



West Ohio Annual Conference June 9-12, 2008, Lakeside, Ohio

The 39th session of the West Ohio Annual Conference, presided over by Bishop Bruce R. Ough, was an experience in living the United Methodist Way. Under the banner of “Love First”, members and guests received a powerful reminder that at the core of our Wesleyan theology is Jesus’ great or first commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself.

In his eighth Episcopal address, Bishop Ough challenged the members and guests of the annual conference to live the “Love First” theme during conference and after.

“Throughout the four days of this conference session and beyond, “ Ough said, “let us hold fast to the words of I John: ‘Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another...; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God’s love is perfected in us.’ (I John 4:11-12)”

Using the metaphor of an ever flowing stream, Ough called the people of West Ohio to be the “*irrigation system for God’s love...the channels through which God’s ever flowing love is delivered to our neighbors, to our communities, and to the world.*” Bishop Ough then invited all annual conference members to sign a covenant card affirming their commitment to live the United Methodist way by promising to abide by three simple rules: do no harm, do good, and love God.

Following the Episcopal address, Bishop Rueben Job and Bishop Ough engaged in a question and answer session on Job’s book “The Three Simple Rules”, which was then distributed to all in attendance.

In keeping with the “Love First” theme, special guests Bishop William Willimon, and Rev. Rudy Rasmus, each contributed powerful presentations to the conference audience. Bishop Willimon led two worship services with his inspiring and often humorous messages on love and following Christ. Rev. Rasmus moved the members of the conference with two very personal and profound messages, asking at one point “What are you waiting for?” and ending with an altar call for the standing room only crowd of over 2500 members and guests.

The most dramatic and visible evidence of inspiring love came when the “Love First” Miracle offering of over \$450,000 was presented by the churches of West Ohio to Bishop Ough for “Nothing But Nets” and the conference’s Southeast Asia partnership. Missionaries Karen and Ut Vo To (Vietnam) and Nicholas and Esther Gitobu (Cambodia) were in attendance and expressed immense gratitude for the opportunities West Ohio’s Love First offering would provide their ministries in SE Asia. Throughout the week Net

Games – both spontaneous challenges and planned events – invited participation and offered excitement. Interspersed between the activities and conference reports were a series of Ministry Moments videos, lifting up leaders, churches and ministries supported by and partnered with the West Ohio Conference. A Ministry Fair offered exhibits by churches and other ministries excelling at the core process, and workshops led by Igniting Ministry, who announced a new 4-year partnership with the West Ohio Conference.

In other conference business, members approved resolutions that:

- Realigned the structure of the Conference Connectional Ministries Council to more effectively support the mission, vision and strategies of the West Ohio Conference;
- Provided a set of procedures which will allow healthy churches to remove the direct costs associated with the launch of a new church start or satellite from the amount used to calculate apportionments paid by the parent church;
- Encouraged the West Ohio Conference, its churches and individuals to explore and take action to better care for the earth as part of our Christian discipleship. A second resolution empowered the Creation Care Task Force to advocate for energy reform legislation;
- Called upon the churches and church members of West Ohio to actively oppose any efforts to legalize gambling in the State of Ohio and offer radical hospitality to those organizations who are offering support to people affected negatively by gambling;
- Contributed \$400,000 from the earnings on the 2007 West Ohio Conference pension reserve to the Central Conference Pension Initiative and agreed to do so for the next four years;
- Asked West Ohio pastors, congregations, staff and members to refrain from judgment regarding homosexual persons and practices and study with open hearts and open minds materials available through Cokesbury on heterosexism and homophobia;
- Offered a new vision/mission statement on diversity and inclusion to be used by the West Ohio Conference;
- Called upon Federal and State officials to stop raids on illegal immigrants and work for comprehensive reform of immigration laws;
- Encouraged all Christians to use faithful discernment in their television choices and find effective ways to express concerns about programming to networks.

Bishop Ough ordained twelve elders and three deacons. He commissioned fourteen probationary and two associate members, and honored forty-five pastors in their retirement. Bishop Reuben Job gave a moving apostolic charge to the conference's newly ordained clergy encouraging them to *“Go where the wounds are...without fear...and with your loving presence, prophetic witness, and pastoral care.”*

For photos, videos, & more information from Annual Conference, visit our website at www.westohioumc.org.



Office of Communications | West Ohio Conference

The United Methodist Church | 32 Wesley Blvd | Worthington OH | 43081
(614) 844-6200x229 | (800) 437-0028 | fax (614) 781-2642 | www.westohioumc.org

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church