



The United Methodist Church
San Francisco Area California-Nevada Conference

Warner H. Brown, Jr.
Resident Bishop

Rev. Deborah Grundman
Executive Assistant to the Bishop

Jennifer McGrath
Administrative Assistant

May 21, 2009

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Book of Discipline states clearly that our work as an Annual Conference is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all for the glory of God.” (§ 601) Called to bring the good news of Christ to a needy world, we must **rethink church** for this time. Rethinking Church involves a passionate rededication to being church in the Wesleyan way. It includes opening our doors and extending appropriate hospitality to the diverse neighbors that surround each of our churches. In the spirit of the early church witness found in Acts 2:43 ff., “Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common...praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

Ours is a connectional church, deeply rooted in shared ministry, shared responsibility and a shared hope which is ours in Jesus Christ. In that spirit of connection I recently announced changes in the way the Cabinet will share our work of **equipping the church for disciple-making ministry**. It is my expectation that working as teams will strengthen our relationship and will enhance our effectiveness.

Each pastor and each congregation will still have a District Superintendent, but the spirit and practice of connectional ministry will be emphasized through the circuits. While pastors and congregations will continue to work with the District office and District leadership, the strength of our connection will be enhanced through the circuit relationships.

As your Bishop **I will be appointing and assigning clergy to both local churches and to circuits**. Circuits will be a covenant for mutual accountability and support. Guided by circuit leaders, pastors will support, challenge and encourage each other within circuit meetings. Pastors will collaborate for ministry development, vision-sharing and strategic discussion toward the making of disciples and extending Christ’s service beyond the church. Superintendents will be freed to use their gifts and graces for leadership development across the Conference.

The circuits of 8-12 clergy will be required to meet regularly throughout the year. Circuit leaders will also be appointed and will meet with their Superintendent regularly as well. The circuits are a central piece of how we as a conference will enter a new season of ministry development and, therefore, participation in circuits is mandatory.

Circuit leaders have gathered for initial conversation and will meet with their Superintendents over the summer for training and consultation. Circuits and leaders will be posted on the conference website by June 1. Circuits will begin to meet in September. Updates, descriptions and information about our new structure will be posted there as well.

God has blessed us with a broad diversity of people and places. It is time for us to engage *together* in the task that God has given to us. Together, we can offer nothing less than our whole-hearted commitment to God on behalf of God’s world and the neighbors we have from God.

I ask for your prayerful support as we live out Christ’s call with each other.

Your brother in Christ,

Warner H. Brown, Jr.
Resident Bishop