

# **Biography**

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## **Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton**

Thomas J. Bickerton has been the spiritual leader of the nearly 850 United Methodist congregations in Western Pennsylvania since he was elected a Bishop in 2004.

In addition to his responsibilities in the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference, Bishop Bickerton serves as the chairperson of The United Methodist Church's *Global Health Initiative* which deals with the church's response to the killer diseases of HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and malaria. This effort, through the church's *Imagine NO Malaria* campaign, has raised over \$53 million dollars within the denomination to eliminate malaria-related death across the world. In addition to this work, Bishop Bickerton also serves as a member of the General Commission on United Methodist Men.

A native of West Virginia, Bishop Bickerton began his pastoral career as a student pastor serving a six-point charge. He later was pastor of medium and large membership churches and was serving as Superintendent of the Northern District when he was elected as a bishop. As he worked in partnership with laity, the churches he served experienced significant growth in the number of baptisms, professions of faith, and members. His church in Shady Spring, West Virginia grew from 85 to 225 members in his six years there, and during his nine years at the Forrest Burdette church in Hurricane, West Virginia, the membership more than doubled from 585 to 1368. The Bishop remains committed to the idea that the vitality of the local church is the key to carrying out the church's mission to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Bishop Bickerton's life has been significantly shaped by involvement in ministry beyond the walls of the local church. His work with Volunteer-in-Mission teams in his home state, as well as in Africa, Argentina, Israel, Mexico, Russia, Cuba, and the U. S. Gulf Coast, has given the Bishop a "true global perspective on the need to be in ministry to all of God's children."

Bishop Bickerton earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree in sociology and psychology from West Virginia Wesleyan College (1980), a Master's of Divinity degree from Duke University Divinity School (1983), and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological School (1994). He has also served as an adjunct faculty member at United, teaching Wesleyan doctrine and United Methodist polity.

The Bishop is an avid sports fan and enjoys travel, playing golf, and photography.

He and his wife Sally are the parents of four adult children: Elizabeth, T.J., Ian and Nick.