

## TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:

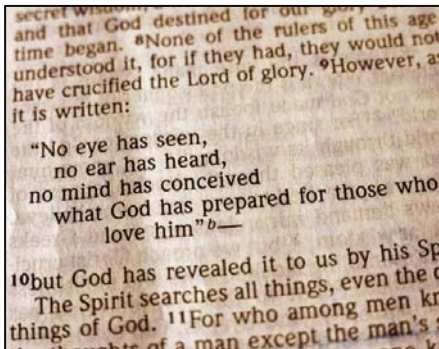
Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ.

We wonder at times – particularly at financially difficult times like these – how did we get in this situation? We are all aware that giving within the Church has decreased, which diminishes the amount of monies available for mission and ministry. We've been worried and anxious about where we've been, where we are and where we're going. We've been concerned with protecting what we have; worrying that life as a United Methodist as we know it – being in ministry and doing mission work to the world – just can't go on as it is.

It's okay to be concerned. Healthy concern allows us to open our hearts and minds to the existing situation. It is the nature of the community to be concerned about our collective futures. And this is not a time to chastise or criticize each other for expressing these concerns. This is a time for the faithful to take action to curb the effects of the economic challenges we face today. Out of our concerns can grow constructive actions.

In many arenas, bold and deliberate actions are being taken to curb the downturn and look to the future. Annual conferences across the connection have prayerfully given consideration to their expenses by rethinking finances and focusing on ministry. They are redirecting their efforts to enhance current and developing new ministries. Praise God for this creative thinking on the part of so many United Methodists across the connection.

The United Methodist Church is in the forefront of compassionate giving. A few examples of the way groups within the connection are living into the reality of a strained economy are exemplified in the reports from annual conferences and agency board meetings. Among them are included: reduction or no increase in salaries for conference staff in 2010; decreases or a freeze in current missional budgets among several annual conferences; the Council of Bishops voted to return bishop salaries to the 2008 level beginning in 2010; and general agencies of the church adjusted spending plans for 2009 and re-evaluating 2010 spending plans. These are just a few.



Experts tell us the economy will begin a turnaround near the end of the year. When? No one knows the exact day, or time, or event, or even by how much. We should be encouraged by some of the early signs of economic recovery: credit markets are thawing and the financial sector is showing early signs of growth. At the same time, our optimism should be tempered with patience. Many in our communities will continue to bear the burdens of this economic crisis and they will need our

### Habakkuk 3:17-19

#### Trust and Joy in the Midst of Trouble

Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation.

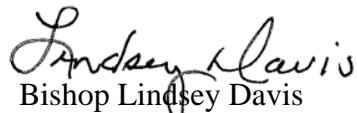
GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights. (NRSV)

prayers and support in these difficult times. Although the likely slow pace of recovery will continue to challenge our churches, conferences, and agencies, United Methodists are still a generous people.


The Economic Advisory Committee of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GFCA) continues to monitor the situation and provide their insights to our leaders. Their models indicate that giving to apportionments in 2009 and 2010 will be below the levels of previous years, but similar to the lowered levels experienced during previous recessions.

As Methodists committed to the lessons of John Wesley, we remain faithful to the word of God as the director of our faith. As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we know that during these times, God continues to show us a new thing: mission work around the world is still continuing, leaders are developing in their effectiveness to shepherd congregations into a new path of growth, donations are being made to purchase life-sustaining supplies that will help stamp out killer diseases associated with poverty. God has, is currently, and will continue to supply all that we need to carry out our ministries, as stated in Philippians 4:19: And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (NRSV)

Thank you for your continued support of the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church.



Bishop Lindsey Davis  
President, Board of Directors,  
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