

PRESS RELEASE

RENEW Takes Part in Dialogue with Bishops' Task Force

Renewal leaders discuss unity issues with panel of bishops

Lake Junaluska, N.C., Nov. 9, 2009. Twelve leaders of several renewal groups within the United Methodist Church met with the Bishops' Unity Task Force. We were grateful for their invitation to meet and share our concerns about the unity of the church and how we can move forward in mission together. The same task force had previously met with a group representing the Reconciling Movement and the Methodist Federation for Social Action.

We had a wide-ranging and forthright discussion about the matters that threaten the unity of the UMC. We spoke about:

- The theological differences that divide our church;
- Events at General Conference that have concerned us; and
- Activities and decisions outside of General Conference by UMC leaders which have, at least in our thinking, created divisions rather than unity.

The renewal leaders were very clear that we respect the office of Bishop and that we want our bishops to lead us by defending and promoting the church's positions on controversial issues as stated in **The Book of Discipline**. While we affirmed that we can respectfully listen to all opinions and act graciously towards all people, we cannot accept all positions or compromise on what God has clearly revealed in the Scriptures.

We were heartened by the desire of the bishops to hear and understand us. It was also encouraging to hear from them that many of the issues that concern the renewal groups have been discussed in the Council of Bishops. All of us present were in agreement that there must be a better way "to do General Conference" and some ideas were shared along those lines. We are now determining if and how the conversation will continue. Thank you for caring for the United Methodist Church and for the cause of Christ

Renewal Group Representatives:

Dr. Billy Abraham (Perkins School of Theology); Steve Wood (Sr. Pastor, Mt. Pisgah UMC, Atlanta); Steve Wende (Sr. Pastor, First UMC, Houston); Tom Harrison (Sr. Pastor, Asbury UMC, Tulsa); Alice Wolfe (Sr. Pastor, Anna UMC, Anna, OH); Chuck Savage (Sr. Pastor, Kingswood UMC, Dunwoody, GA); Pat Miller (Executive Director, The Confessing Movement); Tom Lambrecht (Sr. Pastor, Faith Community UMC, Greenville, WI); Liza Kittle (President, RENEW Network); Larry Baird (District Superintendent, Cornerstone District, Western NY Conference); Eddie Fox (World Director of Evangelism, World Methodist Council); and Rob Renfroe (President and Publisher of Good News, Assoc. Pastor, The Woodlands UMC, Texas), Chairperson.

Council of Bishops Representatives:

Sally Dyck (Minnesota), Chairperson; Mike Lowry (Central Texas); Minerva Carcano (Desert Southwest); Peter Weaver (New England); Daniel Arichea (The Philippines); and Joao Machado (Mozambique).