



UMNS photo by Tim Tanton

WASHINGTON – Bishop Bruce Ough leads the discussion of the focus on making disciples at the Council of Bishops' spring meeting.

Bishops sharpen focus on making disciples of Christ

WASHINGTON (UMNS)—The bishops of the United Methodist Church spent their weeklong spring meeting working on their primary focus: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The bishops adopted the 2005-08 emphasis last fall as their quadrennial focus, one that points directly to the United Methodist Church's primary mission of disciple-making.

The emphasis permeated every aspect of the bishops' May 1-6 meeting in Arlington, Va.—the worship services, business sessions and field-trip discussions. Bishop Peter Weaver, council president, said afterward he sees “a growing unity of this council around this mission focus” and enthusiasm among the bishops for embracing it and living it out.

The Council of Bishops also adopted new resolutions on several issues, including capital punishment, Hunger Awareness Day and the sexual enslavement of Asian women by the Japanese military during World War II. On May 3, five bishops made a pastoral visit to President George W. Bush in a meeting that they said opened the door for future conversations and work with the White House. On May 5, a small delegation of bishops met with U.S. lawmakers and other government officials on such concerns as AIDS and support for struggling African countries during a visit to Capitol Hill.

The bishops are the top clergy leaders of the 10 million-member church, which has congregations throughout the United States, Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The church has 68 active bishops and more than 90 who are retired worldwide.

Missouri Conference ordered to pay \$6 million to musician

COLUMBIA, Mo. (UMNS)—The United Methodist Missouri Annual (regional) Conference has been ordered to pay \$6 million in damages to a former local church music director. A civil court jury found in favor of Teresa and Sid Norris of Springfield, Mo., awarding them \$2 million in compensatory damages on April 29 and \$4 million in punitive damages on May 4. The couple sued the Missouri Conference for intentional failure to supervise and act on complaints against a pastor more than six years ago. Mrs. Norris — music director of Campbell United Methodist Church from Sept 1, 1997, to April 26, 1998 — and her husband filed the lawsuit in 2002, contending the conference did not appropriately respond to informal complaints that were filed against the Rev. David Finestead,

and that this alleged failure to respond put Norris in danger. Norris alleged that Finestead, then pastor of the church, raped her on March 25, 1998, in her office at the church. Conference leaders met May 6 to discuss financial and legal options for future operations.

Logo design sought for 2008 General Conference

EVANSTON, Ill. (UMNS)—Entries are being sought for a logo design for the 2008 General Conference depicting the theme “A Future with Hope,” from Jeremiah. The Commission on General Conference is sponsoring the contest and will award \$500 for the winning design. Deadline for entries is June 15. The logo design must relate to the United Methodist Church, General Conference and the location of the 2008 conference, which is in Fort Worth, Texas. The winning logo becomes the sole property of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. Entries should be sent to Business Manager of General Conference, 1200 Davis St., Evanston, IL 60201, or by e-mail to gbowen@gcfa.org.

New King James version of Bible tops best-seller list

WASHINGTON (RNS)—For the first time since its original imprint in 1982, the New King James Version of the Bible is in the top spot of a publishing best-seller list thanks to an evangelical initiative called the Million Bible Challenge. The challenge paired Thomas Nelson Inc., one of the country's largest Bible publishers, with CBA—the former Christian Booksellers Association—to exclusively sell the New King James Version for \$1 per copy at all CBA stores. The campaign's goal was to get the NKJV to more than 1 million people by the end of 2005. Two weeks after its March launch, Nelson sold more than 500,000 units.

Metro Atlanta church assists families of murder victims

ATLANTA (UMNS) – The tragic deaths of four public servants has inspired a United Methodist congregation to reach out in compassion to the loved ones left behind. On March 11, accused rapist Brian Nichols allegedly murdered three Fulton County employees and one U.S. customs agent. Nichols, who was scheduled to go to court that day, also kidnapped a woman who was later released unharmed.

Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in Alpharetta has paid off the mortgage of slain deputy Hoyt Teasley and started a college scholarship fund for his two children. The church had scheduled a special offering for the Sunday following the shootings to go toward homeless ministries with a goal of raising \$100,000. But after the shootings and kidnapping, the Rev. Allen Hunt told the 7,000-member congregation that anything over \$100,000 would go toward helping the families of the shooting victims. The church has now raised \$230,000 – and donations are still coming in. ■



Photo courtesy of Mount Pisgah UMC

The Rev. Allen Hunt noted the heroism of slain Atlanta deputy Hoyt Teasley during his weekly radio show, “Pastor of Radio,” on WOKV-AM in Jacksonville, Fla.