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PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED TRIBUTE TO BISHOP RICHARD AND JULIA WILKE
MAY 28, 1996

Bishop and Mrs. Wilke, I want to take a few moments to send my good wishes to you both as you ~~begin~~ ^{enter} a new stage in your life together ^{on your own}

It's been a great privilege to have known, worshipped, and worked with you these past twelve years. ~~Both of you have done so much~~ ^{to know that I speak for} to strengthen Methodism throughout Arkansas and to sustain and lift the spirits of your flock. ^{may others}

Bishop and Mrs. Wilke, you embody the Wesleyan spirit of outreach. You leave behind a strong church, with new and revitalized congregations throughout the state. Your Disciple Bible Study has guided so many around the world in their personal quests to better understand God's teachings. But most importantly, through your work, you have touched and changed the lives of so many people for the better -- from Hendrix College to Camp Aldersgate to the Children's Home. ^{parents, families, children, families in jail, that call you has helped}

The Bible says of one of the great kings of Israel: "He sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered." Bishop and Mrs. Wilke, you, too have sought your God and worked wholeheartedly. And all Arkansas has prospered.

I wish you good health and many, many happy days with your greatest blessings -- your grandchildren -- and much luck in all of your new endeavors. Thank you so much.

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I talked to Mr. Nixon, who said he'd call me back if he could think of any good anecdote.

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Address to General Conference April 24, 1996

(applause)

JOHN THOMAS (South Indiana): You may be seated. Well friends. A high moment has now arrived. In the commission considering who would have the privilege of making the introduction, several persons were suggested and several person requested that privilege. (laughter) I think it's been the wise decision of the commission to pick her bishop to make that introduction. So from the State of Arkansas, the Arkansas area, Bishop Richard Wilke for the purpose of making the introduction. (applause)

BISHOP RICHARD B. WILKE: The joy of this introduction is to present a warm and gracious friend. And I must say, Mrs. Clinton, you have warm and gracious friends here to receive you. (applause)

The honor is to present to you the first lady of the United States of America, and in many respects, the first lady of the world. (applause) Twelve years ago, when Julie and I moved to Little Rock, Ark., Julie had joined the First United Methodist Church of Little Rock, and I entered my offices in that very same building. We quickly discovered that Hillary Clinton was a vibrant and vital part of the life of that congregation, serving as a Sunday school teacher, a worker with youth, a faithful worshiper in the church. We were privileged to worship with Mrs. Clinton and Chelsea. In fact we were present the morning that Chelsea was confirmed in the church there and both Governor Clinton and Mrs. Clinton were present. One of the fun evenings was an evening that Mrs. Clinton invited an adult Sunday school class for a picnic on the back lawn of the governor's mansion. Now, that's the way to have a Sunday school picnic!

So it was no surprise to me to see in the newspaper a few Sundays after the inauguration the Clintons faithfully trudging through the snow, making their way to the Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. We had no attorney, no chancellor of the United Methodist Church, in Arkansas, but we hadn't needed one up until that time. So one day I invited top professional United Methodists, top business leaders of our church, to lunch. I told them we needed a highly dedicated lay person who loved the Lord, knew and loved the United Methodist Church, and we needed an attorney with such sterling stature that any attorney or legal representative in the state of Arkansas would have instant respect. They ate the free lunch. Then they said with one voice, you are looking for Hillary Rodham Clinton, the finest attorney that you can find. And I was thrilled to have her serve as my church attorney, the chancellor, until the president was elected.

Her great concerns are life-long. Her concern for children reaches back to immunization of children in Arkansas, to presidency of the Children's Defense Fund. Each year she and the governor honored volunteers of Camp Alders Gate, our United Methodist work with children having illnesses or handicapping conditions. I was not surprised when she spoke so forcefully in China, pleading for children, women, human rights. Mrs. Clinton also is in the practice of bringing people together, people of all races and of all social structures. Those of us who know her have seen her move easily and work carefully with people of all backgrounds. Her recent book, *It Takes a Village*, continues her plea for the children of the world. Mrs. Clinton, I wore a Save the Children's tie in your honor today. She is in the forefront for education for children, always. She is in the forefront of health and safety for children, always. She is in the forefront for the spiritual formation and nurture of children, always. So, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce a brilliant attorney, an advocate of concerns dear to The United Methodist Church, a loving mother and spouse, a gracious and warm person who walks as easily among the great of the world as she does in a children's ward in the hospital or in a kindergarten room in the school; to present to you my friend, Hillary Rodham Clinton. (applause)

MRS. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you so much, Bishop Wilke, for that kind introduction. We're going to miss the bishop and Mrs. Wilke in Arkansas, but I am particularly pleased to have just learned as I was walking in that they will both be working on the *Disciple Bible Study* in their continuing efforts.

I have to confess to you that I have not been this nervous, with 150 bishops, someone told me, behind me, since I read my confirmation essay on what Jesus means to me in my home church. (laughter and applause) And I got through that all right. I hope I am able to convey to you my great sense of honor and pleasure at being here.

This quadrennial General Conference is important to all of us who are Methodists. And Methodism has been important to

me for as long as I can remember. My father came from a long line of Methodists who had immigrated from England and Wales. And they took their church very seriously. And when my brothers and I were born, despite the fact we were then living in Chicago, my parents took us back to the Court Street Methodist Church in Scranton, Pa., to be christened in front of my grandfather and other relatives. We recently took back my nephew to go through the same experience at that church.

My parents belonged to a very large and active congregation in Park Ridge, Ill., the First United Methodist Church. It was the center not only for Sunday morning worship, but Sunday evening youth groups and often during the week for other activities. My mother taught Sunday school and my brothers and I were there as often as the church doors opened, sometimes, although my mother later confessed that one of the reasons she taught Sunday school was to keep an eye on my brothers, so that they actually showed up and stayed after they were dropped off.

The Church was a critical part of my growing up, and in preparing for this event, I almost couldn't even list all the ways it influenced me, and helped me develop as a person, not only on my own faith journey, but with a sense of obligations to others.

It taught me practical lessons as well: for example, how to recover from the embarrassment of passing out in an over-heated sanctuary when I was playing an angel during the Christmas pageant. That particular lesson has stood me in good stead on many occasions in my adult life. But most importantly, I learned from the ministers there, and the lay leaders there, the men and women such as yourselves who ran the church life, about the connection between my personal faith and the obligations I faced as a Christian, both to other individuals and to society.

I am particularly indebted to the many people who taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. I can remember the lessons there, sometimes more vividly than what I have read or seen just last week. How many times did I sing the song, "Jesus Loves the Little Children of the World, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." Those words have stayed with me more personally and longer than many earnest lectures on race relations. And to this day, I find myself wondering how anyone who ever sang them could be prejudiced against any group. (applause)

When I graduated into Methodist Youth Fellowship, I was fortunate to have a youth minister who arranged for us living in our very comfortable, middle-class, all-white suburb of Chicago, opportunities to go into the inner city, to have exchanges with church groups of black and Hispanic youngsters, to baby-sit for the children of migrant workers who, for those of you who did not grow up around Chicago in the 1950's and can only imagine flying into O'Hare where everything looks developed, might find it hard to believe how many farm workers we would have, and our church took some responsibility for helping. We visited the residents of nursing homes; we would go to public events that would feature speeches by people we'd barely heard of like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We discussed what our faith meant in the world, and I am so grateful for those lessons and those opportunities.

I am equally grateful that my daughter has had the same, both at her church in Little Rock, and now at her church in Washington. Her Sunday School teachers there have helped her and her peers explore and express ideas and fears. One time just this past year, Bill and I went to a meeting of the teenage Sunday School group where the teenagers talked about what bugged them about their relationships with their parents. And it helped to have another child say what your own child didn't want to say to you directly. It was one of the many experiences that we have had because of the loving and faithful adults who care for young people in the Methodist Church.

And I hope (applause) that one of the lessons we all take from our own experience, and one of the messages that come forth from this conference, is that despite all the headlines and the problems that we face in helping our children and young people, we have so many young people. (applause) And just a few days ago, I received a letter from a young man who is a delegate here from Arkansas. You are going to think that between the Bishop and me we are promoting Arkansas! He wrote to me about all the good things that were happening in his church and conference, and he said to me, "Our Church and our world must know that youth are not just involved in gangs, drugs and violence; they are also involved in youth programs, missions, and the life of our Church." And I hope that each of us, and certainly from my background with the debt I owe to so many who helped me, understand that in today's world, churches are among the few places in society where young people can let down their guard, let off steam, and be part of a fellowship that offers them the opportunity for religious and spiritual expression and acts of humanity. And if we look at the positive side of what we can offer to young people, then we know that at the center of that experience is our faith and our mission as Methodists and as Christians.

That faith has certainly meant a great deal to me over the years, but I know that today, here at this conference and throughout the world, we are faced with many new challenges and opportunities that test and try us; that ask us how we will put into action what we believe. We know we need to strengthen the spiritual and moral context of our lives, and we know that we need a new sense of caring about one another in which every segment of society, every institution, fulfills its responsibility to the larger community, and particularly to families and children.

Here, in the United States, and certainly in the other countries represented here, we see too many children and people who remain on the margins of society. We see children who are unloved, unfed, unhealthy, and unschooled. We see women and people of color who are marginalized because they are denied the opportunities they deserve to become full participants in society. Those are the continuing challenges, and yet, we now know much more about what we can do together to meet those challenges. Despite the problems of poverty and illiteracy and violence, there are solutions being born, being born in churches and communities throughout the world. The bishop mentioned a book that I have written, *It Takes A Village*, which really does, for me, express my fundamental belief that we all have an obligation to reach out to assist each other, and that we all should be willing to work toward solutions to our problems. It is easy to complain about the problems we face. It is harder but far more rewarding to roll up our sleeves and work together to solve them. (applause) I was heartened, therefore, when I read a text of this year's episcopal address, to see that the Council of Bishops has renewed its call to make the welfare of children a top priority. And I commend the Council for adopting the Episcopal Initiative on Children and Poverty which will amplify the discussion of this very important issue worldwide. Children need us. They are not rugged individualists. They depend, first and foremost, on their parents who bare the primary responsibility for their upbringing. And, yet, as a mother, I know that my daughter's life has been influenced and affected by countless other people, some of whom I know; many, many others I will never meet. Think of it: the police who patrol our streets to keep our children safe; the government officials who monitor the quality of air and water and food; the business leaders who employ parents and make decisions about what kind of income and benefits they will receive; the executives who produce the programs that our children see on television. As adults we have to start thinking and believing that there isn't really any such thing as someone else's child. (applause) My child, your child, all children everywhere, must live and make their ways in society, and now, in the increasingly shrinking world we live in, in the larger globe as well.

For that reason, we cannot permit discussions of children and families to be subverted by political or ideological debate. There are strong feelings about what should or should not be done, but there also, I believe, strong areas of agreement where people should get beyond their disagreements to work together. There should be no disagreement about the fact that the family structure is in trouble not only here, but in many parts of the world. There should be no debate that children need the nurturing and care that a stable family can provide. And there should be no debate about a common sense truth--that children are the result of both--the values of their parents and the values of the societies in which they live.

And so, if we look honestly at the problems we have as the Episcopal Initiative is doing, then we should be asking ourselves, "What areas of common agreement do we have that can lead us as individuals, as a church, as community and society to work together on behalf of our children?" We know the biblical admonitions about caring for each other. We know so well what Jesus said to his disciples in Mark, holding a small child in his arms that whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me, but the one who sends me. If we could only keep that in mind, and see in every child's face that faithful, hopefulness. Take the image we have of Jesus--I can remember so clearly walking up the stairs so many times to my Sunday School class, and seeing that picture that is in so many Methodist Churches of Jesus as the Shepherd. Taking that face and transposing it onto the face of every child we see. Then we would ask ourselves, "Would I turn that child away from the health care that child needs? Would I say that there is no help for that child because look who he is or look who her parents are?" No, we would take a deep breath in the face of disappointment in our efforts to help and we would continue to try.

For me, the Social Principles of the Methodist Church have been as much a description of our history, as a prod for my future actions. We can find direction, if we look to the church's call to strengthen families and renew our schools and encourage policies that enable each child to have a chance to fulfill his or her God-given potential. Now, it is not easy to do that. I don't think it ever has been. I believe if one looks back, not only into the Bible, but certainly since then, and reads the stories of John and Charles Wesley and looks to other church leaders in the last century, we know that acting on our faith is never easy. And it is often a test of our own resolve as much as anything else. I think of the stories that I heard even as a child of John Wesley preaching to people who did not want to hear him. There was that one memorable story of where they were throwing whiskey bottles at him. And I think to myself, how many of us, myself included, would even go into places now where we were likely to be the object of thrown whiskey bottles? Not many of us. And in part what we have to confront is our own willingness to take the blessings we have and take them into a world that is complex, often turns away, and may even be hostile. But just look at the tradition we come from. We continue in this church to answer John Wesley's call to provide for the educational health and spiritual needs of children. We can be proud that our church has been a leader in the fight to improve the quality of education, promote parental responsibility, curb smoking among young people, expand comprehensive health care, strengthen marriages, and help people of all kinds of backgrounds. I'm heartened by the work I see being done in the communities of Shalom Initiative, where individual churches and churches in union are looking to transform just four city blocks in some instance. But taking that responsibility on, being there one-on-one with people unlike ourselves, often. Letting people hear the message of the gospel as well as the example of our works. We'll do more to change lives than any program that could be passed by any legislative body. (applause)

As I look at this great gathering, I see reflected here John Wesley's words that the world is my parish, and if that be the case, then I am optimistic. Despite the headlines of the moment, and all of the difficulties we know lurk outside in this city we are in today, and every other one. I am optimistic because I see spiritual growth and action based on that. Beginning to manifest itself in so many different ways. In my book, I wrote a little chapter called "Children Are Born Believers" because I feel so strongly that we owe our children a chance for them to have a spiritual life. For them to be part of a church, and it is not only something we do for them. We do it for ourselves, and we know that in ways we might not even predict consequences can be positive.

A recent survey of young people and drug use found that children and youth who had regular religious involvement and attendance in a church or synagogue were far less likely to engage in self-destructive behavior like drug use. So we do it because we believe and we do it because we trust that it will lead our young people to a better life for themselves.

Just this past month, I attended the funeral of a young man who epitomized the Methodist spirit of compassion and charity. He was the grandson, the son and the nephew of Methodist ministers. His name was Adam Darling. He attended Foundry Church in Washington as my husband and daughter and I do. And he had accompanied Commerce Secretary Ron Brown on his trip to Bosnia, and was among the men and women who died on the side of that mountain in Croatia. He was only 29 years old. But in the four years the president and I had known him, we had seen a young man that not only blossomed professionally, but was committed to rebuilding cities, rebuilding communities, living in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Washington, getting to know his neighbors, babysitting for their children when he had time, hitting a ball with them in the street. Because he understood from the way he was raised, that fame and success were fleeting, but a commitment to the spirit, involvement in the work of his church would give him satisfaction and build a legacy that others, themselves, could take advantage of. I raise his name because when one contrasts what his short, young life meant, and what he was attempting to rebuild, it gives me a great deal of energy and optimism about what all young people can do if they are given the chance.

I know that we have disagreements in society. We even have disagreements in the church. I think one of the reasons that I'm a Methodist is because I think disagreements are part of life. I think *(applause)* it's part of how we grow together. And I think all of us know that despite our disagreements as the *Book of Discipline* puts it, we are engaged in a task to articulate our vision in a way that will draw us together as a people in mission. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are called to work within our diversity, while exercising patience and forbearance with one another. Such patience stems neither from indifference toward truth, nor from an indulgent tolerance of error. But from an awareness that we know only in part and that none of us is able to search the mysteries of God, except by the spirit of God. That call to humility and forbearance and patience is not only important for the work of the church within the church, but it's critical to our work outside. It calls us to try time and again to reach into the lives of those who are left out.

And it also prods us to look for ways we can work together to help our children. If we were able, even within our own church, in every congregation represented here, to help every mother and father be the best parent that parent could be, we would have done a wonderful piece of work. *(applause)* If we are able to persuade every parent that it's important to talk to a baby, to be affirmative toward a child, to wrap that child in the love, attention and discipline every child needs. Then by the time those children reached our schools, we would be able to persuade our teachers to look at every child and see hope, and see possibility. And we could renew and reform our schools so that they involved even welcomed parents through open their doors to the community, and were determined to leave no child behind.

We would also ask those in the business community to think about the decisions they make in terms, not only of their primary responsibility to their bottom line, but also to the communities that they serve and work in. To ask how they, too, could be *(applause)* part of strengthening families. *(applause)* Even simple things like things, like giving time off to parents to go to parent-teacher conferences in schools would send a wonderful signal about what is important. *(applause)* And if we were able to persuade everyone who has any control of what appears on our televisions and what we hear on our radios, to think about their own children, would they want their own children to see and hear what comes into our homes on a daily basis? Or would they rather not? *(applause)* And therefore change what they produce. *(applause)* And we would ask all of us who are members of churches and synagogues and mosques, we would ask all of us, to set an example of love and respect. We would ask all of us, whatever form it appears in our holy writings, to follow what we call "the Golden Rule." We would ask all of us to act on the outside of church the way we try to act inside, and to throw open the doors *(applause)*, to throw open the doors of our churches, and welcome in those who John Wesley sought out. And open those doors after school, on weekends, especially in some of our tougher neighborhoods, so that children have places that are safe to go.

There is so much we can do in meeting these challenges, and so many opportunities for us, as Methodists, to grasp and be part of fulfilling.

I am grateful for my Methodist upbringing. I am grateful for this church. I watch with great interest and appreciation those

of you who struggle to make the decisions that will govern us for the next four years. And I appreciate that you are grasping with the hard issues; being willing to debate and discuss what needs to be done. And I would hope that many of us, not only members of this church, but all people of faith, would say we have so much in common that we can do, and summon our energy on behalf, first and foremost, of our children. If we were to do that, I know we would see changes before our very eyes. And that the church you serve and that has served us, would continue to grow because it was serving the world, living out the gospel, and being a servant for those who need to hear that message.

With that in mind, I thank you for keeping alive the Methodist traditions and teachings; for helping to awaken and strengthen the spirit and faith of men, women, and children; and for helping all of us to have courage in the face of change, to be willing to struggle forward doing what we can individually, and to make common cause with others who believe that we are called, both for personal salvation, but also for the work we must do in this world. Thank you very, very much.

(applause)

BISHOP IVES: Mrs. Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, on behalf of all of us today, we thank you for walking among us, but more importantly, we thank you for your witness in the world into which you go. Go in peace, and may God bless you.

(applause)

JOHN THOMAS: You may be seated. And now, on behalf of the commission, we have asked a commission member, Mollie Stewart of the North Alabama Conference, to make a presentation on our behalf to our distinguished visitor and speaker. Mollie Stewart.

MOLLIE STEWART (North Alabama): Mrs. Clinton, you have graced us with your presence, inspired us with your reflections on the United Methodist Church, and lifted our spirits with your vitality. This has been a historical moment in the life of our denomination. For those of us in the room, it has been an afternoon we will not soon forget. *(applause)* We trust that for you, too, it has been a memorable day. In thanks and appreciation, we, the Commission on the General Conference, want to present you with these two items. First, a copy of the limited edition hymnal of this General Conference. *(applause)* We also want to present to you this wooden trinket box which bears the logo of the General Conference. *(applause)*

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you, Mollie. That's so very nice of you.

General Conference Index

General Conference Webmaster: Susan Brumbaugh
PETS Creator: John Brawn

Speech to General Conference by Hillary Rodham Clinton
1996 United Methodist General Conference

POSS
May 28 (9)

yes
HRC

OFFICE OF SCHEDULING FOR THE FIRST LADY

DATE _____

ORGANIZATION/ EVENT	Bishop Richard + Julia Wilke
DATE	May 15 July - but need when?
LOCATION	asked for 5/15
EVENT DESCRIPTION	Retirement
STATUS	ACCEPT _____ REGRET _____ PENDING _____ VIDEO _____ LETTER _____
CONTACT	per HRC (Millie) Steve Wilke 316-221-4150
NOTES	- it is OK for them to pay (per HRC) <u>Bill to</u> <u>Send to</u> Steve Wilke Southwestern College 100 College St Winfield, KS 67156

-- 3/15/96 from **Steve Wilke**, son of Bishop Richard and Julia Wilke, who is getting together greetings for a video presentation for their retirement this summer. He requests that you do a 3-minute greeting to be included.

Interested in doing? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

☒ Advise him by phone of the cost involved and ask if he's still interested (According to Holly Nichols, it runs \$600-\$800, even when you do several at once.)

☒ Offer to do a letter instead

→ mention he has a friend who can do amateur video



SOUTHWESTERN
COLLEGE
THE PREMIER COLLEGE OF KANSAS

March 15, 1996

Mrs. Millie Alston
East Wing Room 214
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mrs. Alston;

On July 16, 1996 at the Southcentral Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church a *Celebration of Ministry* will be held for Bishop Richard and Julia Wilke in Kansas City. As a part of the program, a video presentation is being made which highlights over 40 years of their ministry.

Enclosed is a letter asking Mrs. Clinton to be part of this video. I know my parents would be deeply blessed by a brief greeting (about 3 minutes) from her.

If Mrs. Clinton is willing to do this, please have her make a video greeting for them by May 15th, 1996. We will be editing together a number of greetings from around the world.

Please send the video to:

Steve Wilke
Southwestern College
100 College Street
Winfield, Kansas 67156

Thank you for all of your efforts in assisting Mrs. Clinton in giving this wonderful gift of affirmation and friendship.

God's Best,

Stephen K. Wilke, Ph.D.
Dean of Students



SOUTHWESTERN
COLLEGE
THE PREMIER COLLEGE OF KANSAS

March 15, 1996

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Clinton;

Thank you for your gracious support of my parent's, ministry. On July 16, 1996 at the United Methodist Jurisdictional Conference in Kansas City, a celebration of Dick and Julia Wilke's ministry (the last 12 as the Bishop of Arkansas) will be held.

As the highlight of the evening, a video presentation of appreciation and friendship for their 40 years of ministry will be shown. I know they would be thrilled if you were a part of that video. To participate you would need to make a brief video message to them.

Most of your efforts go to help large segments of the population. However, on their behalf, I can't think of anything more affirming to them than your acknowledging their ministry. Thank you for considering this gift of kindness. Our prayers are with you and the President as you continue to lead the world.

God's Best,

Stephen K. Wilke, Ph.D.
Dean of Students



SOUTHWESTERN
COLLEGE
THE PREMIER COLLEGE OF KANSAS

April 16, 1996

Mrs. Millie Alston
East Wing Room 214
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mrs. Alston,

Thank you for working with Mrs. Clinton on the video project. We are excited she is willing to do it. We understand that a bill for production of around \$800.00 will be required. Please have the bill sent to my attention with details regarding its payment.

Enclosed is a copy of my fathers summary of his time in Arkansas. I have highlighted aspects which Mrs. Clinton may wish to use.

If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know. Again, thank you so much for your help.

God's Best,

Stephen K. Wilke, Ph.D.
Dean of Students

I. PERSONAL

These last twelve years represent a huge slice of our lives. What a joy they have been for Julia and me. From a personal point of view we have made some of the deepest friendships in our lives, we have been involved in the life of the church at the grass roots and at the highest administrative levels, and we have had a simply marvelous time doing it. We have been blessed with good health. I doubt if I have missed over a dozen days because of sickness or injury. We were able to enrich our lives spiritually through service, prayer and travel. We cared for Julia's mother first in Texarkana and then in Little Rock until her death. Though living at a distance we were able to maintain a warm and wonderful relationship with our children and our grandchildren. Our home in Arkansas has been pleasant; our relationships, a deep and wonderful joy. We will always look back on this chapter of our lives with absolute satisfaction and pleasure. Of course we still have several months of living here yet ahead and much work to do

II. THE CHURCHES OF ARKANSAS

A. When we arrived we realized that Arkansas Methodism like most of the Church was in significant decline in membership. I threw my energies into the fray, stirring up the dust in the Council of Bishops, heading the Church Membership Committee of the Council of Bishops, writing And Are We Yet Alive? and Signs and Wonders and challenging Arkansas to do the things that would reverse the serious decline. Our collective efforts through starting new congregations, encouraging new ministries for children and youth, stressing growth in the Sunday School, relocating a few churches, the Five Star Plan, Vision 2000 and other efforts to motivate

and inspire have brought results. Now, even though, our rural areas are losing population and even though we have not yet learned how to go to the cities with adequate resources, we have slowed down the decline and some years show slight growth or stabilized worship attendance. We see improvement at the youth or children's level. We have started or relocated about 20 new congregations and that has made a tremendous difference. We still have reluctance particularly among the pastors to start new work and it is one of the most spiritually debilitating realities in our Church. But, I wish you could have been with me when I worshipped in Texarkana at Springhill congregation with 346 in worship. Go to Faith Church in Fort Smith or Grace Church in Conway or the great churches in Bella Vista and Hot Springs Village to see what evangelism and new church growth really can mean. We are projecting a new church at Diamondhead on Lake Catherine this June, have purchased land at Mountain Home and in Chenal Valley, and anticipate a new church in Fayetteville and west Little Rock as soon as possible. We have relocated Grace Church, Searcy and hope to relocate Rosewood Church in West Memphis.

Many of our pastors are regaining a Wesleyan spirit of outreach and are learning again what it means to lead people to Christ and into the fellowship of the Church. Many of our churches are exploring after school children's ministries, stronger youth programs, worship services at different times and under different styles. It is a time of great change and some of our churches are feeling the winds of the Spirit and are exploring together, especially through visioning committees, ways in which the laity and the pastors can reach the unchurched.

B. Upon arrival in Arkansas the laity pleaded with me to have longer pastorates. They said that the system of moving pastors quickly, giving them promotions and raises, but tearing up

congregations after two or three years, was weakening the Church rather than strengthening it. People today are so troubled in their own personal lives; they need stability. So, we have worked diligently at this task. It has been hard for preachers to understand because often a pastor is moved to a much larger situation bypassing a good number of pastors so they can stay where they are. But it has been good for the Church. Second, the larger churches are looking for energy, vitality and great enthusiasm. They all ask for a 42 year old, talented and gifted pastor. We have worked with that in such a way that without causing too much pain we now have most of our larger churches served by pastors in their 40's and 50's. We also have a wonderful cross-section of ages in Arkansas so that we will not "hit the wall" with a crisis caused by a host of pastors retiring. The change will be gradual and appropriate. The pastoral demographics look good.

We have now women in leadership capacities and women in ministry in all levels of the church. Hardly a single parish reacts negatively when a woman is being appointed there. This has been a revolution that has occurred without much of a problem over the past decade.

In the years ahead as we continue to work carefully in consultation with pastors and their families - often with jobs that are needed by spouses or education of children etc. and in consultation with the local church that is becoming more and more aggressive, it is very important that the bishops and superintendents - in fact the whole church - avoid the extremes of a lay committee demanding a particular person or on the other hand a pastor who loses sight of his or her commitment to the Gospel and places inordinate demands upon the appointive process.

III. LET ME TALK ABOUT INSTITUTIONS

I was surprised at an earlier meeting of the Episcopal Committee that the committee did not seem to realize how much of a bishop's time is spent working with the institutions of the Church.. I estimate that 30% to 40% of my energies are devoted to institutional life and I am thrilled at what has happened over the past several years:

✓ 1. Hendrix College is not only one of America's great liberal arts colleges, but is now more closely related to the Church. The selection of Dr. Ann Die who is now President of the Private Colleges of America organization and the appointment of Rock Jones as chaplain and the selection of Ellis Arnold as Vice-President of Development has caused good will in every single aspect of the Church's life. With the tremendous financial support that has been received and will be received, Hendrix College has a brilliant future.

2. Philander Smith College with the selection of Dr. Myer Titus who is President of the Independent Black Colleges of America has taken Philander to its greatest moment of achievement. With nearly a thousand students, magnificent new buildings, a strong Board of Trustees, a growing endowment, a heightened visibility, Philander Smith is ready to serve the 21st Century.

3. The Wesley Foundations, frankly, were mostly in shambles. Slowly, the leadership has been changed, the buildings have been renovated in most of the universities. We now have solid Wesley Foundations at each of the four year universities of Arkansas. Quantum leaps of progress have been made in several of these Wesley Foundations. Arkansas Tech is

embarking on a \$700,000 Building Campaign. Many of our future ministers are coming out of the Wesley Foundations.

4. Under Jim Argue's leadership the Foundation is guardian and steward of nearly \$23 million to serve the Church in countless ways. The greatest service in recent months has been the willingness of the Foundation to give loans to local churches. This has amounted to savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to local congregations.

5. The Children's Home has gone through a tremendous change, decentralizing into seven diversified homes ranging from Magnolia to Springdale. It is fully accredited to do the finest therapy work for young people in the state of Arkansas.

6. Aldersgate went through a financial crisis and thanks to the loyalty of the state and to new energized leadership it is able to do its ministry on an even keel financially.

7. SMU went through a total crisis of break down of integrity with the death penalty in football. Under the College of Bishops, SMU totally reorganized its constitution and by-laws, rebuilt its Board of Directors and regained its stature as one of America's great universities.

8. Perkins School of Theology is more open today to a in-depth relationship with the Church than it has been in a long time.

9. Mt Sequoyah has gone through several changes of leadership. But whereas 20 years ago, the bishops were afraid we might lose it, now, it is used 11 months of the year and most of the time at full capacity. It not only serves the Jurisdiction but serves the western part of Arkansas and the North Arkansas Conference as well.

10. Julia's relationship with Texarkana paid great dividends for Camp Tanako. Not only did people in Texarkana as well as others help to rebuild the lodges that were post World War II buildings, but now the marvelous multi-purpose Horace Cabe Center will be available this summer for use. The number of young people participating in Camp Tanako has doubled over the past few years.

11. The campaign for Mount Eagle is under way. We believe that within the next few months we will be able to launch a superb campaign to provide the North Arkansas Conference with its first conference center in its life. It will open the door for a magnificent ministry in the 21st Century.

12. The Florence Crittenton Home is very important. Started by Methodists at the turn of the century, we have brought it under the umbrella of the ministries of the church without formally taking it out of its independent, not-for-profit status. More and more United Methodist people, particularly the United Methodist Women, are helping strengthen Florence Crittenton.

13. Methodist Hospital Systems is very important. North Arkansas is a one-third

owner of the entire system and that relationship must be kept intact.

On the General Church level, I have served on the Board of Church and Society, UMCOM and on the General Board of Discipleship. Most gratifying has been the last four years to chair the Curriculum Committee and to see marvelous materials produced for Vacation Bible School, new Confirmation materials, new materials for children and youth and a revitalized staff in the Publishing House dedicated to the finest Biblical studies that can be produced.

IV. SPIRITUAL ISSUES

A strange thing is happening in our Church and you, as the leaders, should be intensely aware. The spiritual power now is shifting away from the structures of the Church and into the independent grass roots movements. There is even some anger in the churches that we as leaders are not fully appreciative of this fact. (For example, this year two or three churches withheld apportionment money to make their point.) Our councils and our boards are not seen as making a difference. Movements are. For example, we now have over five thousand people in the Emmaus community and it is a growing movement. Volunteers in Mission is simply exploding and we are wisely giving it support from an organizational level, but it is basically lay-driven. Disciple Bible Study is quasi-official with its spirit coming out of the Scriptures and its organization coming out of the Publishing House. But it is not driven by the boards and agencies or even by the councils of our Church. Such movements as "Promise Keepers" and ashrams and other spiritual life movements operate almost independently of our structures. That means that much of our work in councils and agencies is being called into question. I am hoping that there will be down-sizing of our General Boards and that our Annual Conference can become more loosely organized to be

more coordinative, more helpful in getting people hooked into vital movements. One of my greatest disappointments has been to see the failure of local churches to mother or sponsor new congregations. The Methodist system has caused pastors to want their own churches to grow bigger and every dollar used for their congregations. Every member adding to their rolls. If they had the right spirit, they would be spawning new congregations and helping to pay for them. As it is, we are still having to work at the Annual Conference and District level to achieve funds and that is becoming more difficult. Even support for institutions (colleges, homes, hospitals), of which I am so proud, is being brought into question. (Note Wilamon and Lyle Schaller).

People today want more and more hands-on feelings and they want to give to projects where they see where the money goes. They want to be involved themselves in the action

V. UNITY

As you know, I have worked with both Conferences doing as much collaboratively as possible. The most dramatic achievement was the two insurance committees developing a health insurance plan for Arkansas Methodism that is saving the Church hundreds of thousands of dollars. As I visited the districts, I have bragged on your cooperation: one newspaper, one foundation, one resource library, one Leadership school, one School of Church's mission, one office center with Cokesbury store, one treasurer, one school for part-time local pastors, one teen crisis center, one VIM task force.

The need for one conference is now more critical than ever. With longer tenure by pastors, we have a smaller personnel pool to draw from - we desperately need the whole state to

make good appointments. I am now meeting most of the time with the Combined Cabinet. Programmatically, we are still unable to have a thoughtful, unified, bishop on board , statewide thrust.

Fortunately, the study committee is working independently of the bishop's office, and will provide thoughtful study materials to the two conferences in the months ahead. Unity is urgently needed for your new bishop to provide maximum effectiveness.

VI. PERSONAL NOTES

Julia and I have had a strange and wonderful ministry thrust upon us that has been somewhat peripheral to our bishop's job. Beginning with my challenge to the Council of Bishops and with the publishing of And Are We Yet Alive? and Signs and Wonders I have had the opportunity to preach and speak in many states and at many VISION 2000 launches. We have used all of our study leave and most of our vacation time to study and write. Disciple Bible Study, which started out to be a modest project to train local church lay leadership, has mushroomed into a world-wide Biblical/Spiritual renewal movement. We are ecstatic that Disciple III is now being completed and will be introduced at General Conference on April 17th commemorating the 10th Anniversary of Disciple. Can you imagine how ecstatic we are to know that four hundred thousand students have participated in one of the Disciple studies.

In retirement we will live in Winfield, Kansas part of the time and in Lake Junaluska part of the time so we can be with our children and grandchildren and so that we can be involved in several forms of ministry.

We are looking forward to writing a fourth Disciple, the final one, that will focus on the wisdom literature in the Old Testament and on the Gospel of John and the Revelation in the New Testament. We will also continue to help with international development of Disciple, especially in Russia, Africa and the Pacific rim. What a challenge that will be for us.

We will also be working with Southwestern College, a liberal arts United Methodist college in Winfield, Kansas to develop a Discipleship Center giving scholarships to twelve students a year to be in a covenant group and working in churches. We will liaison with churches within a hundred miles to give resourcing ministries in music, Christian education, youth ministry and Bible study to them.

So, life moves on. We are grateful to be healthy and happy. I will be 66 on June 18, 1996 and with our oldest son Steve, his wife Beth and four grandchildren in Winfield, with our second son Paul with his wife Janelle and their two children in the ministry in Salina, Kansas, with Susan, our oldest daughter, and her husband, Reverend Rob Fuquay, serving at Long's Chapel at Lake Junaluska and their two babies and with Sarah director of Wesley Rankin Community Center in Dallas we feel that God has blessed us with more than we can comprehend and we are anticipating life with family and with ministry as full as we have energy to receive it.

The good news is that we will have to wander back and forth through Arkansas eating catfish and fried okra and visiting you from time to time and that will be a great joy.

Respectfully submitted.

Richard B. Wilke