

Thomas S. Yow, III - Report to the Board of Trustees, September 2008

Thanks to each of you for your presence at this meeting this weekend and for all that you do as members of this board, and for the many ways that serve the ministry and mission of this Foundation.

We acknowledge today Joan Uht, Barbara Erwin, and Bishop Marion Edwards as this is your last meeting as Trustees. Barbara, who served as Chair of this board, thank you for your service. Joan, who served as Treasurer of this board for a while, thank you for your service. We will say more about that at a later time but we just wanted to say that we are grateful for your service. Marion Edwards is unique. To my knowledge, he is the only bishop of the Church who asked to come on the board. We will miss Marion's input and influence. Walter McKelvey has served as the president of AUMTS, and has been a member of this board in that capacity. Thank you for your service representing our schools of theology. Walter, you are rotating out of that job and we have petitioned them that you be re-elected. I am not sure they will hear us. Thank you for your service.

We are also grateful to Jennifer Braaten for her services as president of NASCUMC. We also want to acknowledge that Cheryl Davis is not here. Cheryl's husband's grandmother, who apparently parented and reared him, passed away suddenly on Wednesday. Cheryl came to this meeting, and has gone back for the funeral for Shane's grandmother, which is today I believe. This has been a particularly hard year for Cheryl. We want to remember Shane and Cheryl and their family at this time.

Thank you again for your willingness to share your time, your talents, your thoughts and ideas with us as we endeavor to provide scholarship assistance to enable United Methodist students to attend United Methodist colleges and theological schools. We are grateful for what you do. We believe that something important is taking place at value-centered educational institutions affiliated with our Church. And we believe that what we do is worthwhile as we help make that experience possible for those students.

We encourage you again, particularly as we go through the planning process, at this meeting, to take time once again to read the Grand Vision, the mission, and the goals of this foundation. We are about leadership development of our denomination. We endeavor to make it possible for United Methodist students who wish to do so, to attend a United Methodist related college or theological seminary. We want to provide enough scholarship assistance to make it financially possible for students to attend our colleges and seminaries. We decided, therefore, that it is important that we make scholarship of sufficient amount to make a difference. Accordingly, you decided that it was better to give more money to fewer students so we could make a difference in their decision making process.

Our mission remains what it has always been, that we raise, administer, manage, and distribute funds that will benefit the educational institutions of our Church. It has been the implementation of that mission since 1964 that has enabled our successes and our ability to assist students. We seek to help keep our institutions remain viable as we seek to help put students in the front door. You have heard me say many times that our institutions really

only need three things, friends, funds, and freshmen. And we endeavor to be a good friend and to provide funds to enable them to have freshmen. It is essential that we continue this four-pronged aspect of our ministry to raise, administer, manage, and distribute and I would suggest to you that we are being faithful to that mission.

2008 has been a mixed year. Through the 31st of August, our gifts exceeded our goal for the year. We are pleased that we are able to tell you that we have passed the 2008 goal set by the Resource Development Committee. We thought was a stretch goal. In 2007, we raised over one million dollars in non-estate gifts for the first time in many years. I believe that we will pass that mark again this year. I will not pretend to tell you, that with this economy I think we will surpass the 2.3 million dollars that we were able to generate in gifts in 2007. I believe however that we will exceed the one million dollars gift again this year. Please know how much we appreciate your financial support that helps make that possible. We also much appreciate the fact that you contact others and ask them to also give money for financial support, all of which goes toward an endowment fund to assist students.

I am also pleased to report to you that in 2008 the Dollars for Scholars Program provided scholarships to all eligible applicants! Thank you for what you've done to help make that possible. I hope that we can do that again in 2009. We met the need, and we are helping to make a difference.

Thank you also for your participation last March in the dinner honoring Bishop and Mrs. Lawrence McCleskey. We continue to work with Pfeiffer University and Bishop McCleskey to generate funds for that scholarship fund that was established at Pfeiffer to honor Bishop and Mrs. McCleskey. This event re-emphasizes the point that we need to really look at more than one fundraising event each year. We need your involvement in scheduling several events each year.

This morning, we announced, we have made two staffing changes since our last meeting. Liz Schmidt has been appointed as our accounting manager, and Betsy Neely has been appointed as our scholarship administrator. We are looking forward to continuing to work with both of these persons in these new responsibilities. We are excited about the talents they bring to these responsibilities.

There are areas in which we need trustee involvement. The first is in fundraising. One, we need you to help identify potential donors. Your help in identifying persons that can make an investment in the future of the United Methodist Church and the future leadership development of our denomination, is crucial. Please help us in identifying these people.

We also need you to help sponsor an event for the foundation. Some of you already have done so. We need to sponsor smaller, more intimate events at your home, or other places at your convenience. Those smaller events could focus on a particular institution, the general endowment fund, or a special interest at our institutions. As we endeavor to expand our donor base, and expand our giving. We need more ways to introduce our mission to persons who may be interested. We need and appreciate this continued support.

We also need you to help in visibility for the foundation. We need you to lift up the mission and work of our foundation in your local church. We hope you will encourage your churches to make a gift to our endowment fund as a part of the local church budget. Please consider leading your church to a gift to our endowment fund. This gift could be designated for a member of your congregation. Such a gift creates a connection between your church and our higher education ministry.

Many churches that have had students receive the Dollars for Scholars gift, are making annual gifts toward an endowment fund, so that we can continue to expand that program. We have the ability to go back to them, and particularly with the quadruple program, and say, “We took your gift, and we were able to quadruple what you gave, through our general church and connected ministry. We hope that you will want to make a gift to this endowment fund, so this can be possible for other persons across our denomination.” We ask that you lead your congregation to make this type of gift, and to encourage your local church to consider a gift as a part of its budget to our endowment fund.

We also hope that you may invite a member of the staff to visit your local church to make a presentation. I’m happy to come and do that; others are, as well. We are glad to make a presentation that will help more United Methodists people be aware of what we do and our scholarship programs. We also hope that you will distribute foundation literature at your church, in a visible place where people can pick it up and know about us and ask questions.

We need you to identify new trustees. It is important, as we continue to remodel this board to resemble a typical not-for-profit board, that you help us to identify outstanding United Methodist professional leaders around the denomination; and we hope that you will do that. We hope that you will also encourage persons to become involved in our mission and our work.

We continue to need your wisdom; we need your ideas; we need your questions. As you ask questions and challenge us to think about new ways of doing things, we get better. As you express to us your concerns about things that are happening, we get better. So, an important part of trusteeship is asking hard questions, and expressing new ideas, and giving us new suggestions. We hope you will do that. Thank you for the many ways that you help make this a better organization.

This will be an important meeting. We begin the process of strategic planning. I think it is going to be an exciting kind of adventure. There are a lot of hopes about where this planning process may take us. It will be important, tomorrow, as we work together, that we begin a positive, affirming, and strategically forward looking process.

Our Audit Committee also brings an important report. You will be hearing the audit report for 2007, as well as a proposal that we consider changing auditors.

The Investment Committee spent a lot of time yesterday discussing new methods and strategies as we met with the firms responding to an RFP. They will be wrestling with

some important questions today, and will bring to you a report recommending important policy decisions.

Our Budget & Finance Committee is going to be reviewing a budget that is going to be stretched in this time of decreasing resources. Many non profits depend on stock appreciation and we are no exception. We must wrestle with the implication of decreasing stock values on our annual budget.

The Resource Development Committee will review our fundraising status and point us to 2009 goals. I think the committee also will help us to begin to think through in a more systematic kind of way of how we encourage more persons to consider the foundation endowment as a part of their estate. There is a significant amount of potential there, and I hope that we can take advantage of it.

The other committee work is also important. I am excited about where we are. I want to confirm to you that the work of the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation is going well. We are continuing to do what has been asked of us to do. We are serving an increasing number of students. We are increasing the variety of programs. We have a positive image with our institutions and with other United Methodist foundations.

At one time in my career I taught Old Testament. One of my favorite characters in the Old Testament is Moses. In fact, the first year I taught, I was looking at student evaluations, and one student said that it took me forty years to get through the wilderness experience. It probably seemed that way. In the third and fourth chapters of Exodus, Moses has left Egypt and has gone to live with his mother's family. He is a shepard. God appears to Moses through the burning bush. In that bush, God calls Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. In response, Moses asks, "Tell me who you are! I need to know who this is that is talking to me." And the response is, "I am who I am!" I affirm that I 'am' is a present tense verb. The affirmation is that "I am". God is always present, as Walter said in his devotional this morning. "I am" called Moses to do something very important. "Go back and assemble your people and lead them to the Promised Land". Moses offers many excuses why he is not suited for this task. But then, God says, "I will empower you, Moses, to do the tasks that are before you. I will provide for you the resources that you need to do the work that I have called you to do." With the exception of some of his early life as the child of the Egyptian princess, Moses has lived a pretty ordinary life. At the time of his call, he was a shepherd. He most likely saw himself as being a fairly ordinary person, and yet, God called him to do something very important.

This past spring and summer, I had the opportunity to attend General Conference [which is a lot like watching the grass grow], several of the meetings of annual conferences and my jurisdictional conference. Through that process I was able to see many former students, and others who were college/seminary friends, as well as others who served as trustees at institutions where I have been employed.

When I was a college president, I had a steadfast rule "Never look at the transcript of a an alumni trustee. No good comes from that knowledge." But, as a director of admissions and

as a president, I certainly knew something about the academic record of those people who enrolled as students, and who were students when I was there. You might imagine my surprise when I saw some of those people in real leadership roles in our church. I am reminded of a newspaper cartoon on the wall of the office of a Chemistry professor at Louisburg College; the professor is lying on a gurney and is being wheeled into an operating room. He saw his surgeon, and said, “Oh my goodness! That was a “C” student!”

This spring and summer I had the privilege of seeing former students, lay and clergy, in real leadership roles across our denomination. I had the privilege of seeing one elected to the episcopacy; others were delegates and pastors of leading churches and of their annual conferences. In some cases I know what they brought to the table. I had the privilege of serving as a president of a college that would not have admitted me as a high school student. I know what can happen at our institutions. I am sure that Stephanie, Walter, Jennifer, Ruth and Ken can relay similar experiences of people who have attended their institutions. I know that our colleges and denominational theological schools do a good job of enabling people to develop a vision of what they could be. I also know that the resources are available to prepare these students to achieve that vision.

As God worked with Moses, our institutions have also enrolled people whose talents may have been pretty ordinary, given them the vision of what they could become, and helped them to become something extraordinary. Something happened in the lives of those men and women that made them understand their potential: their intellectual potential; and their leadership potential, and to move into leadership roles. Something changed their perspective on themselves; gave them inspiration; and made them begin to believe in their own talents and abilities. I am sure there are a lot of things at work here. I choose to believe that what happened in their experience at a United Methodist college or seminary significantly influenced that change.

When we begin to wonder if we are really making a difference, consider the students and faculty at the University of Puget Sound that you met last night. Think about the people you have seen, perhaps even your own pastor. Know that important things are occurring, as we help individuals come to understand what they can become and what God has given them the ability to do. I assure you that what is happening on the campuses of our institutions, and what is happening in the lives of our students, is making a difference. I saw that difference this spring. I saw people who we accepted at one institution, because we needed them, making an important difference in the life of their annual conference. Because God took hold of what they could do and they attended an institution that affirmed and supported that process, they grasped the vision of what God would enable them to become. We are providing the means to help transform lives. For those lives to touch our lives makes an ever-winding circle of influence. We are doing good work. You are accomplishing good things. You are making a difference in the lives of people; in the life of our church; in the life of the development of their faith. Be proud of that, and remember that “I am” is always in the present tense.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you in this important ministry.