

The Monthly Update

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update has a report on the "State of the Church" which I believe you will find interesting, in addition to other issues of interest throughout our church. We pray that the right decisions in crucial areas will be made.

Each December, we make our annual request for contributions. We ask that each of you pray and seek the Lord's leading as to how you might support the ministry of Concerned Methodists. We believe that we make the most efficient use possible of the money you entrust to our work. We are able to translate the maximum amount of donations into our ministry of informing people about what is happening within our United Methodist Church. Since we have no paid employees, everyone who works in this ministry does so on a volunteer basis as a "work offering" in service to the Lord.

We do need to surface two other needs of a more far-reaching nature. The first is one we have mentioned before: the need to move out of the office building where we presently are located and into a house that would eliminate the cost of office rental and at the same time provide us with more space for files and work area expansion. In addition we would be able to consolidate some of our members' home offices into one building. Could you pray as to this need?

Secondly, we are publishing a book entitled "**Stewardship Perspectives – 2007**" that will be an updated and expanded study of financial issues in the United Methodist Church; it will have a printing cost of slightly over \$6,360. This will be in addition to our normal expenses of publishing **The Christian Methodist Newsletter**, the "Monthly Updates" and those in getting ready for the 2008 General Conference next year. This work is one that has been requested since the book **Stewardship Report**. We really need your help to make this book possible.

We do appreciate so much your partnering with us in the mission that we believe the Lord has called us to. May we ask for your continued help through your gifts and your prayers as we continue to address the serious issues in our United Methodist Church?

From all of us here, we wish you the very best during this Christmas season and throughout the year. May God continue to bless you.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

"Believing in the ministry of Concerned Methodists, I will":

_____ Make a "Faith-Promise" of \$_____ per month.

_____ Send a one-time contribution of \$_____.

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December 2007 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

There is no use in crying, "Peace, Peace," if at the same time we reject the Prince of Peace.

– Quick Quotes for Church Bulletins

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Of Interest

+ *Researcher analyzes State of the Church report*

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. - The United Methodist presence in the United States today is the same as it was in 1820. And, if trends in aging and membership losses continue at their current rates, the church will shrink to its size at the time of the first Christmas Conference in 1784. The analysis came from the Rev. Lovett Weems, a United Methodist researcher, speaking Nov. 6 to the denomination's Council of Bishops after examining the State of the Church report released churchwide in June. The report provides a baseline of the thoughts, feelings, values and judgments of a cross-section of United Methodist leaders and members, said Ohio East Bishop John Hopkins, president of the Connectional Table, the leadership entity that coordinates the mission, ministries and resources for the denomination. The Connectional Table commissioned the report in 2005 and asked Weems to review the resulting data and feedback and identify emerging questions, contradictions and implications. Weems is professor of church leadership and director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Weems provided his analysis in the form questions related to 10 areas: 1) theological grounding and spiritual vitality; 2) a global church; 3) church structure; 4) the aging church; 5) finances; 6) young clergy recruitment; 7) diversity; 8) the church's future; 9) large churches; and 10) pastoral effectiveness. The questions "lead us to wonder if we can have a future worthy of our past," said Weems, adding that "without a new vision, the future does not look bright." However, he also told the bishops that new visions often emerge in times of hardship.

United Methodist leaders have been struggling for decades to understand the gradual decline of the denomination's reach in the United States, where membership is almost 8 million, a decline of 19 percent since 1974. Forty-one percent of United Methodist churches in the United States did not report a single profession of faith in 2005.

Age and ethnicity

Weems said The United Methodist Church has a future in the United States only if it can reach younger and more diverse people. The church grew up in America in the 19th century and early decades of the 20th century, but "as the last century unfolded, the nation changed and the church did not." Today, the U.S. church is smaller and older and less diverse than the country's population, he said, noting that the denomination has steadily grayed since 1975.

Weems said the issue of race and ethnicity is not as prominent in the State of the Church report as would be expected given that the United States is undergoing one of the most dramatic racial and ethnic shifts in its history. He said all mainline churches have statements about inclusiveness, but "there is not [a] single mainline denomination in the United States that has shown that it can reach any group of people other than white people as well as it can reach white people." The United Methodist Church is most effective at reaching whites and African Americans but is even struggling today to reach those groups, according to Weems.

"The need for a renewed spirit of inclusion of people is crucial today," he said. The church's future will be shaped by "its willingness and ability to respond to the changing face of America."

Graying clergy, large churches

Weems called the lack of young United Methodist clergy both a crisis and a "complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon" and asked if they should be declared an endangered species. Over the last 20 years, the denomination's U.S. clergy under the age of 35 has dropped below 5 percent. "There is no single cause and no single solution," he said. The church must recruit young clergy to bring new ideas, creativity, energy and cultural awareness, said Weems. He added that, without them, these characteristic are lost, jeopardizing the wisdom and experience that can come with long ministry tenures. Weems told the bishops that large churches have attracted young people and diverse congregations for at least 30 years.

Only 1 percent of the 34,892 United Methodist churches have a worship attendance of more than 500 people, and those larger congregations represent 20 percent of membership, 20 percent of attendance, 24 percent of profession of faith, 25 percent of youth, 26 percent of children and 29 percent of people of color.

The numbers, he said, "cry out for attention to what we all can learn from these congregations."

Silver lining

The good news is that the report indicates that United Methodists are immersed in experiences leading to theological grounding and spiritual vitality. "United Methodist core beliefs are clear," and there is "remarkable" consensus on key tenets of the Christian faith, he said, with variations of emphasis in the United States and across the globe.

Weems described the church as evangelical in a liberal tradition. The church, he said, is the first to challenge assumptions and to open windows and doors to new ideas and possibilities when faith demands it. "Could such a vision that is both deep (in faith and piety) and open (to new needs and possibilities) sustain us over the years ahead?" he asked.

The report is based on surveys conducted between June and September of 2006, and involved interviewing a cross-section of about 3,000 United Methodist clergy, lay leaders and members from across the globe. Connectional Table leaders said the project was the first time the church has attempted to produce a comprehensive overview of the life of the church and was designed to stimulate churchwide conversation.

- By Linda Green, *United Methodist News Service(UMNS) #556; Nashville, Tenn.; Nov. 8, 2007.*

[Commentary: A key reason for our church's decline is the loss of true spirituality – the compelling knowledge that all people everywhere are lost sinners and are going to hell if they do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. All too often we pay lip-service to that without really believing it. If we did truly believe it, our actions and priorities would be much different. This problem applies from the top – our bishops – down, especially in the clergy ranks. Unfortunately, sometimes the laity are more concerned about those who are lost than the clergy. This is our greatest problem – along with some in our clergy leadership's not truly believing that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. These are the two basic problems and the causes for decline in our once-great denomination. – AOM]

+ *Commentary: Helping warriors transition into citizens*

Parts of the United States are about to experience an unprecedented event: the near simultaneous return of thousands of combat veterans. The proud, tired and bloodied are returning home, many after 22-month combat deployment in Iraq. Their towns will, in fine fashion, hail the returning warriors with wonderful "Welcome Home" ceremonies. The veterans will cherish the sentiment, then shoulder their duffle bags and simply "go home."

Unfortunately, "going home" is neither simple nor easy. Months of combat training, followed by more months of combat operations, combine to forge these men and women into warriors. Within 300 hours of their last combat mission, they are demobilized and back on the streets in the United States.

The homes to which they will return have changed. Families either have become "survivors" or "broken." The majority have learned to survive without their soldier. Roles have changed, children have grown and family dynamics have altered. For a minority, marriages have ended and families have shattered beneath the stress of almost two years of separation.

Our proud combat veterans will face the daunting challenges of freedom. Gone is the austere, disciplined life of a forward operating base, with the focus of missions and the camaraderie of the military unit. Ahead is the complex, multi-tasking, fast-paced world of work, family, civic responsibilities and, for many, school.

The vast majority of combat veterans will face these challenges and handle them well. In fact, as past generations have shown, this generation of veterans will begin to emerge as leaders in every productive sector of society.

The combination of discipline, wisdom and the love of life appreciated by only those who have seen it threatened will vault this generation ahead of its peers. Future governors, senators, doctors, lawyers, teachers, clergy, social workers and scientists undoubtedly are returning.

A few, unfortunately, will stumble badly. These troubled souls will wrestle with the effects of war on themselves and their families. They will need the best this country has to offer.

How communities can help

The majority will need our support as well. They need employers willing to be patient as they wrestle to regain skills that have atrophied. They need educators in our colleges and technical schools willing to help them

through the complexities of admission, registration and return to rigorous study. They need parent educators willing to offer classes to help them learn to parent the children they love but barely know. They need wise counselors to help them negotiate new roles in marriage and families.

They need savvy medical providers who understand traumatic brain injuries, Middle Eastern parasites and skin diseases. They need clergy who can listen without condemnation and help them sort out the hardness of soul that war can produce.

Above all, they need a community that walks with them and their families long after the yellow ribbons unravel. This community, though deeply conflicted by the U.S. war in Iraq, honors the sacrifice made by these unique citizen-soldiers. It challenges our newest, "greatest generation" to continue selfless service by inviting these combat veterans to serve in leadership capacities in business, education, government, houses of worship and nonprofit organizations.

They need a community dedicated to bringing these soldiers all the way home, leaving none behind, and helping each to become the productive, healthy citizen we need.

- *A Commentary by the Rev. John Morris, as reported by Kathy Gilbert; UMNS; Nashville {557}; Nov. 8, 2007.*

Morris is a United Methodist chaplain in the Minnesota National Guard.

+ 1945 Atomic Bomb Pilot Dies

[Note: Since there has been controversy (wrongly, we believe) surrounding the dropping of this bomb, we are presenting this information we have received. A simple mathematical calculation of the projected 2 to 4 million casualties if it had been necessary to invade the Japanese homeland would show that this was the right decision made by Truman. – AOM.]

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Paul Tibbets, who piloted the B-29 bomber Enola Gay that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, died Thursday. He was 92 and insisted...to his dying day that he had no regrets about the mission and slept just fine at night. Tibbets had requested no funeral and no headstone, fearing it would provide his detractors with a place to protest.

Tibbets' historic mission in the plane named for his mother marked the beginning of the end of World War II and eliminated the need for what military planners feared would have been an extraordinarily bloody invasion of Japan. It was the first use of a nuclear weapon in wartime. The plane and its crew of 14 dropped the five-ton "Little Boy" bomb on the morning of Aug. 6, 1945. The blast killed 70,000 to 100,000 people and injured countless others.

Three days later, the United States dropped a second nuclear bomb on Nagasaki, Japan, killing an estimated 40,000 people. Tibbets did not fly in that mission. The Japanese surrendered a few days later, ending the war.

"I knew when I got the assignment it was going to be an emotional thing," Tibbets told The Columbus Dispatch for a story published on the 60th anniversary of the bombing. "We had feelings, but we had to put them in the background. We knew it was going to kill people right and left. But my one driving interest was to do the best job I could so that we could end the killing as quickly as possible."

Tibbets, then a 30-year-old colonel, never expressed regret over his role. He said it was his patriotic duty and the right thing to do. "I'm not proud that I killed 80,000 people, but I'm proud that I was able to start with nothing, plan it and have it work as perfectly as it did," he said in a 1975 interview. "You've got to take stock and assess the situation at that time. We were at war. ... You use anything at your disposal." He added: "I sleep clearly every night."

Paul Warfield Tibbets Jr. was born Feb. 23, 1915, in Quincy, Illinois, and spent most of his boyhood in Miami. He was a student at the University of Cincinnati's medical school when he decided to withdraw in 1937 to enlist in the Army Air Corps. After the war, Tibbets said in 2005, he was dogged by rumors claiming he was in prison or had committed suicide. "They said I was crazy, said I was a drunkard, in and out of institutions," he said. "At the time, I was running the National Crisis Center at the Pentagon."

Tibbets retired from the Air Force as a brigadier general in 1966. He later moved to Columbus, where he ran an air taxi service until he retired in 1985.

But his role in the bombing brought him fame - and infamy - throughout his life. In 1976, he was criticized for re-enacting the bombing during an appearance at a Harlingen, Texas, air show. As he flew a B-29 Superfortress over the show, a bomb set off on the runway below created a mushroom cloud. He said the display "was not intended to insult anybody," but the Japanese were outraged. The U.S. government later issued a formal apology.

Tibbets again defended the bombing in 1995, when an outcry erupted over a planned 50th anniversary exhibit of the Enola Gay at the Smithsonian Institution. The museum had planned to mount an exhibit that would have examined the context of the bombing, including the discussion within the Truman administration of whether to use the bomb, the rejection of a demonstration bombing and the selection of the target. Veterans groups objected, saying the proposed display paid too much attention to Japan's suffering and too little to Japan's brutality during and before World War II, and that it underestimated the number of Americans who would have perished in an invasion. They said the bombing of Japan was an unmitigated blessing for the United States and the exhibit should say so. Tibbets denounced it as "a...big insult." The museum changed its plan and agreed to display the fuselage of the Enola Gay without commentary, context or analysis.

He told the Dispatch in 2005 that he wanted his ashes scattered over the English Channel, where he loved to fly during the war. A grandson named after Tibbets followed his grandfather into the military as a B2 pilot stationed in Belgium.

- Received by e-mail; "Enola Gay Pilot Paul Tibbets Dies"; November 01, 2007.

(UM) Bishops

+ United Methodist bishops delving into international relations again urge immediate Iraq withdrawal

[Note: It would seem that the good bishops would be more introspective as to their own qualifications in speaking out on issues such as this before pontificating on such complicated issues as international relations. One of the things noted is their recommendation to "support a plan for the reconstruction of Iraq"! If they had bothered to contact credible information sources, they would have discovered that there is an aggressive program to do just that going on at this time - and has been since shortly after American forces entered that country. It would be better for them to get their own house of the United Methodist Church in order first before offering such advice. This would give them more credibility. After all, if they are leaders over a denomination that has experienced decline within the United States for almost 40 years, one might question their credibility in trying to help the president run the country - a far more complicated endeavor. - AOM]

Declaring war "incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ," the bishops of The United Methodist Church called on leaders of all nations to begin an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The bishops also urged against deploying additional troops to Iraq and against establishing permanent military bases in the Middle Eastern country. The action came during the council's semi-annual meeting at a United Methodist retreat center in western North Carolina. In addition... the bishops called on the United States and other Coalition Force nations to initiate and support a plan for the reconstruction of Iraq, giving strong priority to the humanitarian and social needs of the Iraqi people. The resolution is the council's latest action questioning the Iraq war. In November 2005, the bishops urged U.S. President George W. Bush, who is United Methodist, to create a timeline to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

[Note: Again, this would have been one of the worst things the President could have done. The enemy could have then held off on any action until all of our forces had left the country - then unleashed a bloodbath to remove anyone who had supported American forces and might oppose them. This is classic military strategy - a key point the bishops had missed.]

Bishop James Swanson of the Holston Conference said, "We as bishops are concerned about the loss of lives and any resulting effect once the war ends and the troops are removed" He added that, once the troops leave, "the church needs to be about helping the Iraqi people rebuild their lives." [Question: "In what way - if they do not understand basic issues?"]

- By Linda Green; UMNS; Nashville {589}; Nov. 9, 2007.

+ Council of Bishops elects Gregory Palmer president

Iowa Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer was elected Nov. 8 to lead the worldwide Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church. He will begin his two-year term as the council's president in May 2008. Palmer will succeed Bishop Janice Riggle Huie of Houston, whose term expires during the 2008 General Conference meeting next spring in Fort Worth, Texas. The council also elected Bishop Donald Ott to succeed Bishop Roy Sano as its executive secretary and Bishop Sharon Rader as ecumenical officer, effective September 2008. The council elected Bishop Robert Hayes of Oklahoma as secretary of the council, succeeding Bishop Ernest Lyght.

The Council of Bishops represents [nominally] 11.5 million United Methodists in the United States, Africa, Europe and the Philippines. It includes 69 active and 98 retired bishops. - Linda Green; UMNS; Nashville {558}; Nov. 9, 2007.

(UM) General Conference 2008. Evangelical conference addresses church's critical issues

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Conservative evangelical United Methodist renewal organizations asked delegates elected to the 2008 churchwide and jurisdictional conferences to pray and plan for a "renewed and dynamic United Methodist church." The Renewal and Reform Coalition sponsored the conference Oct. 26-27 at Christ United Methodist Church in Memphis.

The meeting's purpose was to address what the groups consider the six most critical issues coming before the church's top lawmaking body: General Conference in the context of a global church; advocacy for women and children; the role of the Judicial Council; doctrine, accountability, leadership and the Council of Bishops; membership standards; and empowering the central conferences.

The 2008 General Conference will meet April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas. The 1,000 delegates elected by annual (regional) conferences will decide policy and approve a denominational budget for the next four years. Jurisdictional conferences will meet in July to elect new bishops for the five geographic conferences in the United States. Ninety-eight delegates, including alternates, registered for the Memphis event, said Patricia L. Miller, executive director of the Confessing Movement.

"You don't have to have a sense of direction as bad as mine to know The United Methodist Church is going the wrong way," said the Rev. Rob Renfroe in opening the first session called "General Conference in the Context of a Global Church."

"In terms of membership, we are going the wrong way; in terms of attendance, we are going the wrong way; in terms of being able to raise up young men and young women who want to give their hearts and their passion and their lives to the cause of Christ in ministry of The United Methodist Church, we are going the wrong way," said Renfroe, a pastor at the Woodlands (Texas) United Methodist Church.

Praising the central conferences

Renfroe said United Methodist evangelicals are indebted "to our brothers and sisters in the central conferences" - which are in Africa, Europe and Asia - because of their commitment to the poor and to Scripture.

The Rev. Eddie Fox, world director of evangelism for the World Methodist Council, praised the central conferences and cautioned delegates about a proposal that may go to General Conference to make the United States a central or regional conference as well. The proposal comes from the United Methodist Council of Bishops and would change the constitution of The United Methodist Church. "It is not the time to talk about dividing the church," said Fox. One-third of the General Conference comes from outside the United States. The church is global and has been from the beginning, he said. "Why change the constitution without knowing what the consequences are? Can you imagine the amount of time and debate we will spend trying to decide what belongs in a national conference and what belongs in a regional conference? Becoming a national entity sets us on a track to be more divisive than it is to create unity for us in our church."

Judicial Council

Judge Ron Enns, Northwest Texas Annual (regional) Conference, told participants the most important votes that will be cast at General Conference will be for spots on the Judicial Council, the top court of the denomination. "Five people on the Judicial Council can change church law," he said. "It is imperative we elect evangelicals to the council."

The Rev. Maxie Dunnam held a session on "Doctrine, Accountability, Leadership, and The Council of Bishops."

"Am I misreading the signs?" asked Dunnam, an author and speaker who will serve as a General Conference delegate from the Kentucky Annual Conference. "I am not hearing words like dynamic or life-changing to describe The United Methodist Church in the U.S. and Europe. People are asking for bread and too often are given a stone." Dunnam said the church's media campaign of "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors." would be "genius" if presented with orthodox and Wesleyan integrity. "Open hearts, open minds, open doors to whom and to what purpose?" he asked.

"I join Mr. Wesley," said Dunnam, quoting Methodism founder John Wesley. "I am not afraid that the people called Methodist should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only

exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this will undoubtedly be the case unless they hold fast to the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out."

Renewal and transformation

The Rev. Jerry P. Kulah, superintendent in Monrovia, Liberia, of the Africa Annual Conference, presented a plan for renewal and transforming the church. "I am delighted to inform you that United Methodists all over Africa strongly hold the conviction that there is hope and a future for global Methodism through our Wesleyan heritage," he said. "But the fulfillment of this hope and realization of the anticipated future critically depend upon the quality leadership that provides direction for the future, and the choices we make as a church regarding biblical doctrine, Christian discipline, our devotion to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, our submission to the control and empowerment by the Holy Spirit and our commitment to the fulfillment of the Great commission (Matthew 28:19-20)."

Kulah said when Jesus was threatened by King Herod, the holy family fled to Africa. "Today the church in Africa offers itself as a sanctuary for God's Word for the renewing of his church around the world," he said.

Other sessions included a presentation on legislation aimed at advocacy for women's and children's issues and membership standards.

The coalition also offered an orientation to its six organizations and invited delegates to join them during General Conference, where daily briefing breakfasts will provide highlights of the previous day's activities and offer delegates a "spiritual lift," according to organizers.

- By Kathy L. Gilbert; UMNS; Nashville #537; Oct. 30, 2007.

(UM) Judicial Council. Church court upholds transgender pastor's appointment

SAN FRANCISCO. The United Methodist Church's supreme court has upheld a bishop's decision that a pastor who changed gender from female to male remains eligible to serve the church. In combining two separate docket items related to the Rev. "Drew Phoenix," pastor at St. John's UMC in Baltimore, the Judicial Council stated that it was not ruling on whether changing gender is a chargeable offense or violates minimum standards set by the church's legislative body, the General Conference. Rather, the court said "a clergyperson's standing cannot be terminated without administrative or juridical action having occurred and all fair process being accorded." "The adjective (in this case, 'transgender') placed in front of the noun 'clergyperson' does not matter," the court states in Decision 1074. "What matters is that clergypersons, once ordained and admitted to membership in full connection, cannot have that standing changed without being accorded fair process." Because Phoenix is a clergy member in good standing, the ruling means Phoenix will continue to serve his[/"her"] church. But the subject of whether transgender clergy are eligible for appointment is likely to be among issues debated when the church's General Conference convenes next April in Fort Worth, Texas. The United Methodist Church bars practicing homosexuals from being ordained but has nothing in its polity about transgender persons.

In other decisions related to sexuality issues, the council ruled that a Minnesota Annual Conference plan for providing health benefits for domestic partners does not violate the church's Book of Discipline. The council would not take jurisdiction in challenges to three Northern Illinois Annual Conference resolutions affirming inclusiveness in the church. The council also remanded a case questioning whether Western North Carolina Annual Conference funds were being used to promote homosexuality. It upheld a bishop's decision in the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference that two campus ministry groups receiving conference funds were not part of any network that promotes homosexuality.

Notable absence: The Judicial Council meeting also was notable for the absence of its president, Dr. Jim Holsinger. As President George W. Bush's nominee for U.S. surgeon general, Holsinger said his participation could become an "unnecessary and unproductive distraction" to the court's proceedings. Holsinger is awaiting confirmation as the country's top doctor as the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee awaits answers to follow-up questions posed to him in August on his views on homosexuality. His nomination has drawn opposition from gay rights groups, among others. In a statement issued just before the start of the meeting, Holsinger said the "work of the council is too important in the life of The United Methodist Church to have its work distracted. While I remain dedicated to fulfilling the role to which I was elected, I believe this is a time in which my service to the Council can best be demonstrated by my absence."

Sexuality-related cases

During the 2007 executive clergy session of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, a change of name was recorded for Phoenix, from the Rev. Ann Gordon, who was ordained in 1989....Bishop John R. Schol confirmed that, following surgery and hormone therapy, the pastor had changed gender and adopted a new name.

In the Minnesota domestic partner benefits case, the council ruled the plan did not violate Discipline paragraphs listed in the request for a decision because no United Methodist Church funds were being used to supply the benefits. The plan offers benefits to lay employees of the conference and their families, including domestic partners, and the cost of the health care coverage is borne by the employee.

In the question on whether money from the Western North Carolina Conference budget was being used to promote homosexuality through the North Carolina Council of Churches and by the campus ministry at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the council ruled that it is up to the individual conferences to determine whether money is being used in violation of Paragraph 612.19 of the Book of Discipline, which blocks funds from being spent in such a manner. The decision directs the conference's Council for Finance and Administration to perform its own investigation and report to the council within 60 days.

In the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference decision, the council upheld the bishop's decision that the conference's Council for Finance and Administration had properly investigated two ministries at the University of Washington and the University of Puget Sound and determined that they were not affiliated with groups promoting homosexuality.

In the Northern Illinois Annual Conference item, the council said it did not have jurisdiction because the three resolutions were not debated separately but were handled together as part of the consent calendar. All three were related to the inclusiveness of the church and in response to the Judicial Council's earlier Decision 1032, which supported the actions of a pastor who blocked an openly gay man from joining the church.

Other issues

The council ruled that candidates for the church's General Conference and jurisdictional conferences cannot be compelled to disclose their view on controversial issues. In Decision 1083, the council declared a motion adopted by the Memphis Annual Conference unconstitutional because it directed the annual conference to create a survey for prospective candidates. "Any attempt on the part of an Annual Conference to add to or change the procedures for the election of clergy or lay members to General or Jurisdictional conference is unconstitutional," the council ruled. The decision noted that candidates can choose to ignore or respond to surveys from various caucus groups.

The council also rejected as unconstitutional a new policy from the Memphis Annual Conference titled "Identifying and Strengthening Effective Clergy Leadership." The strongly worded ruling lists seven points in which the policy does not conform with the Book of Discipline, including that the "twelve-month whirlwind process ... suggests that the real purpose of the proposal is to weed out ineffective clergy rather than developing the skills and abilities which would enable them to become effective."

In a review of a bishop's decision of law in the Western Pennsylvania Conference on a report titled "Faithful, Effective and Fruitful Clergy: A Working Definition" - and the relation of that report to a proposed discontinuance of a probationary member - the Judicial Council ruled that the questions were hypothetical because the conference did not adopt such a report in final form. The questions related to the effort to discontinue the pastor were moot once the clergy person requests and is granted a voluntary leave of absence, the council said.

In addition to Holsinger, Judicial Council members Jon Gray and the Rev. Paul Shamwange were absent. Participating instead were the first clergy alternate, the Rev. C. Rex Bevins from the Nebraska Conference, and first lay alternate, Dr. Solomon Christian from the Memphis Conference.

- *By Neill Caldwell; UMNS; Nashville {#538}; Oct. 30, 2007.* Caldwell is editor of the Virginia United Methodist Advocate magazine and covers the Judicial Council for United Methodist News Service.

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He that would govern others must first be lord of himself, and he only is lord of himself who is consciously and habitually the servant of God.

Global Outlook

Morality and religion are the two pillars of our society. – George Washington

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Kenya. Mainstream Christians, evangelicals mix in Kenya

Christians from more than 70 countries gathered recently in Kenya. A significant number of the 240 church leaders attending were Pentecostals and Evangelicals - groups that don't normally interact with the mainstream ecumenical movement. One result of the Global Christian Forum, which met Nov. 6-9 in Limuru, near Nairobi, was a "Message from the Global Christian Forum to Brothers and Sisters in Christ Throughout the World." Attending the meeting were representatives of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and Pentecostal churches, as well as the broader Evangelical movement and other Christian churches, communities and interchurch organizations. Representing The United Methodist Church...was retired Bishop Emilio de Carvalho of Angola.

- By Linda Bloom; UMNS; New York {#569}; Nov. 15, 2007.

Mozambique. Africa University to open Mozambique satellite campus

MAPUTO. Since opening in 1992, Africa University has grown at an astounding rate, with 1,300 students now enrolled at the United Methodist-related school in Zimbabwe. In 2008, Africa University's first satellite campus will open in Maputo. The project is a collaborative effort with the Methodist University of São Paulo, Brazil, and the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

- By Joey Butler;

UMNS; Nashville {#554}; Nov. 8, 2007.

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Wild oats need no fertilizer