become peacemakers, peacebuilders, and peacekeepers.

(applause)

I have seen our churches find disunity and discord with one another because they are influenced by politics rather than by the faith.

(applause)

Admittedly, it is difficult to not be influenced by the realities and the experiences of our times. But how can we, like Samuel, say together: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." How do we allow God's word and the Spirit to speak to us and to use us as instruments of justice, peace, and reconciliation that leads us to Christian unity? Why? Because Christian unity matters. Say that again with me.

ALL: Christian unity matters.

PILLAY: You are now, in your country of America, busy working toward elections. How is it that we can sit still and be listening to the voice of God, rather than to listen to the voices of politicians? How can we get back to the purity of the Gospel and to the purity of the Word and see that whatever we do, that justice will prevail? We need to do this together. We need to do this in one spirit, even though we may have different views. Why? Because Christians are called to stand up and proclaim Christ.

Thirdly and finally, we are called to work towards unity—Christian unity and the unity of the human race. The apostle Paul speaks very strongly about Christian unity in Ephesians 4. He implores us to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". He then proceeds to remind us that "there is one body and there is one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." The apostle in these verses reminds us that we are called to unity. Unity is God's gift to us. Unity is not uniformity, but oneness and togetherness as we proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. A broken and divided church does not have a message to an already broken and divided world, especially if it does not exemplify and practice what it preaches.

The apostle Paul, in verses 2 and 3, speaks of the character that works towards unity. He says, "Be completely humble and gentle." Note—he calls us not to be partially, but to be *completely*. "Be patient,

bearing with one another in love.” These are the characteristics that enable us to keep the unity and remain faithful to our calling to unity.

When we listen to God like Samuel, then we learn to listen to each other as we share God’s message with grace and truth. Not always easy, because we each think we are listening to God, and yet we come up with different messages. The spirit in which we listen to one another is important. Paul tells us that it must be with humility, gentleness, patience, and love. Something that I’ve seen expressed in this particular General Conference yesterday as I sat in. We need more of those characteristics that brings unity, works toward unity, than instead chooses to divide us. Admittedly, every family has its challenges with disagreements, likes, views, and preferences and desires, but they are still a family. The church is no different. Therefore, at all costs, we must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, says the apostle Paul. Christian unity matters.

My church in South Africa, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, came into a union of two churches in 1999. Unfortunately, two years later and two years further down the line, the union faced very serious challenges, and so we had eight associations, organizations for women, men, youth, and young women. They were joined to become four, but four years later after the union, they became eight different organizations again. This led to the establishment of problems within the church. In theory we had a union, but in practice, it was not the case. The UPCUSA appointed me to bring the eight associations back into four. This was a rather difficult and somewhat impossible task by conclusions of many, many people. And, to cut a long story short, after fifteen long years, the eight associations became four again in 2019. It was a miracle.

(applause)

The unity of the church was restored, and all things are possible with God.

Samuel got a message from the Lord to give to Eli that was not easy to give, but he had to listen to God. Sometimes God’s judgment may be even against the church, but it must never be at the expense of its unity and witness to the world. We have seen this in history, and in the message to the churches in the Book of Revelations, where they receive strong rebukes from God. From time to time, the church may need rebuke, because we are the church. The church may need renewal, revitalization, transformation and yes, even repentance. Faithful witness requires this, but never at the expense of its unity.

What brings us to such a conclusion? Jesus prayed for the unity of believers in John 17. I know that while many people continue to yearn, pray, and work for visible Christian unity, some have become disenchanted and despondent on the journey, believing that such is a far-fetched dream and further from reality as we encounter many challenges. Too many churches today are giving in to splits and fragmentation on grounds of doctrine, theology, social/ethical issues, money, power, and personalities. Some say we can never have unity or be in the same church anymore because we have such great differences; especially these days on the issue of human sexuality. This, of course, is a huge issue, even for the WCC with our 352-member churches, you can imagine how polarized we can be on this issue.

In June 2022 at the Central Committee meeting, the issue of human sexuality caused immense debate. So much so that we were considering whether the unity of the WCC was going to be threatened. And then a miracle moment happened when we adjourned when we asked some people with opposing view to come together with a solution. By God’s grace and wisdom they did. All things are possible with God.

(applause)

I know as a church you, too, have struggled with these issues. But I thank God, by God's grace, you have found new ways to navigate this, and to be able to keep your steadfast unity together. It is important to do that. Personally, I believe that we must never stop praying and walking and working together for Christian unity. We need to affirm and deepen the desire for Christian unity, knowing is what Jesus prayed for in John 17:21.

Unity is a gift already given to us to appropriate in Christ. As I said, unity is not uniformity, and more so, a broken and suffering world is in need of Christians working together towards reconciliation, justice, and peace. Our inability to live up to the calling of visible Christian unity should not diminish or blur the ultimate vision. Let us continue to pray and work together so that the world may believe, whatever the challenges we may face, in preserving the unity of fellowship.

As Christians, we must not fixate on what separates us, but on Christ who unites us and calls us to have unity in our witness to the world. Why? Say it with me...

ALL: Christian unity matters.

PILLAY: Whether we understand unity as spiritual, relational, organic, or missional, what matters most is that we are called to pray, to walk and witness together so that the world may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and that in believing in him, they may have eternal life.

Our unity is a witness to the world so that the world may believe a broken and suffering world needs the unity of Christians. The WCC acknowledges this in its message from the assembly call to order in 2022, and the message reads thus: "We affirm the vision of the WCC for the visible unity of all Christians, and we invite other Christians to share in this vision with us. We also invite all people of faith and good will to trust with us that a different world; a world respectful of the living earth; a world in which everyone has daily bread and life in abundance; a decolonized world; a more loving, harmonious, just, and peaceful world; is possible.

In a world weighed down in so much pain, anguish, and fear we believe that the love that we have received in Christ brings the liberating possibilities of joy, justice for all, and peace with the earth. Moved by the Holy Spirit, compelled by a vision of unity, we journey on together; resolved to practice Christ's love, follow in his steps as his disciples, and carrying a torch for love in the world; trusting in the promise that Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity."

It is clear that the statement is needed to witness to transform the world as we address conflicts, divisions, brokenness, and pain. Christian disunity is nothing but a feeble, weak, and contradictory message to an already fragmented world. Christian unity matters in the quest for justice, reconciliation, and peace in the world. Christian unity is God's call to us today. Like Samuel, will we be willing to say, "Speak Lord, your servant, your church, is listening today?" More so, will we have the joy and courage to live out God's call for unity so that the world may believe that Jesus is the Christ? Christian unity matters. The question is, does it matter to you?

Let me end with this last story. There was once a wise an old wise man who gave lectures to people in the village, and people would go to him with questions wanting to get some of his wisdom. And one day, a young man went out of the village and he studied, and he was the first man to return to the village

with a degree. And he thought to himself, "Let me upstage this old man so people will come to me because I am the person with a degree." And so, in the audience one day he said to the old man, "Tell me, sir, I have a bird in my hand at my back. Is it dead or is it alive?" Now, that was a tricky question because had the old man said it was alive, he would have simply rung its neck and said, "See, it is dead. You are wrong". If he said it was dead, he would have simply let the bird fly and say, "See, sir, you are wrong". The old man paused for a moment, and the crowd wondered how in the world would he answer this question; and the old man looked up gently at the young man, and he said to him, "Son, the answer to that question lies in your hands".

What will you do with Christian Unity? The answer to this question lies in your hands. Let us trust the Holy Spirit to lead us and continue to pray for those miracle moments in the midst of continuous struggles. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(applause)

(music)

(applause)

BISHOP HOLSTON: My friends, let us join in this ecumenical version of our Affirmation of Faith and our Apostle's Creed.

ALL: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

BISHOP DYCK: Please stand as you are able and join together in singing a traditional Moravian hymn, "Join We All with One Accord."

(music)

PILLAY: And now may the threefold blessings of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest and abide with each one of us both now and always. And all of God's people said,

ALL: AMEN.

(pause)

Plenary 1

BISHOP LANETTE L. PLAMBECK: Friends, it is my great joy to call to order the seventh plenary session of the postponed 2020 General Conference.

Friends, my name is Lanette Plambeck. I am the resident bishop of the Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area in the North Central Jurisdiction. Now, I just want to say that's two conferences, one area; three

states, one area; North Dakota, South Dakota, the Dakotas conference; and Minnesota. But wait there's more, in this three-state, two-conference episcopal area resides twenty-five federally recognized Native American reservations. Twenty-five autonomous nations of indigenous tribes of North America. We, in our region, are also a body of immigrants from Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, Europe, South America, Central America. And if you have ever wondered how God has the ability to hold the whole world in holy hand, you need only look at my episcopal area.

(applause)

As we begin our conferencing work this morning I want to invite you to give yourself permission to extend worship into the labor that we do. For this indeed is holy conferencing. John Wesley considered this work a means of God's grace. So I hope that you are settling in with expectant hope for God to show up. Please join with me in a spirit of prayer.

Holy God, we dare not enter this work with a mindset of winners and losers. There is more that we are about this day. We are lovers of you and our beloved denomination, and we lean into the garden moment when Jesus prayed, not only for his followers of then but for his followers now and yet to come, that our witness to the world would be in the way that we love one another. So let this work be a labor of love. God, I would ask that you would surround us with the hedge of thy protection, knowing that there are external forces seeking to disrupt and dismay our work. God show up in this time. Call us into your vision. Call us into your hope. May the gap that separates kingdom of heaven from kingdom on earth be closed this day. Thank you, God, for this opportunity, this privileged to do thy holy work. At the end of this time, may you be well pleased. It is in the beautiful and glorious name of Jesus Christ that I pray. Amen.

At this time, the chair invites—oh, I'm going to introduce my backup team. Sorry about that. Bishops LaTrelle Easterling and John Schol. Give them some love.

(applause)

Monitoring Report

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Now at this time I invite Judge Dawn Wiggins Hare, general secretary of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women and Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, general secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, to provide our monitoring report.

DAWN WIGGINS HARE (Alabama-West Florida, General Secretary of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women): Good morning.

GIOVANNI ARROYO (Baltimore-Washington, General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race): *¡Buenos días!*

WIGGINS HARE: I am General Secretary Dawn Wiggins Hare, Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference.

(cheering)

They still love me; that's very comforting. Laywoman, White, older adult.

ARROYO: General Secretary Giovanni Arroyo, Baltimore-Washington Conference, Latinx, clergyman, adult.

WIGGINS HARE: Friends, delegates, part of our journey in discipleship involves aiding each other in understanding the world and engaging with it in a manner that reflects reverence to God and the inherent dignity in each individual as bearers of *Imago Dei*. This necessitates supporting one another and cultivating self-awareness as we navigate the intersections and decisions that either uphold or hinder our rich diversity.

ARROYO: As delegates representing diverse places around the world, we must acknowledge that will encounter unfamiliar situations, but drawing upon the collective wisdom will aid our discernment. Self-awareness is crucial as it liberates us from assumptions and biases enhancing our capacity for sound decision-making, fostering healthier relationships and broadening our perspectives.

WIGGINS HARE: Now I just wanted to say I had a lot of hope last Saturday morning with that beautiful chart that we showed and shared with you. But it is time to share with you some notable observations that hopefully will prompt self-reflection within our community. During our discussion yesterday—I think I have a chart.

Can you just sit with that for a moment? The breakdown of the speakers from the floor revealed 77.1 percent male speakers, 21.4 female speakers, and 1.4 non-binary speakers. Church, we can do better.

ARROYO: While we command the active engagement of delegates from the Africa central conferences in yesterday's discourse, it was noted that the call to end debate primarily came from White delegates representing the United States.

WIGGINS HARE: So our opportunity of the day, delegates, is to pause and contemplate whose voice maybe absent from our deliberations. Voices whose perspectives could be directly affected by our decisions.

ARROYO: *(speaking in Spanish)*

WIGGINS HARE: Blessings as you continue this good work.

ARROYO AND WIGGINS HARE: Amen.

(applause)

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Thank you for your report.

Committee on Agenda and Calendar

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Friends, the next item of business is some of our administrative committee reports. The first committee report will be presented by the Committee on Agenda and Calendar. The chair recognizes chair of the Committee on Agenda and Calendar, Emily Allen, and the coordinator of calendar, Susan Brumbaugh, to present their report. As they approach the microphone please get your voting devices ready.

EMILY ALLEN (California-Nevada, Chair of the Committee on Agenda and Calendar): Thank you, Bishop. The schedule for today is printed on p. 2190 in today's *DCA*. That's p. 2190. The Committee on Agenda and Calendar recommends the following changes for the remainder of today. After lunch, we will receive the Jurisdictional Study Committee report before continuing with calendar items. In our final plenary today we will celebrate the eightieth anniversary of UMCOR and migrant ministries at 5:50 P.M.,

followed by the recognition of retiring bishops and presentation of new episcopal leadership at 6:00 P.M. Bishop, I move the adoption of today's agenda with the changes I have described.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: It is moved to adopt the agenda with the changes as described. In a moment we will open the pool so that if you wish to speak, you may register. The question is on the adoption of the motion to adopt the agenda with the changes as described. You may now register to speak. Is there any discussion?

(pause)

The chair recognizes delegate Ian Urriola from Upper New York at mic. no. 5.

(pause)

IAN URRIOLO (Upper New York): Thank you, Bishop. Ian Carlos Urriola. I am lay, Latinx, young adult delegate from the Upper New York Annual Conference, and I am male, and I move to amend the agenda to include a five-minute report from Maggie Taylor and Connor Prusha who are the co-chairs of the Division on Ministries with Young People in response to Judicial Council Decision 1497 at 4:00 P.M.

(pause)

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Would you be able to bring that forward to us in writing?

URRIOLA: Absolutely.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: And could you also just repeat it one more time for us?

URRIOLA: Sure. I move to amend the agenda to include a five-minute report from Maggie Taylor and Connor Prusha, who are the co-chairs of the Division on Ministries with Young People in response to Judicial Council Decision 1497 at 4:00 P.M.

(pause)

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Is there any discussion? A second. Y'all can tell that I'm new to this, right? So a little grace, that will be lovely. So I do hear a second.

(pause)

Is there any discussion?

(pause)

We will now proceed to vote. The question is on the adoption of the motion to amend.

So we are going to amend the agenda to add the report from the youth regarding Judicial Council decision. So those in favor of adopting the amendment, you will press *one (1)*; those opposed to the amendment, you will press *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

And I do see some flags, so if we can get folks responding to those waving flags.

(pause)

Still see a couple of flags so we're going to give this a bit of time.

(pause)

Voting is now closed. May we please see the results of the vote? There are 578 affirmative votes and 141 in the negative. The affirmative has it. The amendment is adopted. And the agenda is amended.

[Yes, 578; No, 141]

Is there any further discussion on the agenda as amended?

Delegate—the chair recognizes delegate Jim Allen, mic. no. 4.

(pause)

I believe he has left the pool.

You coming? OK.

JIM ALLEN (Tennessee): Sorry about it, Bishop. Hit the wrong button.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: That's OK.

JIM ALLEN: Jim Allen. Lay delegate from Tennessee. I am here speaking to a secondary motion under Rule 25(6) to limit debate. I would be moving to amend standing Rule 7(3) to change the words *three speeches for and three against* to *two speeches for and two against* and that would be in effect for this matter and for the rest of General Conference. If I—If I get a second, I'll speak to it.

(pause)

BISHOP PLAMBECK: So, for clarification, are you looking for a reduction of time from three minutes to two minutes or a reduction of speakers from three to two?

JIM ALLEN: Well, I think those are both great ideas.

(laughter)

But I was only asking for a reduction from three speeches to two speeches.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: So your motion at this time is not in order.

JIM ALLEN: May I request an explanation of the ruling?

BISHOP PLAMBECK: So that the three-minute limit. So that the rule that you identified is Rule No. 7. It says that the three-minute limited on a delegate. So Rule 9 is the only one that be amended. And you are looking to rule—to amend Rule No. 7, which would be a suspension of our rules.

JIM ALLEN: Thank you, Bishop

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Thank you.

(pause)

The chair recognizes delegate Jay Williams with a point of information or inquiry. You are at mic. no. 1.

JAY WILLIAMS (New England): Yes, Jay Williams, New England Conference, clergy, Black American, adult male, queer. The point of parliamentary inquiry is as we prepare for the remainder of the week in, for floor debate, what is the time allotted for the speaker to initially present a plenary floor item to the—calendar item to the plenary floor or a Rule 34 non-calendar item? So what is the time allotted for presenting a calendar item and a Rule 34 non-calendar item to the plenary floor?

BISHOP PLAMBECK: There is no time. There is not a limit to that time.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Thank you.

(pause)

The chair recognizes delegate Alvin Makunike at mic. no. 3 with a point of information or inquiry.

ALIVIN MAKUNIKE (South Africa Provisional): Thank you, Bishop. Alvin Makunike, South African Annual Conference, lay delegate. Bishop, I raise on a point of inquiry. Also with your guidance, where we are sitting, it's like we are in a cold room; it's very cold. I don't know maybe if we move it to be amended from the temperature seven to temperature ten. If it's possible. Thank you, Bishop.

(applause)

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The chair thanks the delegate for that, and we will do our best address your concern.

MAKUNIKE: Thank you.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: You're welcome.

The chair recognizes delegate Effie McAvoy at mic. no. 1.

(pause)

EFFIE MCAVOY MCCLAIN (New England): Effie McAvoy, female, New England, queer, Black, African American. Can we end debate? Please? I call it. Is this appropriate, Bishop?

BISHOP PLAMBECK: It so. Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: It is moved and seconded that the debate be closed. This motion requires a two-thirds vote. We will now proceed to vote. The question is on closing debate on the agenda. Those in favor of closing debate, will press *one (1)*. Those opposed to closing debate, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

I do see one flag over here, waving.

(pause)

Friends, voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote?

There are 690 in the affirmative and 21 in the negative. Debate is closed.

[Yes, 690; No, 21]

We will proceed to vote on the agenda as amended. Get your devices ready, and we will proceed to vote on the agenda as amended.

Those in favor of adopting the amended agenda, press *one (1)*. Those opposed, please press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(*pause*)

Voting is now closed. May we please have the results? There are 696 in the affirmative and 20 in the negative. The agenda as amended is adopted.

[Yes, 696; No, 20]

EMILY ALLEN: Thank you, Bishop. As a reminder of our legislative process, under the Plan of Organization section 8.c, petitions with financial implications must be completed by the end of the day today. Three items were published in today's *DCA* that have financial implications. Calendar Items 541, 542, and 546. Normally by our rules they could not be acted on until tomorrow. So we have a conflict that needs to be resolved. Bishop, I move suspension of Rule 33(3)(c), in order to consider Calendar Items 541, 542, and 546 in today's plenary business.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: It is moved to suspend the Rules 33(c) in order to take up the petitions with financial implications, 541, 542, and 546, today that were published in today's *Daily Christian Advocate*. This motion is not debatable and cannot be amended. Therefore, we will now proceed to vote. The motion requires a two-thirds vote. The question is on the adoption of the motion to suspend the rules in order to take up the petitions with financial implications, 541, 542, and 546, today that were published in today's *Daily Christian Advocate*. Those in favor will press *one (1)*; those opposed will press *two (2)*.

Please vote now.

(*pause*)

Voting is now closed. May we please have the results of the vote?

There are 658 in the affirmative; 60 in the negative. We have met the threshold of a two-thirds vote in the affirmative, and so the motion is adopted. The rules are suspended, and we will take up the petitions with financial implications, 541, 542, and 546, today that were published in today's *Daily Christian Advocate*.

[Yes, 658; No, 60]

EMILY ALLEN: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Please continue with your report.

EMILY ALLEN: Appreciate that. Delegates in addition to those three, we have several petitions previously calendared with financial implications. I encourage you all to assist our bishops in moving through the business for today in a timely manner.

Consent Calendar

EMILY ALLEN: With that I will turn to our coordinator of the calendar for further reports.

SUSAN BRUMBAUGH (New Mexico, Coordinator of Calendar): Thank you, I am Susan Brumbaugh, coordinator of the calendar, New Mexico Annual Conference. We have three consent calendars to vote on today. First, is Consent Calendar A01 on p. 2155. A01 on 2155. Five items were removed by the request of twenty delegates. Those items are 253, 264, 283, 291, and 308.

I'll repeat those, but first I want you to know you can see those items and the names of the delegates who made the request in today's *DCA*. Again, five items have been removed: 253, 264, 283, 291, and 308.

Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendar A04 except for the items that were removed.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar A04 except for the items that were removed. Please get your voting devices, and we will not proceed to vote. This motion requires a majority vote. Again the question is on the adoption on the Consent Calendar A04 except for the items that were removed.

Those in favor will press *one (1)*. Those opposed, press *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

Voting is now closed. May we please have the results of the vote?

There are 667 in the affirmative and 54 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Consent Calendar A04 is approved except for the items that were removed.

[Yes, 667; No, 54]

BRUMBAUGH: Our second consent calendar is B04 on p. 2163. That's B04, p. 2163. No items were removed, and the calendar is correct as printed.

Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendar B04 as printed.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar B04 as printed. Please get your voting devices ready. We will now proceed to vote. This motion requires a majority vote. The question before us is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar B04. Those in favor will press *one (1)*. Those opposed will press *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

Voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote?

We have 686 in the affirmative; 36 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Consent Calendar B04 is approved.

[Yes, 686; No, 36]

BRUMBAUGH: Our final consent calendar for today is C04 on p. 2177. C04, p. 2177. No items were removed, and the calendar is correct as printed.

Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendar C04 as printed.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar C04 as printed. Please get your voting device. We will now proceed to vote. This motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of Consent Calendar C04 as printed. Those in favor will press *one (1)*. Those opposed will press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

I do not see any flags, so voting—

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To the right.

(pause)

Friends, voting is now closed. May we please have the results of the vote?

There are 701 in the affirmative, and 29 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Consent Calendar C04 is approved as proved. Thank you.

[Yes, 701; No, 29]

BRUMBAUGH: So I want to draw your attention to today's calendars so that you can have the opportunity to submit requests as needed. The list of remaining items that were not supported by the legislative committee begins on p. 2205. That's 2205. You can request to have a petition in this list presented in this plenary by getting twenty delegates to sign a yellow form called "Request to Bring a Non-Calendared Item to the Floor" in room 103. Forms must be returned by 3:00 P.M. today to the same room.

Please also be sure to look at the consent calendars that were printed in today's DCA. Consent Calendar A05 begins on p. 2229. A05 is on p. 2229. Consent Calendar B05 begins on p. 2231. B05 is on p. 2231. And Consent Calendar C05 begins on p. 2234. C05, p. 2234.

Turning back to Consent Calendar B05, six items were erroneously included but will be removed because they have financial implications. The page number for the French, Portuguese, and Swahili translations is 2233. And in the English translation, they start on p. 2232.

The following items will be removed: 513 through 518. That's 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, and 518. These items will be included in the GCFA report that is scheduled for Friday, so they don't need to be considered today. And no one needs to submit a form to have those removed; it's already handled.

You can request to have a petition on any of these consent calendar items, other than those six, presented to the plenary by having twenty delegates sign a blue form called "Request to Remove a Calendar Item from the Consent Calendar." It's in room 103. They must be returned by 3:00 today to the same room. Thank you, Bishop. Thank concludes our report.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: And thank you for the report. The chair recognizes the secretary of our General Conference, Gary Graves, for an announcement related to one of the consent calendar items that was just adopted.

GARY GRAVES (Kentucky, Secretary of the General Conference): Thank you, Bishop. In regard to Calendar Item 423, which was included on Consent Calendar B04, we wanted to lift up and recognize this moment, which is an incredibly significant moment, especially on this day as we celebrate our ecumenical relations.

As you adopted that resolution, you adopted the full communion relationship with the Episcopal Church in the United States.

(applause)

That has been worked on for many years.

(applause)

With the efforts of the writing teams and the discussion teams and the dialogues that have been going on, much work, we did not want that work to go unnoticed. Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Thank you. That feels pretty good, doesn't it? A growing in our partnerships as we collaborate in mission and ministry and do so at table and around the world. What a beautiful moment this is for our connectional relationship, our ecumenical relationship, and our witness to the world.

Committee on Journal

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The next administrative committee report is the Committee on Journal report. The chair recognizes the chair of the Committee on Journal, Rachel Bootes Miller.

RACHEL MILLER (West Ohio, Chair of the Committee on Journal): Thank you, Bishop. I'm Rachel Miller, an ordained deacon from West Ohio, and I want to give a shout out to our brothers and sisters from East Ohio. They're sitting right next to us.

(applause)

We are thankful for you, and we look forward to our continued partnership in the gospel as we together continue to take Ohio for Jesus.

And on to our report for Committee on the Journal. The *errata* for April 30 can be found on p. 2191 of today's *DCA*, volume 5, no. 7. You will find some additional corrections from the legislative committee and subcommittee officers, found in *DCA*, volume 5, no. 3, p. 2006. *DCA* volume 5, no. 3, p. 2012: the title of Petition 21115 should be "The UMC and the Charismatic Movement." *ADCA* volume 2, section 2, p. 703: the reference should be to paragraph 1311.1, not 1311.11. We have printed an updated list of nominations for the Commission on the General Conference, which can be found on p. 2196, and we have also printed an updated list of nominations from the Council of Bishops for general boards and agencies, which is printed on p. 2198. And this concludes our report for this morning. Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Thank you, Rachel.

Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The next report is the report of the Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision. The chair recognizes Bob Burkhart and Melissa Drake to present their report.

MELISSA DRAKE (Iowa, Co-chair of the Committee on Correction and Editorial Revision): Thank you, Bishop. Good morning, church. I am Melissa Drake. White, female, adult, clergy serving in the great Iowa Annual Conference.

(cheering)

BOB BURKHART (Iowa, Co-chair of the Committee on Correction and Editorial Revision): I'm Bob Burkhart. White, male, older adult, retired clergy from the Iowa Annual Conference.

(cheering)

We have the privilege of serving as co-chairs of the Committee on Correlations and Editorial Revision. In addition to working with The United Methodist Publishing House to edit *The Book of Discipline*, our committee is also responsible for reporting contradictions and inconsistencies to the General Conference. That's why we're here.

DRAKE: We have two items today to make the General Conference aware of, and so I invite secretary of our committee to share the first item.

MAIDSTONE MULENGA (Baltimore-Washington. Secretary of the Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision): Good morning, General Conference.

ALL: Good morning.

MULENGA: I am Maidstone Mulenga. Black, African, adult male from Zambia, currently a clergy member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. I stand before you as the secretary of the Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision. I am here to report that Petition 20649, Petition 20649, conflicts with paragraph 40 of *The Book of Discipline*. According to *The Book of Discipline* in paragraph 40, General Conference does not set episcopal areas. That authority of setting episcopal areas is the purview of jurisdictional and central conferences. General Conference provides names and descriptions of central conferences and jurisdictional conferences as listed in paragraphs 540 and paragraph 37. Therefore, Petition 20649, which was Calendar Item No. 18, which was approved yesterday, is in conflict with paragraph 40 of *The Book of Discipline*. Again, the General Conference does not approve episcopal areas. General Conference approves the number of bishops to be financed through the Episcopal Fund.

DRAKE: Thank you, Maidstone. Our second item is related to Resolution No. 3103. Yesterday the plenary passed Consent Calendar Item No. 136, which is found on p. 2092 in the *DCA*, regarding Petition 20573, which deleted the current text of Resolution No. 3101 and Resolution No. 3103 and substituted new language under Resolution No. 3101. In the same consent calendar, the plenary passed Consent Calendar Item No. 208, found on p. 2097 in the *DCA*, regarding Petition 20802 to readopt Resolution 3103 as it currently stands in *The Book of Resolutions*. These two petitions on the same resolution were passed on the same consent calendar, and as such neither takes precedence over the other, but they do conflict. Bishop, this is our report.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Thank you for the report of the committee. We appreciate this committee because as you can see, they have a tremendous task of tracking every single decision that we make here at General Conference. And their work is to identify conflicts and to bring into harmony any and all of our decisions. This is not an easy job, and we deeply appreciate their hard work.

Committee on Presiding Officers

BISHOP PLAMBECK: The next report is report of the Committee on Presiding Officers. The chair recognizes chair of the committee, Jasmine Smothers, and vice-chair Audun Westad to present their report.

JASMINE ROSE SMOTHERS (North Georgia, Chair of the Committee on Presiding Officers): Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

SMOTHERS: Really, y'all. Come on. Good morning!

ALL: Good morning!

SMOTHERS: I'm Jasmine Rose Smothers, clergy, African American, female, adult, delegate from the North Georgia Conference in the United States of America. Thank you, North Georgia. My pronouns are she and her, and Audun Westad and I lead the Committee on Presiding Officers, the team tasked with selecting and notifying our presiding officers for each plenary session.

AUDUN WESTAD (Norway, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Presiding Officers): Good morning. My name is Audun Westad, and I'm a lay delegate from the Norway Annual Conference. Friends, I remember that I said that in heaven we're going to learn to speak Finnish, and even though it's great to be here with you, we're not quite in heaven yet, so I'm going to leave the Finnish be, but if you want to mix up the language a little bit, when you greet someone this morning, you can try the Norwegian and say, "*God morgen*." Can we try that together? *God morgen*.

ALL: *God morgen*.

WESTAD: You're doing great. Thank you. Yesterday we loved having Bishop Mande preside in his language of choice, and we give thanks for all the presiding officers yesterday.

SMOTHERS: Today we have an adjustment in our presiders. We welcome Bishop Lanette Plambeck from the North Central Jurisdiction, Bishop Christian Alsted from the Northern European Central Conference, Bishop David Bard from the North Central Jurisdiction, and Bishop John Schol from the Northeastern Jurisdiction. Tomorrow we will welcome Bishop Sharma Lewis from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. from the South Central Jurisdiction, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, and Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey from the South Central Jurisdiction. You can clap for them, yes.

(applause)

I can't tell you how much I've learned. A lot from Audun, from our team, from our bishops, and from the General Conference staff over the last few weeks. So, I want to remind you of something that my dad tells me all the time. He tells me an old American quote that's often used in military service and

American football. Not *futbol* but football. He says, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.” We’re exhausted, y’all. Let’s remember who we are and that the world is watching.

WESTAD: Friends, please continue to help our presiders and translators make our plenary sessions more accessible for all God’s children, both in the room and in the livestream, by speaking slowly, concisely, respectfully, and directly into the microphone. Thank you for your cooperation with our presiding officers, and we’ll see you all tomorrow.

BISHOP PLAMBECK: Delegates and friends, we have reached the time for a break. Are y’all ready for a break?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes!

(applause)

And we will take a recess until 10:42 when we resume. Bishop Christian Alsted will be our presiding officer.

(applause)

Just want to take a moment to thank you. This introverted bishop thanks you for your grace and your goodness and your good work this morning. May our experience of worship be an expression of our day as we continue to do what Bishop Rueben Job, who is of the Dakotas Conference—he was from North Dakota—always reminded us to do, and that is to hold fast to the three simple rules. So in our work and in our witness may we do no harm, may we do good, and many each and every one of us stay in love with God. Amen.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Amen.

(applause)

We are in recess.

Plenary 2

BISHOP CHRISTIAN ALSTED: Let us be in order. Dear friends, good morning. My name is Christian Alsted. I am the bishop of the beautiful Nordic, Baltic, and Ukraine Episcopal Area in the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference.

(speaking in Danish)

I am a Northern European adult male. And with me I have an excellent support team of two esteemed colleagues, Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsi, the resident bishop of the Iowa Area, and Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, the resident bishop of the West Virginia Area, and together with Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi; she also serves the Susquehanna Annual Conference.

Friends, this is the eighth day of General Conference. And after a few days at General Conference, we are living in a bubble. And we almost forget that life in our families, in our churches, and in the world around us continues at full speed. However, every once in a while, we are reminded, and this morning I

want to remind you of the fact, that while we have been here in Charlotte, literally thousands of people have died in the war in Ukraine, in Gaza, and the conflict in Eastern Congo and in so many other places of the world. Let us be still for a moment in silent prayer for our families, for our churches, and for the world around us.

Let us pray.

(pause)

Lord Jesus Christ, for all the things in our hearts and minds we pray, for all the things that are before us today, we pray. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour. Amen.

Friends, we have much to do this morning. So let us work together and accomplish as much as we can. I remind you to, when you are recognized to speak, please identify yourself and state your business. And please be brief and to the point.

Calendar Items

We will move to our first item of business. We will work on calendar items for the rest of the morning. And we move to Calendar Item 33. It is in, it is in *DCA*, volume 5, no. 2 on Wednesday, April 24. It is on—no, I'm sorry—it is in volume [5], no. 4 and it is on p. 1900—no, 2062. 2062. And I call on the Committee of Church and Society 3 to present this calendar item.

CHERYL BELL (Great Plains Conference): My name is Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell. I am a Black female clergy from the great Great Plains Conference in these United States. My pronouns are she and her, and today my feet are firmly planted as an older adult.

I'm the proud and humble chair of the Church and Society 3 Legislative Committee, an amazing group of saints. And our officers, Vice-Chair Stephen Quigg of Greater New Jersey, Secretary Judith Osongo from East Congo, Sub-Chairs Esther Rodriguez-Perez from Florida and Duane Carlisle from Indiana, provided amazing leadership. I am here to present Calendar Item No. 33 found on p. 2062 of the *DCA* and Petition No. 20849, Africa University, found on p. 1252 of volume 3 of *ADCA*. We acknowledge the great report that we heard yesterday on Africa University. Our committee voted unanimously for this petition. It is coming to you because of the financial and global impact it contains.

The last paragraph reads, "Be it further resolved, that the 2020 General Conference make Africa University a priority and allocate an apportionment of \$10 million over a four-year period and an additional \$10 million to be raised through World Service Special Gifts to continue development, construction, and endowment of Africa University as outlined in the planning process determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the Africa University Board of Directors."

Therefore, Bishop, I move that Petition 20849 be adopted.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much.

It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 33. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item 33. You may now register to speak if there's any discussion.

(pause)

There does not seem to—

There is an other parliamentary inquiry. Mark Holland. The chair recognizes Mark Holland on mic. 4.

MARK HOLLAND (Great Plains Conference): Bishop, may I speak from mic. 6?

BISHOP ALSTED: Yes, you may.

HOLLAND: Thank you. Mark Holland, Great Plains, clergy, White male.

Pursuant to Rule 9.4, I move to reduce speeches from three minutes to two minutes. If I have a second, I would like to speak to it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second!

(pause)

BISHOP ALSTED: Rule 9.1, point four. Yes, it is in order to amend the rules. However, it does require a suspension.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a majority vote.

BISHOP ALSTED: I'm sorry. Please, if you would, make your motion.

HOLLAND: I move, pursuant to Rule 9.4, that we reduce the length of speeches from three minutes to two minutes for the duration of the General Conference.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I second.

HOLLAND: It's a majority, it's a majority vote.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. We have heard the motion for the duration of the General Conference to reduce the limit of speak to—from three minutes to two minutes. This motion is debatable.

HOLLAND: Make I speak to it, Bishop?

(pause)

BISHOP ALSTED: You may speak to the motion and I ask the tech team to clear the pool.

HOLLAND: Thank you. We have now by my count ninety petitions with eighteen minutes of speeches for each; that's twenty-seven hours debate and we have twenty-four hours slated for plenary. I want to keep the three speeches at this point to keep diversity of voices, but the two-minute speeches, we can usually make our points in two minutes. So, we do this usually on Friday when we're panicked and we have more to do than we can. And we end up rushing through very important things like the budget because we're out of time. So I think if we're mindful today, we can make, make up some time. I can also say from personal experiences shorter speeches would have served me well.

(laughter)

Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. The chair recognizes Amanda Bonnette-Kim on mic. 1 for a speech against.

AMANDA BONNETTE-KIM (New England): It's [the microphone's] falling off. Good morning, Amanda Bonnette-Kim, she, her, her, young adult, laity, from New England Annual Conference, biracial, multiethnic.

I'm speaking against this because it is too early in the week to begin limiting important voices, especially when during the past twenty-four hours the speeches in the issues we have been talking about on the floor have involved our siblings of different ethnic backgrounds. So at this time to want to limit the voice of already a group of people and groups of people who are not largely represented or have a hard time being represented and heard is not appropriate. I understand the need to stay on task and get things done and understand we don't need to use the whole three minutes as a personal choice someone gets when they're at the microphone to use the full time. But in context of what we have been discussing and when this has been called, we must be mindful of the impact and message that leaves. For example, right now we are talking about petition on Africa University, so it's about optics and we must remember how we can unintentionally affect our siblings in the room of different ethnic backgrounds.

All this to say I think this is good to do later in the week, but if we want to get things done, we shouldn't interrupt the work we are doing just yet. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. We are right now spending our time discussing whether we would like to limit debate or not. I'm asking if there is any objection in the body to put this question to a vote immediately. Is there any objection? Then we will put this motion to a vote immediately. Please take your voting devices.

You may press *one* (1) to vote yes to the motion to limit the time of debate from three minutes to two minutes or press *two* (2) not to limit the time. You may vote now.

(pause)

There's a flag here in the middle and it's being cared for now, I think.

Thank you. And we will close the vote. Let's get the result up on the screen. Oh, there's still a couple of flags. If we could get them cared for and then we are ready to close the vote.

All right, we have the result on the screen.

We have 560 in affirmative and 140 [144] no.

[Yes, 560; No, 144]

The motion carries. And we have reduced the length of speak from three minutes to two minutes for the duration of the General Conference.

Then we are back on Calendar Item 33. The motion has been presented, and it is before us. Does anyone wish to speak? Let us clear the pool. Please clear the pool.

Does anyone wish to speak to Calendar Item 33? I recognize Amanda Bonnette-Kim for a speech against. No? All right.

Then I don't see anyone wishing to speak on Calendar Item 33.

There is one. That is Ken Ow on mic. 6.

KEN OW (Baltimore-Washington): Thank you, Bishop. Ken Ow, laity from Baltimore-Washington and in full disclosure, I serve on the GCFA board. So this resolution calls for GC—the General Conference, to apportion \$10 million for Africa University. The current proposed budget allocates 28 percent of the total budget towards education, the largest of all categories, including discipleship and social justice. Agency funding within the World Service Fund, such as the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, is being reduced by 53 percent. The proposed budget for Africa University is \$4.9 million for the quadrennium. This reflects a decrease of 52 percent. That is similar to the decrease for other organizations in the budget.

If General Conference chooses to fulfill the resolution, it would need to raise the budget by \$5.1 million.

If General Conference does not want to increase the funding, it needs to accept Report No. 4 as proposed. And that is what I am recommending.

To understand the financial realities of this fund, in 2004 General Conference approved Report No. 4 that said—excuse me. In 2004 General Conference approved Report No. 4 that said GBHEM indicates that an endowment fund of \$40 million should be able to provide a sustainable income base to support the operations of Africa University in lieu of general apportioned funds. To update you on this, Africa University as of 2022 has an endowment fund of more than \$100 million, which should be considered in determining whether to double the amount to be apportioned.

So I rise against this petition.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. Could we ask the tech team to get a clock on the screen? That would help us. I believe we've just reached the two minutes limit.

I am recognizing Jerry Kulah for a speak in favor on mic. 1. Jerry Kulah.

JERRY KULAH (Liberia): Well, thank you, Bishop. Jerry Kulah from Liberia.

I just want this General Conference to know that right now, some of us who are contributing to supporting some of our African sisters and brothers at Africa University are deeply worried because they've received information that because of the scarcity of resources they might have to leave campus right after classes end. And then they have to stay there, they have to pay like \$8 per day to remain on campus. That just tells us the financial constraints facing Africa University, that providing services for all of our students in order to invest into Africa's future.

So, I speak in support of this and I believe very firmly that our agencies have a lot of reserved that we need to probably enter into to save Africa University.

And in the soonest future, think about establishing a foundation that sustains the economic life of Africa University. So I support this petition to keep the funds as they have been proposed by the committee so that our students at Africa University, especially from other countries going to Zimbabwe, would not be sent home or would not be frustrated in their efforts of learning so that tomorrow Africa can be what it ought to be because we are investing into its future and this is a major need for the sustainability of the church in Africa. Thank you very much.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. Turn to Alka Lyall, on mic. 2, for a speech against.

ALKA LYALL (Northern Illinois): Thank you Bishop. Alka Lyall, clergy, Northern Illinois, adult, Asian, Indian.

Bishop, I speak against this petition because yesterday we heard so many of our central conference siblings remind us that they can support more bishops. They have the financial capabilities. We should listen to them and to their desire to contribute more to the larger good of our denomination.

Therefore, I invite us to not support this amendment and let central conference and Africa University become self-sufficient. Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. And the chair recognizes Anne Kiome-Gatobu for a speech in favor on mic. 4.

(pause)

ANNE KIOME-GATOBU (Great Plains Conference): Anne Kiome-Gatobu, Great Plains Conference, clergy.

I'm here speaking for adoption of this petition, noting that education is the key to development. You're investing in development when we invest in Africa University. Africa University does not only serve Zimbabwe, it serves the whole of Africa. And many of the students, if we stop supporting that, that will be the end of their education. When we support their education, we are supporting the development of the whole continent. We are supporting really the change from poverty and just the development of the whole continent. I really wish to consider that, if there's one place we need to invest as a church in Africa, it ought to be in education. And Africa University has proven itself to be one of those institutions that are leading people into better lives and to help the whole continent. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. The chair turns to Alvin Makunike for a motion to close debate on mic. 3.

ALVIN MAKUNIKE (South Africa Provisional): Thank you, Bishop. Alvin Makunike, South Africa Annual Conference, lay delegate, adult, Black African.

I move we close the debate so that we can vote. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. The motion to close debate is not—Is there a second to this motion?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP ALSTED: There is a second to the motion. The motion is before us. It is not debatable. At this point I would like to ask if there is any objection to us using the green hand fans for votes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Yes. Yes!

BISHOP ALSTED: Oh, there's objection to that. All right, then we will not do that. At this time, I want to inform you that we have eight persons wanting to speak in favor and we have one who wishes to speak against, so we will bring the motion to close debate to a vote if you'll take out your voting devices.

And you may press *one (1)* to close debate or *two (2)* not to close debate. You may vote now.

(pause)

We do have a few flags up here in the front, in the section just in front of me. And there's one over here in the A section.

(pause)

We will now close the vote. And let us get the result up on the screen.

667 in favor of closing debate, 61 against.

[Yes, 667; No, 61]

We have closed debate and we move on to vote on Calendar Item 33.

CHERYL BELL (Great Plains Conference): Bishop?

BISHOP ALSTED: Oh, the committee chair is allowed to speak. Please.

BELL: When we approved this petition, our entire understanding is that it was going to go to GCF and A and that they would make adjustments to the amount that goes to Africa University. What happens to petitions that get forwarded to them that have the financial implications?

(pause)

BISHOP ALSTED: To answer the question, this is non-disciplinary petition, and so it will not be sent to GCFA.

BELL (Great Plains Conference): Wow.

(laughter)

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. We are ready to vote. If you would take out your voting devices, press *one (1)* in favor of Calendar Item 33 as presented or *two (2)* opposed. You may vote now.

(pause)

There are some flags here in section B towards the back. And also one in section C. We are closing the vote and let's get the results up on the screen.

You have 356 votes in favor and 387 votes against.

[Yes, 356; No, 387]

The "Nos" has it and the calendar item has not passed.

Before our committee chair Cheryl Jefferson Bell leaves the stage, I want us to acknowledge that it is her birthday today. So happy birthday!

(applause)

BELL: Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: We're now ready to move to Calendar Item 20, and I turn to the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, Bishop Harald Rückert.

BISHOP HARALD RÜCKERT: (*speaking in German*) Good morning, dear fellow United Methodists. Standing Committee is back. I am Harald Rückert. I'm bishop overseeing the Central Conference of Germany, which is comprised of three annual conferences. And I'm also vice-chair of the Standing Committee of Central Conference Matters. I thought this would be the last day to stand in front of you with only three remaining petitions, but it looks like and sounds to me that you want us, the Standing Committee, to be present here on stage for a little longer to offer you your daily portion of our report.

(*laughter*)

Now we move to Calendar Item 20. You'll find this in the *DCA* on p. 1993, p. 1993. It's the last of three of our petitions that are related to Africa and they are in line with what we have already discussed and decided here in General Conference with calendar items 18 and 19.

The essence of this petition is first, to align the listing in *The Book of Discipline* with what we have decided yesterday. The grouping and there has to be some more work within the Central Conferences of Africa and to clarify and put in the correct names of countries. Because some countries, as the *BoD* has been printed last, have changed their official names and now we include the correct official names in this petition. So this is what the petition is about. And one last remark, on p. 1993, there is a little typo when you go through the listing instead of "h" at the end it should read "g" because that is just an editorial correction. So, the petition is before you and we would be happy if you approve it.

BISHOP ALSTED: *Danke schon*, Bishop Rückert. The question is on the adaption of Calendar Item 20 and you may now register to speak if there's any discussion. The chair recognizes Daniel Colbert on mic. 6 for an amendment.

DANIEL COLBERT (Baltimore-Washington): Thank you Bishop. Thank you, Bishop. Daniel Colbert, Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, lay, White man, I was a young adult when I was elected.

(*laughter*)

But that was five years and two children ago.

(*laughter*)

The amendment I would offer is in subsection A, at the top of p. 1193 [1993], where it says, excuse me, where it says "Central Africa Central Conference," I would strike the first instance of the word *Central* and replace it with the word *Mid*.

BISHOP ALSTED: And if you would please bring the motion in writing to our secretary.

COLBERT: Of course.

BISHOP ALSTED: Is there a second to the motion?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Yes.

BISHOP ALSTED: It's seconded. You may speak to your motion.

COLBERT: This simply brings this language into agreement with what we did yesterday.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. We have the amendment before us. If we could clear the pool please. And you may register to speak on the amendment.

There doesn't seem to be anyone who wishes to speak. Let us move to—oh, I'm sorry, there is a, I recognize Rukang Chikomb from North-West Katanga on mic. 2 for a speech against.

(pause)

RUKANG CHIKOMB (North-West Katanga): Bishop, thank you so much. Rukang Chikomb/George or whatever.

(laughter)

Bishop, yesterday I was going to rise to talk about that amendment but was too late. My brother, you don't understand what you putting will not translate in French. You putting "Mid-" Central Congo. Go back to French: *(speaking in French)*. It does not mean a meaning, but yesterday we voted it. I was in line to talk about it; it was too late.

I'm against this amendment. It does not translate. Please help us.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. The chair recognizes Sylvestre Muthoma on mic. 4 from East Congo. And that is for a speech against. Do we need our headsets?

SYLVESTRE MUTHOMA (East Congo): *(simultaneous translation from French)* for letting me speak. Thank you for recognizing me. The person who spoke before me spoke about the African context. We estimate that even if we have two central conferences there is a central referring to the location and central referring to Central Conference. But because we approved regionalization, why don't we call it the Regional Conference instead Central Conference. So it could be the Regional Conference of Central Africa instead of Central Conference of Central Africa.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. I turn to Valentine Cimpaye on mic. 5 for a speech against.

Is there anyone who wishes to speak in favor of the motion? We don't have anyone in the pool who wishes to speak in favor.

Valentine Cimpaye.

VALENTINE CIMPAYE (Burundi): *(simultaneous interpretation from French)* Thank you, Bishop. I am Rev. Cimpaye Valentine from the Conference of Burundi. I am against this to call it a Central Conference of Mid Africa because Africa is divided in four parts. There's Central Africa, there's West Africa, there's East Africa, and West and East Africa. I think the way it was written first was better. The Central Conference of Central Africa. Central Conference of West Africa. Central Conference of East Africa. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. The chair recognizes Anne Kiome-Gatobu for a speech in favor on mic. 4.

ANNE KIOME-GATOBU (Great Plains Conference): Thank you, Bishop. I'm Anne Kiome-Gatobu, Great Plains Conference, clergy.

I want to speak for the petition. Yesterday, we discussed the name change and it passed. So this petition being brought today, I believe would be an editorial change as opposed to something that we are voting.

Let me also add that the reason for wanting that change. It's not only because of *Central* appearing twice on the name, but it's also that the word *Central* has connotation of most important, as opposed to *Mid*, which would be speaking to the geographical area of where that conference is located. When we use the word *Central*, there's a connotation that it's the more important; it's the most important; it's the most central conference of all the central conferences in Africa. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. We have now had three speeches against, one speech in favor— oh, I'm sorry. I'm being corrected here. We've had two speeches in favor and three against, and no further person in the pool who has indicated he or she wants to speak in favor of the motion. So, we'll put the motion to a vote.

The motion is to amend subsection A, strike first instance of *Central* and insert the word *Mid*.

In the pool, we have six speeches against.

We are ready to vote. You may take out your voting device.

The vote is on the amendment to Calendar Item 20. You may vote now.

(pause)

We do have a few flags in sections B and C.

(pause)

We will close the vote and get the result up on the screen.

381 have voted in favor of the amendment. 357 have voted against.

[Yes, 381; No, 357]

The motion carries.

And we are back on the main motion as amended. Back on Calendar Item 20 as amended.

Please clear the pool. Please clear the pool, and then I will open again for debate.

I recognize L. Olandor Boyce for a speech against on mic. 1.

L. OLANDOR BOYCE (Liberia): L. Olandor Boyce, lay delegate, Liberia Annual Conference.

Bishop, in the administrative report this morning, the Committee on Reference informed us that the vote that we took yesterday to pass Petition No. 18—I mean Calendar Item No. 18—was against *The Book of Discipline* Paragraph 40. When it comes to number, naming, and boundaries of annual conferences.

BISHOP ALSTED: I'm sorry I have to interrupt you; we are not debating Calendar Item 18. We are on Calendar Item 20 as amended.

BOYCE: Yes, so, I want to speak against Calendar Item No. 20 because I believe it is also against the same *Book of Discipline* Paragraph 40 (*indecipherable*) naming, boundaries of annual conferences in jurisdictional and central conferences. So I speak against that. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: The chair recognizes Amy Lippoldt for a speech in favor on mic. 4.

AMY LIPPOLDT (Great Plains Conference): Thank you, Bishop. Amy Lippoldt, clergy, Great Plains Annual Conference, White woman, American, member of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, member of the Africa Task Force, drafter of the petitions.

I speak in favor and encourage your adoption of this simple petition that is simply cleaning up country names and putting the countries in the right central conferences. We regret the error on petition—or Calendar No. 18, and we have a plan to fix it later in the day, so that it will be in line with Paragraph 40 of *The Book of Discipline*; stay tuned for that. I encourage you to vote in favor of this petition. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. The chair recognizes Randy Frye on mic. 2 for a point of information or inquiry. What is your question?

RANDY FRYE (Holston): Thank you, Bishop. Randy Frye, clergy member, Holston Conference, older adult male.

Just for the sake of accuracy, in Paragraph E, Estonia is listed and they disaffiliated last year, so they need to be removed.

BISHOP ALSTED: I think I will turn this question to the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters.

BISHOP RÜCKERT: I can answer the question easily. The countries that you find here in the list, they are communicated with all central conference bishops right here in Charlotte. And especially when it comes to Estonia, you would also find some other countries in the list that, one or the other way, have left The United Methodist Church, but still it is so new and there is still a possibility that a United Methodist church will continue in one of those countries. So the decision of the bishops of those respective areas was to leave the countries in the list now, because there is still some clarification needed. And so they asked us to leave these countries in the list because there's still a possibility for United Methodist work to continue.

FRYE: OK. Thank you.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you for the answer to the question.

I call on Charles Boayue on mic. 5 for an amendment.

CHARLES BOAYUE (Michigan): Bishop, may I used mic. no. 6?

BISHOP ALSTED: Please do.

BOAYUE: Thank you, Bishop. I have a question in order to determine whether my amendment would be in order.

BISHOP ALSTED: Why don't you make your amendment first, then we will answer a potential question, afterwards.

BOAYUE: Thank you. I'm Charles Boayue. Clergy, Michigan Conference, Black, adult. I move that wherever reference is made to Mid—to Central Africa Central Conference, that an editorial change be made to call it Mid-Africa Central Conference. If I can get a second, I'll speak to it.

(pause)

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. As chair, I make the decision that this would be an editorial matter, as we have passed an amendment to rename the Central Africa Central Conference to the Mid-Africa Central Conference, so that will be an editorial matter, and so your motion to amend would not be necessary.

BOAYUE: Thank you.

(pause)

BISHOP ALSTED: I will recognize Reynoldo Abdon, on mic. 4, for a speech in favor.

(pause)

REYNOLDO ABDON (Philippines-Cavite): Good morning, Bishop. I am Rey Abdon, from the Philippines-Cavite. I'm male and adult. I am in favor for the alignment of the central conferences because, for in the case of the Philippines, we have missions in the Middle East, particularly Dubai and the other one, the others. The problem there is that as a provision of the bishop in the Philippines Central Conference should be, should elect, should be included in the Middle East, particularly the churches there. That's why I, we are in favor of this. That's all.

(pause)

BISHOP ALSTED: At this point, we've had two speeches in favor and one speech against. There is no one in the pool who has registered to speak against. I will move to Dalton Rushing on mic. 5 on a motion to close debate.

DALTON RUSHING (North Georgia): Thank you, Bishop. Dalton Rushing, clergy delegate, North Georgia, adult, White, man. I move that we close debate.

BISHOP ALSTED: Is there a second to this motion?

UNITIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second!

BISHOP ALSTED: It's seconded. This is not a debatable motion, so I ask you to take out your voting devices. There are one speech in favor of the motion in the pool. And there's one amendment. Please let's get the vote up on the screen. You may press *one (1)* for yes; *two (2)* for no. The vote is now open.

(pause)

There's one flag in section C and one in section B.

(pause)

Thank you, and the vote is now closed. Let's get the result up on the screen. 695 have voted in favor of Calendar Item 20, as amended. 28 have voted against. The affirmative has it, and the calendar item is approved.

[Yes, 695; No, 28]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: No.

BISHOP ALSTED: Oh! I'm sorry! I'm sorry. I am—I'm sorry. Please disregard what I just said. This was a motion to close debate, of course. We've closed debate. Now, we are on Calendar Item 20, as amended.

(pause)

The chair of the Standing Committee or the vice-chair of the Standing Committee gets to have the final remark.

BISHOP RÜCKERT: Friends, this list that is here in front of you, it reflects our reality. And the reality is that The United Methodist Church is doing faithful ministry in all of these countries named here, so this is of joy. I move to approve it.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you, and we are ready to vote. Please take out your voting devices. We are voting on Calendar Item 20 as amended. You may vote *one (1)* for yes and *two (2)* for no. The vote is now open.

(pause)

And we will close the vote. Let us get the result on the screen.

656 have voted in favor. 70 have voted against. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Calendar Item 20 as amended is adopted.

[Yes, 656; No, 70]

Thank you. And we move to Calendar Item 236. It is Legislative Committee on Conferences, and I call on their chair, Lonnie Chafin.

BISHOP RÜCKERT: See you again this afternoon.

(laughter)

LONNIE CHAFIN (Northern Illinois): Good morning, General Conference. It's a great pleasure to be with you. I think we've all spent a lot of time in church basements, but this is the biggest one.

(laughter)

I'm Lonnie Chafin, laity from Northern Illinois Annual Conference. White, male, maturing, and I come to you to bring a calendar item. It's humbling to be presenting the work of the Conferences Legislative Committee. It's a remarkable group of people, just lions of the church. It's been such a joy to work with them in this time. Our first petition to bring to you is Calendar Item 236 which is Petition 21045 and appears on p. 1363 on the English *DCA*. As you are aware, our progress towards a more effective church through regionalization comes before us in eight petitions. We have already approved a very significant constitutional change proposal and five more of these petitions. All eight petitions are necessary in order to proceed to our new structure. So what you have before you is a single necessary piece of this regionalization approach. It was strongly supported by our committee: 59 in favor and only 8 against. It

would be on the Consent Calendar but comes before you because it is tagged as having financial implications.

This non—so far we've agreed to a pathway of constitutional changes for regionalization of the church. This non-disciplinary petition creates a committee to propose how the U.S. region will be organized. The committee with work on answering questions about the structure, the leadership required, the meeting times, and the functions of this U.S. regional body, proposing the rules and powers for its function. It is an interim committee and ceases to exist with the first meeting of the U.S. regional body. We hope you will support Calendar Item 236.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. It's moved to adopt Calendar Item 236. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item 236, and you may now register to speak if we have any discussion.

I don't see any discussion so please take out your voting devices, and we are ready to vote.

You may press *one (1)* for yes and *two (2)* for no. Please vote now.

(pause)

We have no flags. Wonderful. The vote is now closed. Let's get the result up on the screen.

639 in the affirmative; 85 opposed. The Calendar Item 236 has been adopted. That was smooth.

[Yes, 639; No, 85]

Let us move onto 443.

(laughter)

CHAFIN: Thank you, General Conference. I hope you enjoyed that as much as I did; we can do it again on this next one. We are going to do Calendar Item 443. And I encourage you to read the Calendar Item 443 and not the petition that underlies it. Our committee replaced the petition that was printed in the *DCA* entirely. That petition asked for a study of Russian translation at General Conference. That to us seems less urgent than it was, and we replaced all of that text with the text that is printed on Calendar Item 443, which is p. 2177. It is not a requirement, but it asks the Commission on the General Conference to evaluate whether a different language—the addition of Spanish language—would be useful for us as we try to broaden our table and invite more voices to General Conference. It's a simple request that the Commission on the General Conference evaluate this, and we would hope that it would be passed so perhaps a more dynamic and growing language group in our community and our connection can participate. So, Bishop, with that I would move Calendar Item 443.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. It's moved to adopt Calendar Item 444—443. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item 443. You may register to speak, if we have any discussion.

There doesn't seem to be any discussions, so you may take out your voting devices. We are ready to vote. If you vote in favor of Calendar Item 443, please press *one (1)* for yes. Or *two (2)* for no. The vote is open.

(pause)

There is one flag in section B.

(pause)

The vote is closed. Let us get the result up on the screen. 676 in the affirmative. 57 no. The affirmative has it. And you have adopted Calendar Item 443.

[Yes, 676; No, 57]

Lonnie, please move on.

(laughter)

CHAFIN: There's no more from me, Bishop, so thank you very much. Thank you, General Conference.

(applause)

BISHOP ALSTED: I call on—I call on Lindsey Baynham Freeman, Legislative Committee on Ordained Ministry

(applause)

LINDSEY FREEMAN (Virginia): Thank you, Bishop. My name is Lindsey Baynham Freeman. Clergy, Virginia Annual Conference, United States, adult, female, multiracial, Black, African American, White, Anglo, and I had the honor of chairing the Ordained Ministry Committee.

(cheering)

I give thanks to God for each committee member's grace, wisdom, and joy as we did our work together. A special thanks to vice-chair Rev. Robert Kilembo and secretary Rev. Emily Dueitt Kincaid, subcommittee chairs Deaconess Gail Boykin—Douglas Boykin, Ms. Kathy Ezell, Rev. Kimberly Ingram, and the birthday girl Rev. Karli Pidgeon. The item before us can be found on p. 2180 of the *DCA*—Calendar Item 467—and p. 1061—oh yeah, I'm saying the right thing—of volume 2, section 2 of the *ADCA*—Petition 20661.

The committee voted to adopt Petition 20661. We appreciated the hard and thorough work of the Study of Ministry Committee. "A Sacred Trust," if you have not read it, explores the richness and depth of our Wesleyan tradition, particularly as it pertains to our sacred trust together and the theology of ordination. The committee affirmed the continued work of the ministry study moving forward to present more recommendations for the next General Conference.

Bishop, I present Petition 20661 for adoption.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you very much. Calendar Item 467 has been moved. To adopt—the question is on the adoption of Calendar Item 467. You may register to speak, if there is any discussion. There doesn't seem to be. You may take out your voting devices. And if you wish to vote in favor of the motion to adopt Calendar Item 467, you may press *one (1)*, and *two (2)* for no.

(pause)

The vote is now closed, and we will get the result on the screen. 669 have voted in favor. 54 have voted no.

[Yes, 669; No, 54]

(video playing)

(laughter)

Thank you. That was not a jingle.

You have voted to adopt Item 467. Thank you.

And let us express our appreciations to the chairs of the legislative committees who presented.

(applause)

I will now turn to the secretary of General Conference, Gary Graves, for some announcements. Gary.

GARY GRAVES (Kentucky, Secretary of the General Conference): Thank you. We hope you enjoyed the premiere of the theme song for the Study of Ministry Commission.

(laughter)

As we make our way to lunch, we do want to remind you of a couple of lunch announcements. For those who are attending the ecumenical lunch in Richardson Ballroom A and B, you have been asked to bring your interpretation devices with you. For those of you who are on the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy, a reminder that that meeting is in room W206A and B. For those who are needing something to do during the lunch time, please remember that we have the exhibit hall in Hall A, and there are many things there and many people who are waiting to greet you. If you have not found your way to Exhibit Hall A, for the exhibit hall, please be sure to do so.

During lunchtime, we will be having our Holy Communion service at the Prayer Room, E222, and today it is Bishop David Bard who will be leading that service.

Thank you, Bishop. Those are our announcements.

BISHOP ALSTED: Thank you. Thank you for your kindness. You have been wonderful to work with this morning. I also want to thank my two supporting bishops, Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai and Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, for their support. And also our parliamentarian.

Friends, it is now 11:57, and you have just received the gift of three extra minutes for your lunch break so use them well.

We are now in recess. Enjoy your lunch.

(applause)