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In Africa, The United Methodist Church is growing, with new people joining congregations on a daily basis. While the denomination is making an effort to be a global denomination, there are feelings among some that one section of the global denomination dominates:



Lloyd Nyarota

- If you read The United Methodist Church Web pages, they are dominated by American stories.
- If you look at the issues worked on by the General Board of Church and Society, the issues are all based on a U.S. agenda. Africa is normally not on the agenda unless the issue is about war, death, poverty, malaria or HIV/AIDS. These may be African problems, but they are not necessarily on our agenda as the priority issues.
- When we look at who is represented

to address the differences of opinions on a number of moral and spiritual issues, recognizing that as a global denomination, there are cultural differences that exist among members. Settings in Africa are different than those in Europe and America. Because of cultural differences, certain issues have to be handled with care, while respecting each other's culture.

Take for example, the issue of homosexuality. In most African cultures, this is something people cannot talk of, even outside the church. In other cultural settings, it may be tolerated as a norm.

As the church, we have to be inclusive but also respect those with different cultural interpretations of morals and values.

We also have to decentralize to be truly global. If we do this, we'll be able to better hear the prayers of the people. They are crying out because of HIV/AIDS, hunger and the need for peace in the world.

Financial challenges are a reality in the church.

Decision making is often based on availability of funds. It appears that those who can raise dollars can push for programs, yet these programs may not be priorities or the missional needs of those who "have not."

around decision-making tables, the United States always has the largest number of delegates; Africa is the least represented. However, when it comes to who walks into churches on Sundays, Africa has the biggest numbers.

- Financial challenges are a reality in the church. Decision making is often based on availability of funds. In too many situations, it appears that those who can raise dollars can push for programs, yet these programs may not be priorities or the missional needs of those who "have not."

As a denomination, we need to decentralize and have a global agenda. We need

Poverty is the major killer of people in the Third World because those who are rich create the war, and it's the poor who suffer. Look at Iraq as one case.

All need to be represented equally at decision-making tables. Those who "have not" need to be part of the conversation about their missional needs. The "least of these" need to be heard before funding decisions are made.

The church should be the voice *with* the voiceless, while being the conscience of society.

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