

## Time for cease-fire in the worship wars

It is time for a cease-fire in the so-called worship wars which have plagued many of our churches. What are those "worship wars?" They are the seemingly endless arguments about the best way to worship God. Some battles in those worship wars have dealt with differing styles of music, with one side desiring more traditional and formal music while the other side wants contemporary or casual music.



musical instruments, a veritable war of pipe organs verses drums and keyboard and guitars. Other battles have dealt with the location of the worship in the sanctuary, in fellowship hall or in an off-site venue like a movie theatre. Some of the battles even have dealt things as trivial as whether the pastors and worship leaders should wear robes.

It is time for these silly battles and arguments to end, so I am declaring a Cease Fire, and I invite every church to join me. I

"It is time for these silly battles and arguments to end..."

receive a constant barrage of letters and e-mails which bring these worship wars to my attention, and frankly I am tired of it. Cease fire! Stop! Enough!

The wonderful story in the Gospel of John about Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman should remind us, as Jesus says, that "those who worship must worship in Spirit and in Truth." Jesus was dealing with the question of the Samaritan woman about the worship wars of that time – between the Jews who worshipped God in Jerusalem and the Samaritans (half-breed Jews) who worshipped God at other holy sites. In response to her questions, Jesus says that it does not matter about the location or the style of worship. Worship is about praising God in Spirit and in Truth. And just in case we might think Jesus was being hard on those Samaritans, during Holy Week we read that Jesus cleansed the

temple in Jerusalem, too, and declared that worship is all being in a house of prayer.

Jesus refused to take sides in the worship wars of that day, and I suspect that Jesus refuses to take sides in the worship wars of our day. Do you really think Jesus cares whether or not the worship leader wears a robe? Can you image that our choice of music really is a concern to Jesus? I just can't picture that these are real issues for those who follow Jesus.

So, I am declaring a Cease-Fire, and I am asking that we focus, instead, upon worshipping the Lord in Spirit and in Truth, and making our places of worship, wherever they may be, into a house of prayer.

Bishop Michael J. Coyner

Indiana Area of

The United Methodist Church

"Making a Difference in Indiana and around the world"

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### Beard for episcopacy

Beard was ordained as a probationary clergy member of the North Indiana Conference in 1982 and as an Elder in 1985. He has served churches in Winchester, Ky., Middletown, Ky., and in Indiana at Anderson New Hope, Kokomo Beamer, Elkhart Faith as associate pastor, and Walnut Creek. The Bishop appointed him to the North Indiana Cabinet in 2004.

Concerning other NCJ episcopal candidates, the members of the North Central Jurisdiction Committee on Native American Ministries recently endorsed **the Rev. Dr. Jerry DeVine**, as an episcopal candidate. DeVine, of Battle Creek, Mich., has been instrumental in raising awareness of Native American Indian concerns in society and in The United Methodist Church. He currently serves as superintendent of the Albion District in the West Michigan Conference

Other candidates previously endorsed by their conference delegations (in alphabetical order) include:

**The Rev. Dr. David Alan Bard** of the Minnesota Conference. Bard is senior pastor of First United Methodist Church of Duluth, Minn., and has served as superintendent of the conference's Northwest District (1998-2005). He was ordained an Elder in 1986.

**The Rev. Dr. Timothy Bias** of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. Bias is directing (senior) pastor of First United Meth-

odist Church in Peoria, Ill. He was ordained an Elder in 1981 by the West Virginia Conference and has served churches in West Virginia and Illinois and as Director of Evangelism Ministries, General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, Tenn.

**The Rev. Randolph Cross** of the Dakotas Conference. As a pastor with 28 years of experience in a wide range of ministry settings, he has held appointments across both North and South Dakotas and currently serves as both the Lower James River District Superintendent and Dakotas Conference Director of Leadership Development and Connectional Ministries.

**The Rev. Laurie Haller** of the West Michigan Conference delegations. She is highly regarded as a leader of deep spiritual integrity, according to those endorsing her. Haller, of Grand Rapids, Mich., currently serves as superintendent of the Grand Rapids District.

**The Rev. Dr. Larry Pickens** of the Northern Illinois Conference for 23 years, having been ordained as an Elder in 1987. He has served as a pastor in Illinois, on the United Methodist Judicial Council and as the General Secretary of the General Commission of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, from July 2004 to Dec. 2007.

For more information about the NCJ Conference and these episcopal candidates, log on to [www.ncj2008.org](http://www.ncj2008.org) and click on Episcopal Candidates.

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