

It is a mark of segregation for the African central conferences to be required to meet after General Conference, and I fear the African block feels disillusioned and not a part of the general church, potentially triggering a breakaway. Submitting resolutions after four years have elapsed makes them outdated and makes the church in Africa lag behind in everything.

*The Book of Discipline* contains issues that are American and should be transferred into the Jurisdictional Conference constitutions. The danger with leaving things unchanged is that the American churches' organizational structure can be mistaken for a global structure. This has financial implications where global funds are being used to do national projects. Separation of the national and continental constitutions, such as the central conferences in Africa, should be done without delay.

**Phillimon Chikafu is chaplain of Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe. (CR was not able to obtain a photo by press deadline).**

When being asked my view of the church and theological education upon being interviewed for the presidency of the Iliff School of Theology a year ago, I said that I deeply believe that both institutions have a basic choice to make: go directly to hospice or be transformed!

Where we must now focus is to help people find fresh and compelling ways to connect that learning with the sometimes unarticulated hopes and fears of the laity—and not just in church settings! Our biggest task is to form leaders who can themselves instill hope, connect the great story found in the gospel message to the stories of God's people, speak in very clear language, and make a winsome case for the urgency of being stewards of God's whole creation for reconciliation and transformation.

**David G. Trickett is president of The Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado**



David Trickett

On Pentecost Sunday 2004, in Newark, Delaware, parishioners of Newark United Methodist Church, the church to which I was senior pastor, read the scripture from Acts 2:2. They read it repeatedly, fifteen times — each in their own language. Before my arrival, the church had been 99% white.

That image showed me what The United Methodist Church can be. That Pentecost morning, a common gospel was shared from a United people ... and I was glad that I was part of The United Methodist Church and could experience the spirit of the Lord and the birth of the church that Sunday. It was a monumental experience. In God's kingdom, Jesus embraced all of us. I came to model that as a pastor. I wasn't black or white, I was a pastor. The church has to find a way to model being The Church of Pentecost: Decision-makers must not assume that whites can only pastor "white churches," and African Americans can only pastor "black churches." The church must realize that the people in the pews are eager to reunite our families. The institution is reluctant. Diversity at events like Schools of Mission across the country can be a model for the denomination.

The church needs to stop the persistent struggle over homosexuality and realize that when we isolate one thing as being more egregious than others, we have "logs in our eyes," and we're not focusing on feeding the hungry, stopping war, ensuring universal health care, etc. All of us have sinned before God's eyes. Racism, adultery, sexism, pedophilia — these persist in separating us from the mission and purpose of our call to be the church of Jesus Christ.

In God's kingdom, full of diversity, Jesus came to embrace all of us. It's time for the church to move beyond comfort zones, embracing the purpose in our hearts to live in the Christ zone.

**Bernard "Skip" Keels is executive director of the Methodist Action Program in Wilmington, Delaware.**



Skip Keels

We must strongly foster ecumenism. Our future is in openness.

We must foster skills and competencies in the leadership of growing and vital congregations. Pastoring, preaching, teaching, and administration are all separate skill sets, and becoming competent in all of them is a tall order. But it can be done, and is being done. These skills can be taught, and the church can do much more to create and empower many more leaders who can be effective in each area.

We need to redouble our efforts to connect with today's and tomorrow's young people. Obviously, they are our future, and the church should be a vital part of their future. Given the nature of the society into which they are being born, this is a major challenge, but there is no more important one for us to address.

**Edward W. Kelley Jr. is vice-chair of the Board of the United Methodist Publishing House.**

The UMC could become engaged in the issues that are affecting God's children around the world: War, torture, terrorism, peace for people on this earth, education for children, healthcare, poverty, immigration, care for elderly. Too often, people talk about how governments control the issues and how money and corporate interests affect the decisions. But the truth is, the church could play a role in the decision-making process, ensuring that those who are voiceless are given voices. The church comprises a lot of voices!

However, to make a difference, we have to unite ourselves.

Across the denomination and within our communities, we are from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and languages. So why not have worship services, programs and events together so that we can truly understand each other, then speak together as one voice?

**Kyung Za Yim is President of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries.**



Kyung Za Yim



Edward Kelley