



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

General Secretary's Address: Rev. Dr. Kim Cape
Wednesday, August 9, 2017
Nashville, Tennessee

Bishop McAlilly, board members, staff, and guests, thank you for coming. I know your presence is a statement of commitment to our common work and for that I am grateful. We also know that some of you have travelled halfway around the world. We know the toll that takes and are doubly grateful.

I have recently returned from two months of the three-month leave you granted me, which I spent at Wesley House in Cambridge, United Kingdom. Thank you for allowing me to do that. I was tired at a cellular level and the time away gave me a chance to refresh and renew—body, mind, and spirit. While I was there, I attended the British Methodist Conference, which was also an educational experience. I learned a lot, and would benefit from going back. I sincerely thank all our staff for the fine way they worked in my absence. I had complete confidence that our work would get done while I was away, and my confidence was well-placed. Thank you all.

The last time I saw some of you, was at our previous board meeting in Mutare, Zimbabwe. I look back at that time with sadness, but also with deep appreciation, and a stronger sense of urgency, and a clearer purpose.

Sadness, because this was the last time many of you saw our friend, Ted Brown, who was a member of this board of directors and had agreed to serve as our interim associate general secretary for the Division of Higher Education. As you know, Ted died six weeks after assuming this role, leaving not only a void in many lives, but also a legacy to be emulated. I appreciate Bishop McAlilly's pastoral presence at that moment of mourning and grief. Since then, we have had several opportunities to be with the Brown family and celebrate Ted's life: at his funeral in Pulaski, Tennessee; a special ceremony during the IAMSCU conference in Puebla, Mexico (where Ted was posthumously honored with The Flame of Excellence, the highest award bestowed by this international association); at NASCUMC two weeks ago, when the presidents of our schools, colleges, and universities showed their support to the Brown family; and also now as we begin the meeting of GBHEM's Board of Directors and honor the memory of our friend. Our prayer is with Cheryl, his wife, and his extended family. God hold them close.

At our last board meeting we were also celebrating the 25th anniversary of Africa University. I think it was incredibly important for us to begin our work this quadrennium at that celebration. The trip helped us build community among ourselves, allowed the cabinet and you to build relationships. But, it did something even more important. It gave you a better understanding of the scope and scale of our work. As you saw at Africa University, our work is very complex.

After six years, I still learn something every day. As I prepared for this address, I read through my last several addresses, primarily to ensure that I don't repeat myself (this is the 13th address I have made), but also to gauge how much of what I am presenting is familiar, and how much is new. It should be no surprise to you that in the past six years our work at GBHEM has changed. The world has changed. The church has changed and we have changed with it. We have had two General Conferences. What was already complex



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became more complex. What was already conflicted became more conflicted. What was already messy became messier.

We all share a sense of urgency. In one of my addresses to this board, I talked about the V.U.C.A. world, with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Bob Johansen, Leaders Make the Future). At the same time, and I think as a result of the VUCA world, the church has become clearer about one thing: the need for leadership.

The General Conference of 2016 asked the Council of Bishops to lead the discernment process around questions of human sexuality with the Commission on a Way Forward. Through the four Areas of Focus, the church has asked, and continues to ask, GBHEM to become THE Leadership Agency for the whole church. Because of the prospect of schism at home, and the explosion of ministry needs across the world, it is clear that we need to equip and form leaders who can navigate rapid change, leaders who can unite true knowledge and vital piety, and have the courage to lead the church to faithfulness in a VUCA world.

I think this is what the church was doing when the 2012 General Conference charged the district superintendent to be the “chief missional strategist.” This is what the General Conference was doing when they asked us to implement the Young Clergy Initiative. This is what the church was doing when they asked us to implement the Central Conference Theological Education Fund. We are the only agency in the last two General Conferences whose portfolio was increased. Because the General Conference is asking us to take Leadership and DO SOMETHING!

Literally, the church is asking GBHEM to be the chief missional strategist for leadership. Bishops can do this with their district superintendents, but they can really only impact their own Annual Conferences. Our primary work is to connect and implement a clear roadmap for Christian leadership formation for the whole church, here and everywhere. Only we can connect the resources that already exist in pockets all over the world. Our local churches, our campus ministry, and our Annual Conferences understand their mission as equipping those entrusted to them to discover their identity and vocation in God, and then lead others in competent service. We are tasked by the church to implement a global leadership process... to change this culture of confusion to a culture of call. Helping connect God’s call with the God’s mission in the United Methodist Church. This is the “SO THAT.” That is why our “ecology of call” resonates so strongly.

Wrestling with these challenges has helped us to define a clearer purpose, a stronger focus on leadership. We have been patting around on this for the last couple of years, especially as GBHEM was named as the agency responsible for the Leadership Focus in the four Areas of Focus. This is what we were doing when we re-instituted our Publishing Office. When you think about it, it becomes clear. Look at the whole ecology of call. The church is asking us to manage this life-long process to develop leaders, both here and around the world. It has been a growing realization for us to see that everything, everything, we do is about contextual leadership formation and development, here and everywhere.

What we are presenting to you is a proactive adaptation of our work. Kim Ingram and Alice Williams have provided key leadership and will present the product of their workgroups after my address. Taking the products of our board workgroups, our cabinet has worked hard to articulate and map this expanded mission and vision. Mark Zuckerberg says that companies fail in two ways: by not hitting their plan and by hitting a plan that is not ambitious enough. He says you never want to fail the second way, because then you have basically failed before you start.



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In a few minutes, when you look at the current organization chart, and then look at our new organization chart, you won't see a drastic change. You may possibly wonder if this is a significant change. You see some shifts in the location of offices. You may think, they are rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. No. Strategy is no longer what we spend a year to dream up and then put on a shelf to gather dust. As we implement adaptation throughout our agency it will mean aligning all of our work to leadership formation and development. We will do Higher Education with this focus. We will do Ordained Ministry with this focus. We will do Global Education through this focus. We will do Administration with this focus. How is this different from what we have always done?

We are now asking the ROI (return on investment) question: What change has this program/event made? In a time of diminishing resources, are we delivering on what the church is asking? Are we giving the church the process we need to produce the kind of leaders we need for 2030? 2050? How do we know? You may say, "Kim, you are crazy." We don't know what the church will look like after 2019 or 2020. You are right. We don't. But I know this: whatever the church looks like, the church will need leaders who can navigate change and complexity in a global context. After college, after seminary, after RIM, will our lay and clergy leaders ask this question, "What do I need to learn to be an effective leader in this context?" And, learn by going where they have to go. The easy thing would be to keep doing what we have always done. Since we don't know the future, do we say, we don't know the future so why change anything?

Friends, we shape the future by decisions we make or don't make now as we seek to align the identity and vocation of GBHEM with the purposes of God to serve the United Methodist Church. Not to decide, is to decide. I look forward to working with you as we lead the church in the proactive adaption of our work into God's future. If as a board member you are asked, "what is GBHEM doing?" The answer is leadership development, here and everywhere. I have built in time for our discussion of this direction in our executive session before lunch. I believe this direction will demonstrate the value of GBHEM to the future of the church in 2020 and beyond.

Albert Einstein taught physics at Princeton University for years. He was distributing the final exam to his class, when one of the students looked over the test and raised his hand. He said, "Dr. Einstein, there must be a mistake. This is the same test you gave us for the mid-term." Einstein smiled, and said, "No, there is no mistake. This is the same test I gave you at mid-term. You are right, it is the same test. And this time the answers are different." We at GBHEM have the same test we have had for years. Now the answers are different. The good news is we know it. I believe that the God who has begun this good work in us will bring it to fruition. May it be so. Bishop McAlilly, this is my report.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Cape