



Deanna Shimko Laity Address

Bishop Jung, Assistant to the Bishop Steve Polster, District Superintendents, Conference Secretary Amber Wolover, members of Annual Conference and guests –

Dear People of God, dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Now is our season of sowing seed...sowing seed generously from the abundance God provides...good quality seed that will grow deep roots and strong trunks and produce abundantly the everlasting Fruit of the Spirit...for the sake of congregations and communities in Wisconsin and around the world.

I thank all who are serving...many, many, many serving in many places, capacities and ministries across this Conference and our world. I thank those who are serving in the local church, who are not at Annual Conference and may never experience our wonderful Annual Conference. Yet those are people who are called to serve in so many ways and places...strong, generous and faithful leaders and workers extending compassion and sowing seeds of love. I am thankful for all who answer the call that God puts on their hearts. Some will not hear God's call and will not know this grace; many will hear God's call...in the next few months and years, and will turn their hearts to God. Oh, to hear God's voice...oh, for the sowing of the seeds that will grow. Oh, imagining Wisconsin Anew with all the seeds that are being sown today...and our many tomorrows. Oh, for the abundant fruitfulness coming!

Let me tell you about the First Annual Laity Leadership Convocation – a first-of-its-kind event in Wisconsin Conference. By the way, how many of you were present? This event was a collaboration of the Conference Board of Laity, Episcopal Office, the Cabinet, Black River Falls UMC, your apportionment dollars and the Nancy Moffat Memorial Laity Education Scholarship Fund. More than 150 laity from around the Wisconsin Conference gathered March 14-15 this year, in Black River Falls to learn, engage and be equipped to live out and get a greater and deeper understanding of Imagining Wisconsin Anew presented by Bishop Jung and Circuit Ministry 2.0 presented by Dan Dick and Don Greer. In this setting we were able to benefit not only from the excellent presentations but from generous Q&A time. In addition we sang, worshiped, dined and talked, met new people, made friends, and experienced the strength of our United Methodist connection. The feedback told us laity loved the event and think we should gather like this at least twice a year! I'm just letting you know that we haven't yet stepped up to twice a year; but do look for information announcing the 2nd Annual Laity Leadership Convocation in spring 2015 later this year. Be checking the Wisconsin Conference website and ENEWS.

We are made for this. We are a people called by God to go into the world. We are the body of Christ. Many parts, one body. Many and diverse gifts united in Christ. The key of course is "together"...united in Christ...united in our vision "Imagining Wisconsin Anew!" Friends, we have all that we need, to do what we need to do. Regardless of our shyness, regardless of our small faith, regardless of our inadvertent and conscious behaviors that separate us from God, God is persistently present and sustaining. And where God is, all things are possible. Throughout the scriptures we hear the loving instruction and words of comfort: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you." "Do not be afraid. I have good news." Revelation 20:56 tells us, "I am making everything new." God has a bold plan to "make all things new."

In this season of Pentecost, let us be roused within by the dynamic Holy Spirit! Let us be roused for prophetic witness! And "do not be afraid." John Wesley had no map. He had no organizational chart.



There were no rules. As you write, Bishop Jung, in your chapter called "Strengthening Clergy and Lay Leadership" in THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH-7 VISION PATHWAYS, exactly pg 49, "...it began with imagination. John Wesley trusted his heart and the faith of those around him to imagine what it might be like to spark a passion for Christ...we are called to nurture visionary leaders for the church and the world today." Our Wesleyan heritage is one of being involved in the political and social struggles of peoples' lives, going to people who live in the margins. This involvement is an expression of the personal change we experience in our baptism and conversion. We are not just observers; we care enough about people to take the risk to be involved regardless of the controversy or complexity. And the church, the church is a good place that helps us think and act out a faith perspective.

Dear Bishop, you know that in this past year our Conf Bd of Laity studied together the book THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. I have earlier quoted from this book. Of course, the way we got into the book was to begin with the chapter you wrote that begins on pg 47. Bishop Jung, we met you there in your message for the ages, if I can paraphrase just a little: vision is not a position in the Book of Discipline and not the "title of any elected office"...nevertheless it is "the primary need for every key leader at every level of the church...At the core of visionary leadership is attentiveness to God's leadership...Leaders"...first have "to be open to where God is leading."

There are moments in history when we need a new vision. The old vision has run its course. We need a new vision for ourselves and our world. The new vision promotes life as we imagine it ought to be. There's a lot of power in a vision. It draws us into the future. It guides us on our way. A vision portrays a worthy goal. We Imagine Wisconsin Anew!

We have before us at this Annual Conference strategies to advance Imagining Wisconsin Anew and to significantly improve our ability to engage in ministry in Wisconsin and beyond. I am talking about Wisconsin launching its effort to raise \$1 million for Imagine No Malaria. I'm talking about the Circuit Ministry 2.0-A Plan for Revitalizing the Connection, and the proposal for 5 Districts and 5 District Superintendents in the Wisconsin Annual Conference with its financial support piece, and the budget for 2015 as brought forth by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration. The preconference orientations in each region a month ago gave us an excellent opportunity to get a look at these initiatives and ask questions. I trust you took advantage of the preconference orientations to become informed on these initiatives, because as many of you know, there is rarely the time we desire at Annual Conference to dialogue and process in plenary.

It is not too audacious for me to say that we can turn around Wisconsin! Imagining Wisconsin Anew! lays out what we need to do together to accomplish the outcomes of our new imagining. We need ways of working in our world today that connect us to others who also want to build relationships with the poor and engage in ministry with them. United Methodist Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton also in THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, pg 106, writes that we United Methodists, as citizens of "...a world of interdependence must create interdependent solutions...an unprecedented partnership of sacred and secular that creates a movement that will turn heads, make disciples, and heal a disease-infested world." The church is a good place that helps us think and act out a faith perspective.

Dear Bishop and People of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, let us advance God's plan to "make all things new!" Conference Board of Laity is working in many ways throughout the year in the fertile soil of laity and clergy throughout the Wisconsin Conference.



Conf Bd of Laity hold in high regard our strong relationships and great partnerships with you Bishop; Gordon Lind, Cabinet Liaison to Conf Bd of Laity; the District Superintendents and other Cabinet members. These strong partnerships afford Conf Bd of Laity the ability not only to participate timely in developments in the Conference, but also to resource laity and clergy throughout the Conference. As Wisconsin Conf leaders, Conf Bd of Laity are vision carriers. Actually, all leaders in local churches and all of us here are vision carriers! We are Imagining Wisconsin Anew with you, Bishop.

Conf Bd of Laity studied the plan for laity circuit teams working closely and collaboratively with circuit clergy at Laity Leadership Convocation in March and then more at our Conf Bd of Laity meeting on May 17 with Don Greer. We explored deeply the plan for Circuit Ministry 2.0 to engage, train and utilize laity in every circuit in order to create consistency and effective ministry aligned with our Conference vision. Conf Bd of Laity will be collaborating with Dan Dick, Director of Connectional Ministries, and Don Greer, Coordinator of Circuit Ministries, and clergy to include CBOL members and identify other laity with the gifts and who are called to vision and implement Circuit Ministry 2.0 and to prepare to lead the Circuit Ministry 2.0 October workshops and November training events. We need people who can vision Circuit Ministry 2.0 and people who will do it. I encourage the clergy and laity who are here to encourage those in your congregations to engage in this leadership in the circuits. We need people from each church engaged in Circuit Ministry 2.0. I expect many gifted and called laity to be in vibrant laity circuit teams in vital ministries, offering inspired and Spirit-led leadership, and engaged in collaborative ministry with clergy. The plan is in place. Training schedule is set. We are preparing. Every congregation can live into Imagining Wisconsin Anew! and Circuit Ministry 2.0. Now is the time to get engaged!

Conf Bd of Laity is cooperating in an exploration of the potential for the role of and requirements for Certified Lay Minister in the Wisconsin Conference. The Certified Lay Minister is authorized and defined in 2012 Book of Discipline §271.3, and I quote: "in order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God's grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism." Certified Lay Ministers in Wisconsin will have increased avenues for their gifts and ministries. Certified Lay Ministers will enhance resources and ministry available to local congregations. This is important as we look for laity with the gifts and called to lead in Circuit Ministry, forming new faith communities and revitalizing our existing congregations.

The Spiritual Formation and Leadership group of the Discipleship Leadership Council is piloting small group trainings focusing on creating a discipleship system in a church. The initial small group trainings have been very well received and created heightened interest in more such training. A discipleship system is firmly grounded in spiritual development that in turn nurtures spiritual principled leaders. Each church can live into these small group trainings. Contact Barbara Dick to invite a training team to your church. Go to the Wisconsin Conference website for more information about the ministry of Spiritual Formation and Leadership.

Conf Bd of Laity is contributing our resources and abilities to Imagining Wisconsin Anew! as are local church lay leaders, lay members of AC, lay servant ministers and lay speakers. At General Conference 2012 requirements for certified lay speaker were redefined. To be eligible to be a certified lay speaker, a lay person must successfully complete the lay servant basic course plus courses in leading worship, leading prayer, discovering spiritual gifts, preaching and United Methodist heritage and polity. The District and Regional Directors of Lay Servant Ministries and regional and district committees on Lay Servant Ministries are addressing how in our Conference we can provide adequate access to the



necessary courses to meet the needs of those who are currently certified lay speakers pursuant to the previous requirements and want to comply with the new requirements for certified lay speaker.

We are passionate to turn around Wisconsin and to advance God's bold plan to "make all things new." Bishop, we walk side by side with you in the Imagine No Malaria initiative, the 5 districts plan, Circuit Ministry 2.0, and a budget to support the ministry we are called to. We are developing and nurturing principled spiritual leaders, equipped for leading in local churches, circuits and beyond.

Dear Bishop, Conf Bd of Laity is sowing good quality seeds in fertile soil of invitation and call. We are all about forming and training up deeply spiritual disciples of Jesus Christ through the Faith Alive! program. It is a great joy for us and a very strong beginning for the participants that you are their teacher for the first weekend of our next Faith Alive! course beginning September 12-14 this year as you were for the class beginning Sept 2013. Strong spiritual grounding is essential to making disciples and taking risks. Dear Bishop, you wrote it this way *THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH*, exactly on page 47: "No one is able to develop a disciple without first engaging in the process of becoming a disciple himself or herself." And further along in the same chapter, "...grounding in the Holy Spirit must be preface and practice for all of the efforts undertaken in the development of principled leaders." Bishop, on March 30, 2014, we celebrated the newest graduates of the 2-year Faith Alive! course that began Sept 2012. The ten graduates are from around the Conference, Rhinelander to Salem, Mazomanie to Milwaukee. These graduates have grown and are growing ever deeper faith roots and strong courage trunks. And they are faithful and bold following God's call to become a local pastor, a district lay leader, a hospitality coordinator for Faith Alive! Two courses of Faith Alive! run concurrently with a new course beginning each September. There are 13 participants in the 2-year course that began Sept 2013. Please pray for these participants in their journeys and pray for those people in your congregations who may be seeking to grow in their spiritual lives. How many of you present here have been through Faith Alive!? To others of you, do you hear the call to this journey for spiritual deepening? Registration is open for the course beginning September 12-14 this year. You'll find information and how to register for Faith Alive! on the Conference website. Register soon! Class size is limited to provide a small group experience for members who study, worship, eat, play and laugh, question and learn together with others seeking more depth in faith development. The setting provides an environment away from home and work that is conducive to dedicating one's time to spiritual development with diverse participants, faculty and leaders. The student journeys on his or her individual faith path with the support of this close faith community of loving, caring, nurturing and encouraging members. Faith Alive! is sowing good seeds to develop and nurture principled leaders for the future of the church.

We know, Bishop Jung, that you have been regularly visiting churches and circuits on a Wisconsin tour for more than a year now and have visited more than 300 churches in the Wisconsin Conf. That is amazing! Bishop Jung has met you face to face and heart to heart as I have beginning 2008 with regular lay leader/lay member of AC trainings throughout the Conference and other events. Bishop and I hear your words and see your passion for ministry in your churches, communities and beyond; and we know there are many dedicated and generous servant leaders, ready for the new way of being in Imagining Wisconsin Anew.

As I mentioned earlier, Conf Bd of Laity has been studying together *THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH-7 VISION PATHWAYS* as I mentioned before. We will now engage in studying *SEVEN LEVERS: MISSIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CONFERENCES* by Bishop Robert Schnase. This is a very new book. I had the privilege of attending the annual meeting/educational workshop of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders in Kansas City, MO, in spring this year, and Bishop



Schnase was our workshop leader for 2 days. Bishop Jung has announced that Bishop Schnase will be the presenter for your 2014 Clergy Day gathering on September 18 at Green Lake Retreat Center. Conf Bd of Laity is eager to carry the vision and align our efforts in the strategies that will accomplish the expected outcomes of our new imagination. Together in partnership, laity and clergy, open to God's leading, can turn around Wisconsin.

CBOL meets nine times a year. We are thankful for you meeting with us, Bishop, for the faithful engagement of Gordon Lind. In our holy time together we pray, worship, study, plan and work. We are a cohesive, dedicated and faithful community. We connect with laity and clergy around the Wisconsin Conference throughout the year in events, courses and trainings CBOL sponsors and those that the members of the CBOL lead in their own local churches and beyond in order to provide ways of equipping laity for ministry in the world. Your Conf Bd of Laity members are in the CBOL brochure in your Conf materials. We make it easy for you to contact your district leader or any member of Conf Bd of Laity. We are happy to resource you and connect you to others who can resource you, too. Conf Bd of Laity has a page on the Wisconsin Conf website plus posting training events on the "lay training opportunities" page and the Conference calendar, all on the Conf website.

Thank you for the honor and privilege to serve the sacred office of Conference Lay Leader of the Wisconsin Annual Conference. I will do my very best to be the servant leader I am called by God to be.

Bishop Jung, I request a moment of privilege to introduce the Board of Laity. ...Thank you.

It is my privilege to introduce the members of the CBOL who are present. Please stand as I call your name and remain standing. Deb Kraemer, Winnebago District Director of Lay Servant Ministries; Imelda Roman, Metro South District Lay Leader; Judi Weinert, Winnebago District Lay Leader; Sharon Black, Metro North District Director of Lay Servant Ministries; Shirley Clark, Heartland District Lay Leader; and Steve Mayeshiba, Capital District Lay Leader, Laura Pfeffer, President of the Conf United Methodist Women; Dan Dick, Staff Liaison; Dorthy Radley, Past Conference Lay Leader; Mark Sheets, Metro North District Lay Leader; Ron Vinger, Nicolet District Lay Leader; Lisa Gilbert, Capital-Coulee Regional Director of Lay Servant Ministries Denise Retzleff, Dean of Faith Alive!; Gail Burgess, Associate Dean of Faith Alive!; Eric Taylor, Young Adult Representative; and Summer Frosland, Youth Representative.

We recognize those who have transitioned off Conf Bd of Laity: They are: Ray Cherney, Chippewa-Heartland Regional Director of Lay Servant Ministries; Rex Nelson, Metro Region co-Director of Lay Servant Ministries; and Donna Wilkinson, Nicolet District Director of Lay Servant Ministries; August Grulich, President of the Conference United Methodist Men. We thank you for your ministries and fruitfulness in this Conference; we thank you for your dedication and generous sharing of your gifts; and we wish you joy and blessings as you go on to other things God offers you in your lives.

The Conference Board of Laity is an uncommon group in the very best way! They are a loving and a holy conferencing community. They are faithful, dedicated, generous and fruit-producing servant leaders. They are a blessing to me and this Annual Conference. It's good for us to be aware that all members of the Conf Bd of Laity are volunteers! You are amazing! Thank you.

Thank you, Rev. Steve Polster, Assistant to the Bishop, and District Superintendents, Rev. Sam Royappa, Rev. Ann Spint-Henschel, Rev. Deborah Thompson, and Rev. Gordon Lind. Thank you all for your commitment and collaborative ministry with the Conference Bd of Laity and particularly in the Lay Leader/Lay Member of Annual Conference trainings in all districts in our conference and our Laity



Leadership Convocation last March. I extend a particular thank you to Rev. Gordon Lind, Cabinet Liaison to the Conference Board of Laity. As you know, Gordon is retiring from active appointment. Gordon, we benefit from your gentle presence, wise counsel, generous heart and engaged and supportive ministry with the Conference Board of Laity throughout the year. We are missing you already. We will remember you well. May God bless you daily as you go forth.

Bishop Jung, I reserve a very special thank you to you for journeying closely and building strong partnership with me and with the Board of Laity and all the laity in Wisconsin Conference. Thank you for living servant leadership. Thank you for visioning with us – a new way of being in Wisconsin – Imagining Wisconsin Anew! For this new way of living into ministry we need risk takers! Look to the future; and we are bold to partner with you, Bishop, to turn around Wisconsin.

May the Holy Spirit that was vivid to us in the fiery reds, yellows, oranges, whites and golds of Pentecost live in each of us throughout this Annual Conference so that together we will worship, pray, study and learn, laugh and build each other up, like never before! Let all the people say "Amen!"