

**Highlights from
Living the United Methodist Way - Turning the World Upside Down
Gaye King**

Workshops I attended

- Visioning Leadership for the Annual Conference Church
- The Congregation's Plan for Family and Age Level Ministries
- The Challenge of Globalization and Its Impact on the World Poor
- All God's People Healthy for Life
- Commission on Religion and Race Agency Workshop

Prior to the conference, I attended a one day workshop for Church and Society Leaders. As we discussed advocacy ministries we lifted up the thought that advocacy is all about prayer, relationships, education, and mobilization. If we are to turn the world upside down . . . living the United Methodist Way – this should be our path.

Because of my position at the conference, I took a variety of workshops, but the one thing that stands out most in my mind came from a session entitled “The Challenge of Globalization and Its Impact on the World Poor”. In the area of engaging in ministry with the poor, we were reminded that we need to be in ministry with the poor not minister to the poor. As a church we do a pretty good job at ministering to the poor. We make a plea for offerings and supplies, and Holston responds generously. But that may not be the poor's greatest need.

At this workshop, a young man from Africa gave a perfect illustration of this. He said that as a child he remembers a missionary coming to his village and observing their music and worship and then making the statement that what they needed was a piano instead of their native instruments. A plea for a piano was made and soon the piano arrived . . . only to be silent. No one knew how or wanted to play this foreign instrument. The missionary had assumed they knew what the people needed, but had failed to listen to their needs.

If we are to engage in ministry with the poor we must listen to their needs and engage in ministry with them – not to them! And it should begin with prayer and continue with building relationships. I believe education will play a key role and by developing leaders for the church and world, we will be better situated to mobilize the church. We can do this by walking beside the poor, living it rather than hearing it. That's why UMVIM trips are so effective – it's hands on training.

I think we need to challenge each congregation to exam themselves by asking the question “If tomorrow, we ceased to be, would anyone other than our members notice?”

Visioning Leadership fro the Annual Conference Church

This workshop was not what I expected. It was led in a tag-team approach – unfortunately the team didn't seem to match. One thing I took away from the session is that we need to help folks to see the bigger, broader and better picture. We need to help them through

“supervision” – helping them have superior vision and super intent – beyond the ordinary. There was a period of time for sharing from those attending and some resources were shared.

The Congregation’s Plan for Family and Age Level Ministries

In this session we spent most of the time discussing the previous plenary session on developing new congregations and renewing existing ones. We talked about what we had heard and we reflected on ways we were presently supporting and planning for family and age-level ministries in our individual conferences. We talked about training, utilization of research, creating networks and communication – especially in view of our changing world.

The Challenge of Globalization and Its Impact on the World Poor

Statistics were shared in the plenary preceding this session. Two that were memorable: 80% of the world population lives on less than \$10.00 a day. (I spent \$10 just eating lunch today!) 20% of the world population has 75% of the world’s income (and that includes most United Methodists). Poverty has a human face and it confronts us every day. If we are to engage in ministry with poor, then we must be willing to listen to the poor, accept the poor and acknowledge their presence and be ready to serve the poor by responding to their needs. Creating new places for new people (or renewing existing ones) will require us to look for ways to see the faces of the poor children and in seeing their faces we will see Christ. We need to learn how to start churches for the poor or integrate them into our existing congregations.

All God’s People Healthy for Life

We talked about what we had learned in the previous plenary. A few notable thoughts: We aren’t starting the idea of Global Health. We are already winning in most parts of the world. In the last 100 years, the average lifespan has increased by 37 years. The good news is “Yes We Can”!

We talked about health care requiring attention to:

- Environmental Factors (clean air, pure water)
- Public Health Factors (disease prevention)
- Social Lifestyle Factors (balance work & family)
- Spiritual Lifestyle Factors (hopefulness, love)
- Personal Lifestyle Factors (habits, addictions)
- Cultural Factors (harmful traditional practices)
- Economic Factors (poverty)
- Political Factors

We also shared ideas and resources for health ministries within the local congregation and conferences.

Commission on Religion and Race Agency Workshop

In this session we spent time talking about the role of Religion and Race in the local church as well as on the conference level and its role. Monitoring is a place to start but the work of Religion and Race is more than monitoring. Each annual conference should have regular

assessments and reviews and identify where diversity is doing well and where it is lacking. Monitoring is more about who we are serving and who we are not. It is about relationships across racial lines. The annual conference should provide training for clergy and congregations for cross-racial appointments.