

The Christian Methodist Newsletter

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Church Employees Support Soldier's Deployment Refusal

The narrative below is printed with minimal editorial comment in the body of the text. However, we need to take a serious look at the content, the slant, and the implications of this report. You will note that it is extremely sympathetic to the officer's disobeying a lawful order and his refusal to serve his country in its time of need. This is problematic for several reasons. First of all, it goes against our biblical mandates to support our government. Secondly, the war itself is a worthwhile endeavor. For those critics, I would ask, "What if laypeople took a similar attitude of not supporting you or your actions? How was this war illegal? What about the war makes it supposedly immoral? The fact that we went against one of the partners in the international terror network? The fact that we freed a worthy people from a brutal dictator? The fact that we are trying to take freedom – the same types of freedoms that we ourselves enjoy – to others so that they may, among other things, enjoy the freedom of religion and speech? The fact that we have the opportunity to establish a beachhead of Christianity there in the heart of Islam and take the priceless message of salvation through Jesus Christ?

For this last reason alone, I would ask the people below to respond as to why this would not be a worthy effort. I speak as one who has studied and worked in this environment, and served my country for over twenty years within Army ranks - both enlisted and officer - in several very-worthy endeavors of a similar nature. A great deal of soul-searching needs to be done, not just by those who have publicly spoken out below. But finally, why do some of our United Methodist Church's leaders use the good name of our denomination to promote this item on their political agenda? That is something to which they owe an answer to the people sitting in the pews, those faithful men and women whose "nickels, dimes, and wrinkled dollar bills" pay their salaries.

Finally, these three bishops come from the Western Jurisdiction with a history of far-left political advocacy – and uninterrupted decline for over thirty years. It would seem that they would first get their own house in order before speaking out in an area in which they have minimal expertise. Could it be that such posturing is a reason for our church's over-39-year decline? - Allen O. Morris

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Some UMs are rallying in support of Army Lt. Ehren Watada, who refused deployment to Iraq because he feels the war is "morally wrong" and "a breach of American law." He faces charges of missing troop movement, conduct unbecoming an officer and contempt towards officials. Watada is currently at Fort Lewis in Tacoma, Wash. Three UM bishops have written letters in support of Watada.

Bishop Robert Hoshibata: "This letter is being written in support of you..." said Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata of the denomination's Portland (Ore.) Area. "Along with much of the rest of the nation, I have been observing with great interest and concern the media accounts of your decision to challenge the legality of the current war being waged in Iraq," he continued. "I perceive in your actions a courageous [Note: I would say "misguided"] questioning of the role of the military in our world and a willingness to act on the basis of what you believe to be ethically right. As a bishop of the United Methodist Church, I affirm our church's stance on peace and war and applaud your willingness to balance your call to duty with your innermost thoughts and core beliefs." [Note: "Bishop, do you also affirm our church's stance on "Just War Theory"? Should we not seek to put reality to our frequent use of the term "justice"?"]

Bishop Roy I. Sano: In becoming the first military officer to refuse an order for deployment to the Iraq war, Watada has stated, "It is my conclusion as an officer of the Armed Forces that the war in Iraq is not only morally wrong but a horrible breach of American law. As the order to take part in an illegal act is ultimately unlawful as well, I must, as an officer of honor and integrity, refuse that order."

Bishop Roy Sano, executive secretary of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, addressed his letter to Watada's mother, Carolyn Ho. "I was inspired by the brave step your son took in refusing to be deployed to Iraq," he wrote. "In the United Methodist Church, we do not take civil disobedience lightly, but when necessary for conscience sake, we approve it in our Article of Faith and Social Principles. In addition, I want you, and above all your son, to know that 109 United Methodist bishops signed a statement of conscience concerning the war in Iraq." The statement, signed in November 2005, said in part: "As elected and consecrated bishops of the church, we repent of our complicity in what we believe to be the unjust and immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq..."

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson: “I commend you as one who has taken a courageous and difficult stand to publicly make known a position you have come to believe in opposition to a particular war.” Swenson cited Paragraphs 164, “About military service,” and 165, “About war and peace,” from the denomination’s lawbook, the 2004 Book of Discipline...

Information taken from a report filed by Kathy L. Gilbert A United Methodist News Service Report; ostensibly with supporting information from Lt. Ehren Watada; Aug. 14, 2007.*

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At their October meeting, the directors of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) fired GBGM General Secretary R. Randy Day. The decision has shocked many in the church. The sometimes controversial Day had been GBGM general secretary since January 1, 2003. He condemned the Bush administration for fanning "xenophobic flames" over immigration. And Day organized a GBGM partnership with a British Islamic group. He the reasons for his firing appeared to be purely administrative.

Retired Bishop Felton May was elected as Day's interim replacement. He has been chairing the United Methodist Holistic Africa emphasis and serving as dean of the Harry R. Kendall Science and Health Mission Center at United Methodist-related Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas. Formerly he was vice president of the GBGM directors and bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

GBGM is United Methodism's largest agency. Directors approved a \$60 million 2008 budget for GBGM, excluding funds for the Women's Division and UMCOR. GBGM Treasurer Roland Fernandes reported that GBGM has requested \$155.1 from the apportioned World Service Fund for the 2009-2012 quadrennium, a 23 percent increase from the current quadrennium's \$126 million. But Fernandes reported that the Connectional Table and the General Council on Finance and Administration have changed the General Conference request \$133.8 million, which is a 6 percent increase similar to other church agencies. Fernandes warned that this "will be insufficient to sustain the [GBGM's] current level of activity." GBGM's total net assets currently stand at \$198.8 million, excluding Women's Division assets.

Directors also elected the Rev. Sam Dixon as head of UMCOR, a position he has filled in an interim capacity since the resignation of his predecessor, Paul Dirdak. Dixon has previously strongly defended the GBGM's practice of diverting funds from missions to give grants to divisive, left-wing, secular political groups. He has a doctorate of ministry degree from the radical Chicago Theological Seminary. Dixon spoke to directors about the recent partnership agreement between UMCOR and Muslim Aid. The formal partnership developed out of cooperation in helping Sri Lankans flee their civil war. He admitted the partnership has sparked "controversy" and reported receiving a number of protest letters. But he defended the arrangement, noting that Muslim Aid has some Christian staffers and shares UMCOR's philosophy of providing aid to all people. Bishop Edward Pup of Seattle, who had been quite involved with the partnering, expressed hope that the partnership will encourage more leaders "from the religious community" to come together to help "all of God's children."

[Note: Bishop Paup errs in a fundamental assumption here. He is right in that through Adam and Noah, we are biologically related to one another, and we are assuredly all creations of God. However, he has confused the fact that we are not all children of God. We are children of God if we have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This enables us to become “adopted sons and daughters” of God. What Bishop Paup had said goes against what the Bible has to say in that we become “adopted sons of God” when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior: John 1:12, 13; Romans 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 6:18; and Galatians 3:26 and 4:4-7. Romans 8: 15-17 directly refutes what he had said with, “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” In just one of the places that Dr. J. Vernon McGee speaks to this is in his commentary on Ephesians 4:4-6. He makes seven observations the last of which is, “7. “One God and Father of all” refers to God’s fatherhood of believers. Since there is only one Father, He is not the Father of unbelievers. Sonship can come only through Christ. The unity of believers produces a sharp distinction between believers and unbelievers. He is Father of all who are His by regeneration.” (*Thru the Bible*, volume 5, page 251.) This idea of the universal sonship of humanity is reflective of a far-left view that leads to universalism – the idea that everyone will be saved regardless of what they believe or what they have done on this earth. – Allen O. Morris]

The Rev. W.P. Ebenezer Joseph, President of the fast-growing, British-linked, 36,000-member Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, personally thanked GBGM's UMCOR for tsunami relief. His church is "asking every Methodist to bring another into the saving power of Christ in the next two years." He also affirmed the UMCOR-Muslim Aid partnership, saying that it was important to work with people of all religions in order to achieve peace.

Leftist Themes Still Prevalent

Liberal political themes were present at the GBGM meeting. One young adult mission intern described U.S. immigration law as "oppression" and described "dealing with the shame of being the face of America" while traveling overseas. Among the assignments of the 17 young adults recently commissioned for 22 or 32 months were:

+ Foundry UMC, a prominent congregation among those that have affiliated with the Reconciling Ministries Network in defiance of church law. Sabeel, a Jerusalem-based Palestinian activist group that strongly condemns Israel.

+ United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), which lobbies in Washington, D.C., in the church's name for left-wing causes.

Church World Service's liberal lobby office in Washington, D.C. Director Dan Soliz of Texas claimed that in the U.S., "people are being deported simply because of their skin color." Director Judy Nutter of West Virginia linked anti-racism to religious universalism, asserting that Christians and people of different religions "all basically believe the same thing."

Some Hopeful Signs of Moving Forward

However, a different perspective was offered by Bishop Benjamin Justo in his sermon for the commissioning of thirteen new missionaries. The Filipino bishop declared that "soul-winning-activities to win souls for Christ-is the primary task of missionaries." He said: "The area for Christian mission, contrary to what some people think, is still very large," citing "those teeming millions" throughout the world who "still have to hear and accept the evangelical Gospel as United Methodists understand and interpret it." Bishop Justo provoked murmurs by noting the importance of high standards for missionaries. True missionary service cannot be "impulsive" but involves both "counting the cost" and willingness "to follow the mandate of the Lord for mission whatever the cost."

"To Jesus the demands of service to the Kingdom of God should be set above all other priorities," Bishop Justo observed. Missionaries with "no deep and strong roots" in discipleship "are out of place in kingdom building," he said. They "are useless in the fulfillment of the church mission," and "can even be liabilities to mission by being, for example, termites to the financial resources of the Board."

At the latest official count, the GBGM claims a total of 931 "mission personnel," of whom 205 are standard support (i.e., receiving full salary support from GBGM) and serving overseas.

Addressing Global United Methodism

Sixty-five percent of United Methodists are American, 32 percent are African, 2 percent are Filipino, and 1 percent is European. But the Book of Discipline currently limits the total number of non-American directors of general denominational agencies to 10 percent.

GBGM directors heard from Scott Brewer, Director of Records and Statistics for the United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA). He reported that United Methodism in the U.S. has shrunk by a fourth since 1968. But the church is growing globally, Brewer said. United Methodism currently includes a total of 13,755,535 members, including both adult "professing members" and baptized children. Brewer later provided information breaking down that figure as follows:

U.S. Southeastern Jurisdiction: 3,236,959

U.S. South Central Jurisdiction: 1,976,546

U.S. North Central Jurisdiction: 1,655,947

U.S. Northeastern Jurisdiction: 1,621,431

U.S. Western Jurisdiction: 439,917

West Africa Central Conference: 1,992,891

Congo Central Conference: 1,936,452

Africa Central Conference: 494,905

Philippines Central Conference: 272,127

Germany Central Conference: 61,201

Central And Southern Europe Central Conference: 36,930

Northern Europe Central Conference: 30,229

Bishop Minerva Carcaño of Arizona spoke on the denomination's relationship with the Latin American Methodist churches, all of which have become autonomous. She chairs a task force studying United Methodist ties to the Latin American Methodist denominations. Some leaders of these autonomous churches have recently felt frustrated that autonomy has not yielded all the benefits they had hoped for, she reported. Carcaño said that Wesleyan ecclesiological and theological principles of connectionalism and oneness in Jesus Christ do not support the principle of "complete autonomy." She suggested that autonomous churches could be represented on The United Methodist Church's Council of Bishops and general boards and agencies. She also noted that one Latin American church leader had told her that "a real dialogue" would necessitate U.S. church officials denouncing their country's foreign policy with "a prophetic voice."

GBGM staffer Rena Yocum spoke about the plan of the Task Group on the Global Nature of the Church of the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table to dramatically restructure the denomination. The plan would make the U.S. church a separate regional conference, separating it somewhat from the non U.S. churches. During a question-and-answer time, Bishop Joseph Humper of Sierra Leone urged fellow directors to "think ... very seriously" about whether or not this plan would help the church grow or if it could provoke stagnation.

Report of Seminary Task Force

Director Maxie Dunnam of Kentucky reported to fellow directors on the work of the Seminary Task Force for Mission, which he chairs. The GBGM announced the establishment this Task Force at its Spring 2005 meeting. The group was tasked with evaluating the teaching of mission theology and history in United Methodist seminaries and making recommendations for improvement. Its final report and recommendations will be decided upon next month. "As goes the seminary, so goes the pastor, as goes the pastor, so goes the local congregation, as goes the local congregation, so goes the entire church," Dunnam said. The church's 13 official U.S. seminaries are not "adequately" addressing missions, he lamented. Dunnam reported that the diminishing number of United Methodist missions professors had informed GBGM that missions was "slipping away from the core curriculum of our United Methodist seminaries." Dunnam's task force has lamented "the lack of support for full-time mission faculty in United Methodist theological schools" and noted that the "implications of the southward demographic shift in Christian population has not been fully assimilated into our missiological thinking." "If it's true that the church exists by mission as fire exists by burning,"

Dunnam asked fellow directors if missions should not be at the heart of seminary curriculum.

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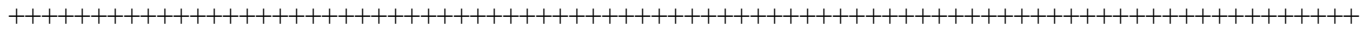
Taken from a UMAAction report entitled "United Methodist Missions Agency Chief Fired at Directors' Meeting" by John Lomperis, dated: 10/19/2007. Received by e-mail. UMAAction is another renewal group associated with: The Institute on Religion and Democracy, 1023 15th Street NW, #601, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: 202/682-4131.

Website: www.ird-renew.org

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Psalm 119:9 - 11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.



Garrison Keillor on Methodists

We make fun of Methodists for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them. If you were to ask an audience in New York City, a relatively Methodist-less place, to sing along on the chorus of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Methodists, they'd smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the road!

Many Methodists are bred from childhood to sing in 4-part harmony, a talent that comes from sitting on the lap of someone singing alto or tenor or bass and hearing the harmonic intervals by putting your little head against that person's rib cage. It's natural for Methodists to sing in harmony. We are too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison. When you're singing in the key of C and you slide into the A7th and D7th chords, all 200, it's an emotionally fulfilling moment. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other. I do believe this: People, these Methodists, who love to sing in four-part harmony are the sort of people you could call up when you're in deep distress. If you are dying, they will comfort you. If you are lonely, they'll talk to you. And if you are hungry, they'll give you tuna salad!

(Adapted from an essay by Garrison Keillor)

Worth Remembering

Some time ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine athletes, all mentally or physically challenged, were standing on the start line for the 100 meter race.

The gun fired and the race began. Not everyone was running, but everyone wanted to participate and win.

They ran in threes, a boy tripped and fell, did a few somersaults and started crying. The other eight heard him crying. They slowed down and looked behind them. They stopped and came back... All of them...

A girl with Down's Syndrome sat down next to him, hugged him and asked, "Feeling better now?"

Then, all nine walked shoulder to shoulder to the finish line.

The whole crowd stood up and applauded. And the applause lasted a very long time...

People who witnessed this still talk about it.

Why?

Because deep down inside us, we all know that the most important thing in life is much more than winning for ourselves.

The most important thing in this life is to help others to win. Even if that means slowing down and changing our own race.

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A candle loses nothing if it is used to light another one.

To Reiterate
Allah or The Lord Jesus Christ?

By Rick Mathes

In the past issue we had included an article with the above title. It narrated what happened in a prison involving Islam – one of the fastest growing religions in the world and the fastest growing religion per capita in the USA, especially in the minority races!

The above-named article referred to a testimony by Rick Mathes, who is involved in a prison ministry, during a training session at which there was a presentation by three speakers representing the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Muslim faiths, who explained each of their beliefs. He was particularly interested in what the Islamic Imam had to say. The Imam gave a great presentation of the basics of Islam, complete with a video.

After the presentations, Rick directed his questions to the Imam and politely challenged him on his religion. He reasoned with the Imam and forced him to admit that Islam taught its adherents to kill “infidels” – non-Muslims. The Imam was shamed into admitting it.

After publication of this article in the last issue of The Christian Methodist Newsletter, I was challenged as to whether or not it happened. I checked and, yes, it did happen despite any nay-sayers you may hear to the contrary. I accessed follow-up information to verify it.

We stand by what we had printed.

- Allen Morris, Editor