



Stop throwing stones. Sit down and listen.

I was six years old when my grandfather taught me to skip a smooth stone on a forest pond. Skip, skip, skip, *splunk* it went across the black water and into the leaf-covered bank on the other side. My grandfather's strong, coalminer arms could have skipped me across the water, but instead his calloused hand gently surrounded mine as he showed me the proper way to hold jagged red-dog slate.

He also taught me how to sit still at the edge of the pond and listen for deer, birds, and other creatures that came to drink the cool, clear water. It was important not to startle the creatures as they sipped. After all, they probably walked farther than we did to reach the water's edge.

Each Christmas my family and 30-plus other relatives and friends – and usually a few dogs – gather at my grandmother's house to celebrate the season. My grandfather died some years ago, but his lesson of throwing rocks and compassion stay with me.

Admittedly I have always liked to throw rocks more than listen. Listening takes time, for goodness sake. Who has that to spare with the whole wilderness calling your name? As I grow older I realize that I like to throw rocks of all types, and I have become pretty good at hitting my target. Oh no, not just red-dog slate, but also silky-smooth political rocks, quasi-religious quartz, and of course, that self-righteous slag that is so very easy to find.

Throwing rocks is fun for a while, but the most cherished moments occur when the creatures arrive. True peace at the pond happens when those who can throw rocks sit down and listen. So many of God's creatures thirst for water and have none, and yet even the nearsighted skunk deserves a little sip.

The world is thirsty for peace at the pond.

Behind the nuclear banter of North Korea I hear a voice that is desperate, defensive, and thirsty. The sectarian violence in Iraq is radically more vio-

lent, frantically desperate, and equally thirsty. The growing economic divide in my own backyard is painfully obvious, and yet, as a church we often are silent when we should throw rocks. Many of God's creatures have had to walk a long way to the water's edge. Can we offer peace enough to drink?

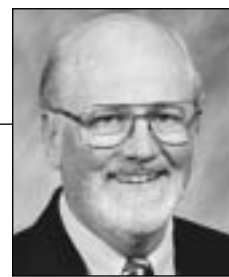
The Prince of Peace said, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." My hand is stayed and my ears are open. It is a lot easier to throw rocks, but peace comes through compassionate listening, a just sharing of resources, and bold faithfulness in the face of the impossible.

Christmas has come and gone once again, but any day is a good day for peace on earth to begin. It can happen. I have seen it at the pond. ■

The Rev. Hanshew is chair of the Peace With Justice Committee and associate pastor at Fountain City United Methodist Church.

resolutions & petitions:

By Jim Green



Therefore be it resolved

Before we gather at Lake Junaluska in June 2007, there will be opportunities to discuss the many facets of the historic annual conference. This article will attempt to shed light on resolutions and petitions, highlighting differences and similarities. Further, procedural issues will be outlined to assist members of the conference in understanding how both resolutions and petitions are handled.

Let's begin with resolutions. A resolution to the Annual Conference deals with some aspect of the life and ministry of the Annual Conference. A resolution is essentially "in house." Look in the 2006 "Journal" on page 944 to examine resolutions that have been passed. A good resolution begins with statements of fact and ends with a statement that is relevant to the facts stated. A resolution says, "Here are facts to consider, and in light of these facts, here is an appropriate action to be recommended."

A resolution to the Annual Conference generally calls for some concrete action on the part of the conference. It is important that a resolution be very clear and specific.

The Task Force on Family Ministries resolution passed in 2003 is a good example of a meaningful resolution that continues to yield fruit. It began with a concern that was developed into a resolution that formed a task force that now has implemented a meaningful ministry in the life of Holston. There are many such examples.

When we turn to petitions to General Conference,

we are in a different arena. Petitions must follow strict rules because they can amend the contents of the *Book of Discipline*. The modifying of the *Book of Discipline* can only be done by the quadrennial meeting of the General Conference. Specific directions for formulating petitions to the General Conference are provided at this link: <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=7139>

The work of the Holston Conference Joint Committee on Resolutions and Petitions is an important component in the administration of resolutions and petitions. The agenda of the diverse Joint Committee is clear: Receive the resolution or petition. Read. Study. Pray. Discuss. Recommend. Following the recommendation of the Committee, the matter is the province of the plenary sessions of Annual Conference. It is a process that has served Holston well for many years. Here's how it will work:

(1) All resolutions to the Annual Conference must be in the conference office by March 1, 2007. E-mail them to SheilaKnowles@holston.org.

(2) All petitions to the General Conference that the sponsors want considered by the Annual Conference must be in the conference office by March 1, 2007. E-mail them to SheilaKnowles@holston.org.

(3) The Joint Committee on Resolutions and Petitions will meet soon after March 1, 2007, to consider the resolutions and petitions and formulate recommendations.

(a) The recommendation on either resolutions or petitions will be either concurrence or non-concurrence. The

"2007 Book of Reports," received by every member of the Annual Conference, will contain copies of the resolutions and petitions with a statement of recommendation from the Committee.

(b) If the Annual Conference votes concurrence on any petition to the General Conference, the petition will be sent by the Conference Secretary to the Petitions Secretary of the General Conference for consideration.

(c) If the Annual Conference votes non-concurrence on any petition to the General Conference, the sponsor(s) of the petition can still send the petition to the Secretary of General Conference Secretary by following the procedures outlined in the instructions.

(d) Sponsors of a petition to the General Conference can send the petition to the General Conference Petitions Secretary without it ever being considered by the Annual Conference as long as all prescribed dates and directions are respected.

(e) In regard to "c" and "d" above, it is our understanding that all petitions to General Conference, regardless of the route they take, will receive equal treatment.

(f) Resolutions approved by the Annual Conference will move into the programmatic structure of the Annual Conference following the recommendations of the resolution.

These observations should get us on the same page when important issues are under discussion. ■

The Rev. Green is chair of the Joint Committee on Resolutions and Petitions and a retired clergy member.