

Man: We're rolling whenever you're ready.

- Okay. What are three critical issues that face our church in the future? I think the first issue that would come to my mind is appointments. Surely one of the most important things our bishops do is to appoint clergy leaders to congregations. A bishop has the responsibility to ensure that there is a good fit between the mission of a particular congregation and the gifts and the graces of a particular clergy person. When I travel about our connection, I find that many believe we have a crisis of leadership today. And so I would work for a fair, rational, responsive system of appointments, a system based not on factors of gender or seniority or many of the other factors that have alas been used to make appointments in recent years, but rather mission. I want each church to be led to a statement of their particular mission and then to fit that mission statement with the gifts and graces of particular clergy. I think we are in a crisis of leadership where many of our laity and clergy are wondering about the rationality of our present system. That is the first critical issue I think that must be addressed by every bishop in our church.

Man: Stop there, and let me just kind of. And we're rolling.

- What are three critical issues facing our bishops today? The first issue that would come to my mind is the appointment of our clergy. Surely one of the most important things a bishop does is to appoint pastoral leaders for our churches. As I travel about the connection, I feel there is a crisis of trust in our ability to appoint to the right people in the right places. A bishop has to ensure that there is a good fit between a congregation's mission and the gifts and graces of the clergy appointed to help lead that mission. We need an appointment system which is obviously rational and understood, fair and, above all, based on mission. The mission of the local church should be primary in appointment-making, not seniority or primarily questions of salary, et cetera, but mission. We clergy exist to help the local congregation fulfill its mission. Second, I would think that a major concern of our bishops ought to be empowering the local church. My great long-term interest in the restructuring of our church is motivated in great part on my concern that our structure has disempowered the local congregation. Too often we've come to think that the good ideas flow from the top down, whereas I keep saying the really good ideas flow from the bottom up, that is the church, in its annual conference and general conference manifestations, exists to empower the local congregation in the fulfillment of their mission. The structure, our leadership shouldn't be that which is an impediment to mission but which is an encouragement, facilitator of mission. And then the third area I would have to say would be that our bishops need to work at evangelism. I'm in campus ministry here at Duke and work with young adults, and our church has lost an entire generation of young people to our church, and we could do better. Too often we have given our energies and creativity toward internal maintenance issues when I think we need to give more attention to external issues, reaching others. The church turned outward to the world, this is surely part of our historic Wesleyan genius, and it is a an aspect of our church we must recover. Appointments, empowering the local church and evangelism come to mind. Now, what can a bishop do to lead, to motivate us in this direction? Well, I think, first of all, our bishops need to listen. They need to be in

the local churches. They need to be with the people on the front line, pastors and laypeople, listening to the frustrations, to the hopes, the visions of the local congregation. We don't need absentee bishops during a time like ours. I think our church is in crisis. We've got to have bishops willing to stay in their Episcopal area to work at the needs that are there in their Episcopal area. I think that is crucial. Too often our bishops have concerned themselves and become entangled in general church committees and commissions and concerns. I think they need to know that the center of their ministry is within that annual conference. And then, after listening and being present, bishops preach, and I love to preach. They can teach. We in our church, I think, are in a kind of crisis of doctrine, a crisis of identity. Who are we? Wesley used to organize his original annual conferences along the questions, what to preach, that is, what is our message, what to teach, that is, what is our doctrine, what is the basic form of our faith, and then finally ask, what to do? I think those three questions are still or perhaps even more valuable for us today. Bishops can write, share their ideas, and interchange with our people, and I also enjoy writing. I think, alas, too often the bishops we have been electing, as I've said, have been managers rather than leaders. I think a bishop should be a person with ideas, should be willing for those ideas to be exposed to the examination of the wider church, and then be present in the interchange as we all work on energizing and changing our church. Finally, what is my vision for our church? I've been critical of our church, and I've been criticized for my criticism, but overall I'm extremely hopeful. I think we United Methodists have a wonderful way of structuring ourselves for mission if we will make that primary. I think we have a marvelous system of clergy deployment in that we clergy are important to the church only on the basis of what needs to be done in the local congregation. I feel that we are poised for a great period of renewal and rethinking. I believe that we're turning the corner on our decades of denial. It's hard to imagine an organization which has lost 20% of its constituency in the last two decades that has not made really one major structural change in the way we do business. I get the feeling that that may be behind us, that we have increasing numbers of us that are ready to ask the tough questions, to face the reality, to think, to dream, to re-envision. And I think it would be a great opportunity to be part of the church during this period of renewal. We Wesleyans have always been known to be practical people. What works is what's good. The church exists to be impacting the world and spreading the Gospel and moving out and reaching others. I want that vision to be regained, and I'm hopeful, excited, energetic, feel that it can be regained, particularly if our leaders hold us accountable to the best that is within us, hold us accountable to the strengths of our tradition, and then help us to move forward. Thank you.

Man: Okay, whenever you're ready.

- What are three critical issues which face our bishops in our church? Well, the first issue that would come to my mind is appointments. One of the most important things a bishop does is to appoint clergy to local churches, and as I travel about our connection, I feel it can be said there is a crisis of trust in our appointment system, on the part of both clergy and laity. A bishop has got to demonstrate that appointments of clergy are made in a rational, open, fair and caring way, and that they are made on the basis of mission, an assessment of that local congregation's mission and an assessment of that particular pastor's gifts and abilities to help that congregation be in mission. Bishops have got to work at appointment-making. Then I would say the next critical issue is to empower the local congregation. Empowerment of the local congregation is related to wise appointment-making, but it's also related into

the structure, the way we do business. My decade-long concern with the structure of our church is based upon my deep faith in the local congregation as the chief locus of our church's ministry. I believe all good ideas, in a sense, flow from the bottom up, rather than, as our structure would make you believe, from the top down. I think we've disempowered our congregations with the way we've appointed clergy, with the way we have done our business. I want to return a sense of vision and empowerment to the local congregation, so that everything is dependent upon that congregation coming to a sense of its own mission in its particular time and place, and then our larger connection giving that church what it needs to fulfill its God-given mission. The third critical area I would mention is something dear to my heart and that is evangelism. Our church has been too internally concerned, expending too much energy and resources and time on purely internal concerns and not enough energy and creativity and innovation expended on external concern, the world about us, the people who need us. I work here at Duke, on a university campus, and so I am deeply concerned about our young people, our young adults and youth. And yet our church has had a sad record in the past two decades with this particular age group. It is as if we have lost an entire generation. I would want to work to change that, to ask our church, what changes do we need to make among ourselves in our own self-understanding, our own definitions of the church, to turn our church more outward, to reach, to teach, to preach, to integrate new life into our churches? That would also go for my great concern about the excluding ethnic population in the United States, a population which we, alas, as United Methodists, have not been doing well in reaching. I think that our failure to evangelize both our younger generation and the exploding ethnic population are due in part to the way we have structured ourselves, to the way we have deployed and utilized our clergy, to our failure to undergird the local congregation and reaching out. Now, what can a bishop do to lead, to motivate a church to attain these visions? I think the first thing a bishop can do is to listen, to get down in the local church, to listen to those people there, their frustrations and their dreams, their hopes for our church. This means that we need bishops to be present. During a time of crisis, which I think our church is in, we can't afford absentee bishops. Our bishops, many of them have spent far too much time getting entangled in general church commissions and committees and processes and not enough time in residence working within their annual conference. And I think that is essential, to keep the bishops close to their Episcopal area. A lot of internal work needs to go on so that we can be an external mission. Bishops can preach, and I love to preach. Bishops can teach the faith of the church. A lot of United Methodists say they don't know who they are. There's a crisis of identity. Who are we? What is the basis of the faith? Teaching the faith is important. A bishop can write, and I enjoy doing that, putting one's ideas out before the whole church for examination and discussion. Alas, I think for the past couple of decades, as I have said, at many places, we have been electing managers rather than leaders, managers who merely keep the status quo rather than help the church in dreaming and envisioning and moving forward. Well, I think a bishop should be a person of ideas, a person who is in constant interaction with the church about how to make our most lively future. What is my vision for the United Methodist Church? Well, I'm hopeful. I've been critical of our church, and some have criticized me for my criticism, but I want to assure you that my criticism of our church arises from my deep love and faith in United Methodism. We've got a wonderful church and a wonderful way of going at ministry. The United Methodist Church, from our Wesleyan roots, inherits the idea that the church exists to take part in Christ's service to the world. Therefore, at our best, everything, clergy, laity, the structure of the church, everything is subordinate to mission. What works is what's good. We are practical people. I believe, from my travels about our connection, that we are turning the corner on now a couple of decades of denial, that we

are at last ready to confront some tough issues. We're ready to dream and to revision. It's hard to imagine an organization like ours that has lost 20% of its constituency and much of its giving power in the past two decades, where we have not made really one fundamental change. I believe we're turning a corner on that, and we are ready to move forward. People are looking for voices of change, of innovation, of new thinking. People are looking for ideas. And I find it exciting to be part of that change, and would welcome the opportunity to help lead in what I think may be one of our greatest decades of United Methodism. Thank you.