

The Monthly Update

January 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I want to thank you for your response to our appeal for support that helped us close the budget gap from our expanded coverage of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter*. Both your financial participation and your prayerful support in the ministry of Concerned Methodists are very reassuring. The finances enable us to continue publishing our information to over 20,000 people, families, and congregations; maintaining our website; preparing studies; and participating in conferences that are important to our mission. Your prayers are of crucial importance in helping us win the victories we have; hopefully, they will continue – especially in 2007 and 2008. As it now stands we still have a shortfall of \$700 in meeting all of our bills for this past year, but I am confident that even those needs will be met.

As we go into this next year we are looking forward to the annual conferences and their election of delegates to the 2008 General Conference which will be held in Fort Worth, Texas. We believe that we are in a “window of decision” between the 2004 and the 2008 General Conferences that will determine the future survival of our denomination in its fight over the homosexual question.

This is the “flag issue” on which many United Methodists hinge their continued membership in the denomination. This area combined with the gradual secularization of the church; radical feminist theologies; and political activism are the chief issues plaguing our church and preventing it from fully serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

This last area is one that affects everyone who is an American citizen. Our church leaders’ continued posturing against the war in Iraq could affect the future of our country if the wrong decisions are made in this struggle. Whether or not some want to admit it, we are in World War III against the forces of radical Islam. The Iraqi War presents us with a tremendous opportunity or potential for unprecedented defeat. If we succeed in forming a democratic state in Iraq with freedom of religion, then a beachhead of Christianity can be established there in the heart of Islam with the prospect for evangelization of that part of the world. If we do not achieve victory in Iraq but leave with less than pacification of that country, then Islamic terrorists will see that as weakness and lack of commitment - and follow us here to the United States and commit even greater atrocities than we saw on September 11th.

We do believe that if our church leaders and clergy would not try to help the President run the country and get to winning people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, we would see revival in our once-great denomination. I pray that will happen.

I thank you in advance for continuing to pray for those of us in Concerned Methodists and for standing with us financially in this continuing battle for the heart and soul of our United Methodist Church.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

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January 2007 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

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

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Immigration Issues. North American Methodists Build Bridges on Immigration

[Note: Often "Immigration issues" is a term used to mask advocacy for illegal immigration for which UMC employees have advocated. It is important to understand this and to filter what are legitimate concerns from this type of advocacy.]

Concern for people migrating across political borders is motivating increasing collaboration between the UMC in the United States and the Methodist Church of Mexico. Simultaneously, UM general agencies are stepping up their collective attention to U.S. immigration policy. Bishops and others from annual conferences north and south of the border met Dec. 1-2 in Tucson, Ariz., to formalize what will be called the Methodist Border Mission Network. It was the third meeting of its kind in the last 15 months. The day before, meeting in Phoenix, representatives from most of the general agencies and the UM Council of Bishops set up an Interagency Task Force on Immigration, a possibility projected by the 2000 General Conference. This panel will focus on federal, state, and local immigration policy and on education about immigration issues within the UMC. The emphasis is on just immigrant policy and comprehensive U.S. immigration reform legislation.

Bishop Minerva Carcaño (Phoenix Area) convened the interagency group as chairperson of an immigration committee of the Council of Bishops. In addition, as host bishop, she presided at the meeting that set up the border mission group. Most of the participants in the interagency group also attended the Tucson sessions to make presentations on existing programs dealing with immigrants. Felipe Ruiz, who heads the immigration ministry of the Mexican church, said that 82% of the people crossing the border into the United States are from Mexico, with Hondurans, Salvadorians, and Brazilians forming the next largest groups. A major concern at both the border consultation and the interagency meeting was how the churches serve acute human needs and work to prevent the loss of life among migrants. Both gatherings acknowledge that migration is a global reality challenging the churches.

- Elliot Wright, *GBGM NewScope*, December 15, 2006.

Of Interest.

+ *Do you believe in God?*

NBC this morning had a poll on this question. They had the highest Number of responses that they have ever had for one of their polls, and the Percentage was the same as this:

86% to keep the words, IN God We Trust and God in the Pledge of Allegiance
14% against.

That is a pretty 'commanding' public response. Why then is there such a mess about having "In God We Trust" on our money and having God in the Pledge of Allegiance? - Maria Romero, received by e-mail.

+ *New UMC.org will offer more services, create communities*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - United Methodist Communications will relaunch the denomination's Web site to become the "front door" to the online faith community in early January. "UMC.org" has been retooled to incorporate innovative technologies to bring people together in new ways. "The new design was necessary as the Web transforms to become a part of the fabric of our lives," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications.

Front door to the church: When the switch is flipped in early January, the new site will enable individuals to access the church's resources, find a church in any community in the United States, identify personal spiritual gifts and share prayer concerns with others.

- By Linda Green, *The United Methodist News Service (UMNS)*; Nashville { # 729 }; Dec. 15, 2006.

+ *Cote D'Ivoire Church not fully admitted, says Judicial Council*

Cincinnati - The top court of the United Methodist Church has ruled that the 2004 General Conference was within its authority to limit the United Methodist Church of Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) to two General Conference delegates. Meeting Oct. 25-28, the Judicial Council made it clear that the action by the 2004 General Conference "was not a final act of admission" of the Methodist Church of Cote d'Ivoire into the United Methodist Church. "By its terms, the legislation contemplated that further action would be taken by the 2008 General Conference," the council said in its ruling. The 2008 General Conference will meet April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas. The ruling cites Paragraph 502 of the Book of Discipline as authority for a General Conference to provide for the composition and allocation of delegates.

On the final morning of the 2004 General Conference, delegates considered a recommendation from the Commission on Central Conference Affairs proposing the addition of Cote d'Ivoire to the West Africa Central Conference.

[Commentary: Boyette, et.al, ruled that to have just 2 delegates is unconstitutional. Now, their four votes did not prevail over the three which supported the "2 delegates" concept, because to rule an action of the General Conference to be unconstitutional takes a 2/3 vote, or 6 of the 9 members of the Judicial Council. The three who prevailed argued that the matter was still in transition and would be completed at the 2008 General Conference. Boyette and company argued that the matter is not in transition. They said the Ivory Coast church has elected its bishop and the East Africa Area has recognized it, and the church has filed proper papers with GCFA, so it is a done deal, which seems to be a proper interpretation. But, they didn't have the numbers to prevail.

All of the JC decisions are posted. Go to UMC.org. Then click on "About our Church," and then Judicial Council decisions. The decisions between with 1042.]

- By Neill Caldwell, UMNS# 657; Nov. 6, 2006. UMNS information and commentary received by e-mail from an associate of Concerned Methodists.

+ Research firm explores state of the United Methodist Church

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - What do United Methodists like about their denomination? What is the role of the church in their lives? Getting answers to these and other questions is the task of an international consulting firm that is working with the United Methodist Church's Connectional Table for an assessment of the state of the denomination. Researchers with the Martec Group are contacting United Methodists to collect information for the Connectional Table's state of the church project, said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications and a member of the table.

The research firm's findings will describe the thoughts, feelings, values and judgments of active and inactive members of the United Methodist Church, he said. The company is based in Chicago and has offices in Houston, San Francisco, Detroit, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Beijing. The firm also will interview bishops, pastors, district superintendents, annual conference treasurers and administrative service directors, connectional ministries directors and designated lay leaders.

The research effort was initiated to define current realities - strengths and weaknesses - in the life and ministries of the United Methodist Church and to offer proposals for dialogue and action that will "lead to enhanced effectiveness in making disciples of Jesus Christ and foster mercy and justice in the world," said Neil Alexander, co-leader of the research project with Hollon, and president and publisher of the United Methodist Publishing House. "The research is just one of the ways we are working to observe and learn more about the range of opinions and attitudes United Methodists have about the needs of people, the effectiveness of our churches and extension ministries, and the near- and long-term challenges we must confront," said Alexander, who is also a member of the Connectional Table.

"It is obvious that this is a bold undertaking," Alexander said. The table "aspires to ignite imaginations and animate churchwide evaluation and planning." The group does not "intend to issue a judgmental report card," but based on input from a variety of sources, it will "prepare descriptions and propositions that will help laity and clergy reflect in informed and faithful ways about who we are, how we are doing, and how we can advance our mission and witness together."

An international effort

Meera Buck, the principal researcher for United Methodist data for Martec, said her assignment is to develop an understanding of the state of the church, find out "what is on the minds of United Methodists and the role of the church in their lives with a view toward the future." Buck, a United Methodist, said the research has three phases. The group is analyzing existing church data as well as conducting personal, one-on-one interviews with "all kinds of people within the church to understand what they think of the church," she said. "The interviews will be representative of areas where the United Methodist Church exists."

Data will be gathered from United Methodists in the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Germany, Switzerland, Russia and the Philippines. The Martec Group is also collecting information through telephone interviews, Internet bulletin boards, surveys and other research methods. "We need statistically valid baseline data so we will not fill in the blanks with speculative assumptions," Alexander said. The results gleaned from the gathered information will provide points of comparison for measuring the degree and rate of changes in attitudes and views in future years, he said.

"The Connectional Table is encouraging leaders to participate in facing the facts about current reality, to collaborate in prayer and reflection to discern God's call, and to help shape our response as individuals, congregations, annual conferences and the general church," he said.

Since the personal interview phase of the research has begun, concerns have been raised about how the data will be used and of the confidentiality of responses. "I always assure people that they are going to be totally anonymous, and if I quote anybody, it will be as a group of people," Buck said. Citing the researchers' code of ethics, she said anonymity compels candor, and without it, researchers would not get the information they seek. "We need candor," Buck said. "This is a huge effort to help United Methodists the world over. It is not a report card on anything. It is looking to the future."

According to Alexander, the only thing the Connectional Table is seeking is "to collect honest, accurate, and useful information that helps all of us think about who we are, how we are doing, and how we can become more effective in fulfilling our mission."

[Note: This has tremendous potential. Central to the issue are spiritual matters – an authentic experience with Jesus Christ and true evangelism. If we do not address these areas, we will have missed a priceless opportunity to revive our denomination and transform not only the United States but have a Christian outreach to the world.]

- By Linda Green, UMNS; Nashville {UMNS # 376}; June 21, 2006.

+ **United Methodists fill 62 seats in new Congress**

Washington - Sixty-two United Methodists will serve in the 110th Congress - the same number as in the 109th Congress - and the denomination remains in third place among all religious groups. As a result of the Nov. 7 elections, some partisan reshuffling has occurred, resulting in a net gain of four Democrats. There are 34 Republicans and 27 Democrats in the Methodist membership in the House of Representatives. There were no changes in the 13 United Methodists serving in the U.S. Senate, where they are second in number to Catholics.

With 10 members, Texas has the largest number of United Methodists in Congress (with a runoff election set for one of the state's districts Dec. 12), followed by five in Florida, four from Ohio, and three from Indiana and Kansas. Thirty states elected at least one United Methodist to Congress in 2006, the same as in 2004. Thirty-five United Methodists represent states in the South or Border South, while 16 hail from the Midwest, seven from the Rocky Mountain West and the Pacific Coast, and three from the Mid-Atlantic states. There are no United Methodist members from New England.

United Methodists rank third in total Congressional membership, following Roman Catholics in first place and Baptists in second. Presbyterians, Jews and Episcopalians are in fourth, fifth and sixth places. Nondenominational Protestants, Lutherans, Mormons and nondenominational Christians complete the top 10 religious groups represented in Congress. In addition, President George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are United Methodists.

After the recent elections, the United Methodist Church also has six members who are or will be serving as state governors. They are Janet Napolitano, Democrat, Arizona; Ruth Ann Minner, Democrat, Delaware; Charlie Crist, Republican, Florida; David Heinemann, Republican, Nebraska; Ted Strickland, Democrat, Ohio; and Rick Perry, Republican, Texas.

- By Albert J. Menendez, UMNS #714; Dec. 13, 2006. This tabulation is based on the religious affiliations reported by Congressional staffs to Congressional Quarterly and to the Almanac of American Politics. The affiliations of the newly elected members of the 110th Congress appeared in CQ's Guide to the New Congress, issued Nov. 9. They have been compiled by Albert J. Menendez. The tabulation does not reflect the outcome of a Dec. 12 runoff for the 23rd Congressional District in Texas. Information on the governors' religious affiliations comes from CNN and from The Almanac of American Politics.

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"Enthusiasm is that kindling spark which marks the difference between the leaders in every activity and the laggards who put in just enough to get by." - Author Unknown

Global Outlook

In order to be big, you have to think big. If you think small, you're going to be small.

- Emeril Lagasse in Cigar Aficionado, as quoted in Reader's Digest, November 2006

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Africa. African churches have obsession for evangelism, scholar says

MAPUTO, Mozambique (UMNS) - The success of evangelization of Africa is a "surprising phenomenon to the rest of

Christendom," said Africa University's chairperson of evangelism. "The church in Africa has an obsession for the ministry of evangelism," said the Rev. John Wesley Kurewa, founding vice chancellor of Africa University and holder of the chair of evangelism. The United Methodist-related university, in Mutare, Zimbabwe, has about 1,300 students from 24 African countries.

Addressing the United Methodist Council of Bishops Nov. 2, Kurewa highlighted the role that the missionaries and the early church in Africa played in evangelizing the continent. He expressed his gratitude at being able to speak about

evangelism and church planting across the denomination's African central (regional) conferences, but he noted that with "Africa being such a vast continent as it is, it is presumptuous for any body to claim to speak for the continent."

Since 1910, a shift has been occurring in terms of the growth of Christianity, he said, noting that Africa, Asia and Latin America were once known as non-Christian lands and Europe and North America were referred to as Christian continents. Quoting research, Kurewa said the population of Africa in 1900 was 108 million, with nearly 10 million or 9.2 percent of that number identified as Christians. A study by David Barrett predicted that by the year 2000, the population on the African continent would increase to 813 million and that Christians would be 400 million or 48.4 percent. "For Christianity to claim almost 50 percent from 9.2 percent of the total continental population within one century is testament to the vigor of the early church which claimed its known world within the first century of Christianity's history," Kurewa said.

The United Methodist Church also has grown in Africa. In 1980, it had two central conferences and 10 annual conferences. Today, the church has three central conferences, 21 annual conferences, four provisional conferences and several "initiates." "I don't think we would have this many conferences if our numbers were down," he told the bishops. "There is significant growth in these conferences and ... as long as we have provisional conferences, it shows that the church is growing, (and) I think this is very imperative in Africa."

Evangelizing Africa

Early evangelization in Africa was performed by four groups or waves of churches: the mainline churches, the African Initiated churches, the "so-called" Evangelical churches and the Pentecostal churches, he said. "As the European powers scrambled for African colonies, the mainline churches in Africa were also scrambling for areas in which to evangelize the African people," he said. The missionaries, in order to avoid overlapping in their work, engaged in "comity agreements" that restricted each denomination to one area of a country for evangelism.

Even though the colonists and missionaries had different agendas for Africa, they had similar interests for the people. For the missionaries, it was to evangelize and to civilize Africans. The colonists wanted to "first civilize the Africans and to Christianize them," he added. Kurewa said both sought to accomplish their goals by destroying "all that was African" and supplanting old communities with "so-called Christian and civilized communities."

The missionaries and colonists regarded all that was African as "superstitious," and indigenous culture and religion were condemned "as work of darkness or the work of the devil - whom, by the way, the African did not even know." Africans, he said, believed that the greatest human enemy was another human "and not some conceptual figure out there," he said. The African people were alienated from their cultures and civilization and their own people as they "became European Christians or American Christians," he said. "Our traditional ways of learning, drawn from our experiences as a people, and our methods of healing the sick, were all usurped by the evangelizing missions of the West, bringing with them health and education institutions, which were 'civilized,'" Kurewa said.

Kurewa said that before the missionaries and colonists arrived to teach African people about God, they already knew God and believed in God. They just did not know about Jesus Christ and did not deserve to be called "heathens" because they not know, he said. He noted that African religions were "monotheistic" and that God was called by different names by the various groups across the continent.

Visions of the gospels

Pentecostal churches, he said, target and attract young couples and preach a gospel of prosperity. "The church in Africa has inherited the gospel of the cross and suffering ..." he told the bishops. "There is another aspect of the gospel that we seem to forget: the gospel of the resurrection, the gospel of the Holy Spirit, the gospel of joy."

Addressing the problem of poverty, Kurewa said the poor are often ignored, while mainline groups target the working class, leaving the Pentecostal church to take up the slack. "Methodism without the poor is no longer Methodism," he said. He challenged the bishops to find the faces of people as they address poverty across the continent. Across the continent, there is an obsession for evangelism, he said. "Evangelism is the heartbeat ministry of the church in Africa."

Although churches may disagree on how to address the divergent social issues that plague society, "when it comes to

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evangelism, they come together" and cooperate in various programs, he said. Special occasions such as weddings and funerals are seen as opportunities for evangelism to reach those who do not normally attend church. "Good results are harvested this way," Kurewa said. Radio and television ministries are also used to evangelize, he noted.

- UMNS #666; Nov. 9, 2006.

China. Executed for Distributing Bibles

When 34-year old Jiang Zongziu and her mother-in-law went to their neighboring market in Guizhou Province, China; Jiang took this as an opportunity to hand out Bibles and Christian literature. Only this day they had an encounter with the Chinese police. The two Christian women were handcuffed together and brought to the police station. They were interrogated throughout the evening. The next morning they were sentenced by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) to 15 days incarceration for "suspected spreading of rumor and disturbing the social order."

Jiang and her mother-in-law knew the risk of spreading Christian literature in communist China. Both had been active in their church for more than 10 years and dared to go forth. Even when they were arrested, interrogated and sentenced to serve 15 days, they were willing to accept the consequences of their actions-all from a government that claims to have "freedom of religion."

But it was not enough for the PSB to arrest and beat these two Christian women for the crime of passing our Christian literature. The following afternoon Mrs. Jiang Zongziu was pronounced dead by the PSB office of Tongzi County. They claimed she died of "natural causes." The fact is she was beaten to death.

The Voice of the Martyrs has received video testimony from the surviving family, photos of Jiang body showing her bruised body, and a copy of the actual arrest document. All of this had to be smuggled out of China as the authorities continue to attempt to hide their systematic persecution of Christians.

Much of the world would like you to believe Christians are no longer persecuted. Sister Jiang's family would disagree.

- *NewsMax.com; Brought to you by The Voice of Martyrs.*

Episcopal Church. 8 Virginia flocks break away

Eight Northern Virginia churches announced yesterday they will leave the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia after their congregations voted overwhelmingly to depart because of liberal trends in the 2.2-million-member Episcopal Church.

A surprised murmur ran through the packed sanctuary at the 275-year-old Falls Church, the largest and most historic of the departing congregations, as the Rev. John Yates announced the vote. His members voted 1,228 to 127 to leave the diocese, and 1,279 to 77 to fight to keep the congregation's historic property in the city of Falls Church. "God is going to lead this church forward in ministry," said Mr. Yates, whose congregation grew by 4 percent this year and whose budget rose 15 percent from \$4.6 million for 2006 to \$5.6 million in 2007. "This whole situation isn't about us. It's about the next generation and the next and the next ... For the sake of the children, we must be faithful to Christ."

A ninth parish, St. Paul's in Haymarket, also voted yesterday on whether to leave the diocese but will not report the results until today.

The departing congregations comprise about 10 percent of the diocese's 90,000 members and about 17 percent of the 32,000 people in the pew on an average Sunday. Virginia Episcopalians have been in an ecclesiastical civil war since the 2003 consecration of New Hampshire Bishop V. Gene Robinson, an active homosexual, with the support of Virginia Bishop Peter J. Lee.

"I wasn't at all surprised," said Kim Cooke, a former vestry member. "This church has always made a point of being faithful to the Scriptures and God. When faced with a choice between man and God, it was an easy choice."

"I am thrilled at the results," longtime member Judy Thomsen said. "I think we need to move on."

Most of the departing churches will affiliate with the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), a Fairfax-based organization under the Anglican Diocese of Nigeria, headed up by Archbishop Peter J. Akinola. Martyn Minns, the rector at Truro Church in Fairfax, was appointed its bishop and will head its approximately 25 U.S. congregations.

Bishop Minns said the total of his congregations' average Sunday attendance will outstrip the same figure in 50 Episcopal dioceses.

A 10th church, All Saints in Dale City, which announced its results Dec. 10, will affiliate with the Anglican Diocese of North Kigezi, Uganda.

Bishop Lee said he was "saddened" by the votes and used battle imagery to describe the departing churches -- "Nigerian congregations occupying Episcopal churches." He is calling a meeting of the diocesan executive board and standing committee, both advisory bodies, along with diocesan lawyers, to meet today on how to handle the departing congregations. He repeated his longtime stance that the Diocese owns the churches' property.

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The vote in the eight parishes that reported results was overwhelmingly in favor of leaving the Episcopal Church, with the closest vote coming at St. Stephen's Church in Heathsville, 75 percent of whose members voted to leave. A lot of cradle Episcopalians were loath to cut ties, reported its senior warden, Ward LeHardy. Some have been in this church all their lives," he said. "For those in the old, established church, it's hard to let go."

Truro Church, which lost several dozen families after the Robinson consecration, delivered an overwhelming mandate to leave. Its members voted 1,010 to 85 to leave and 1,034 to 55 to fight for its property. "A new day has begun," Jim Oakes, senior warden of Truro Church's vestry, or governing board, announced at a crowded morning service. Several of

Truro's members appeared stunned and sad, including Carolyn Crocker, who brushed away tears. "Oh, I'm just like this," she said after adding she had voted to leave. "There are 85 people hurting here," referring to those who had voted "no" on the first ballot. "Actually," said J.T. Griffith, another member, "I'm delighted. But we're being studiously restrained here as we don't want to put on a triumphalist display."

The lopsided results were no accident, said Tom Wilson, senior warden at the Falls Church. "This was the fruit of those two rectors tending their vineyards," he said of Mr. Yates and Bishop Minns. "By standing in their pulpits for many years, teaching the Bible to their congregants, when it came to this crisis, their congregants responded with an overwhelming vote."

The Rev. Robin Adams, rector of the departing Church of the Word in Gainesville and an executive board member, said yesterday he was asked by the diocese to not attend today's meeting. "I think what will happen is the diocese will negotiate in good faith with all these churches," he said. "They also don't want to be forced into multimillion-dollar lawsuits."

In a press conference, Bishop Minns, along with more than a dozen other departing priests, said CANA's congregations will be "sensitive" to the concerns of those members that voted to remain in the Episcopal Church. As for the diocese: "We believe it can be worked out."

- By Julia Duin, *The Washington Times*; December 18, 2006

Iran. Secret Police Arrest Leaders of "Jesus Only" Movement

On Sunday, December 10, Iranian secret police began to raid and arrest leaders of the Islamic republic's indigenous "Jesus Only" movement, arriving unannounced in the early morning hours to search their homes in Tehran, Karaj, Rasht and Bandar-i Anzali. For five days, several members of the house-church movement were called in for a day or more of interrogations and then released. But eight remain under arrest, including one woman. According to one source, those arrested have been told they face 10 accusations, including evangelization activities and actions against the national security of Iran. Pray God will protect His servants who do not deny Jesus. Hebrews 12:1, 2

[Note: This is of interest because of that nation's aggressive support of terrorists in Iraq and pursuit of nuclear arms.]

- *Compass Direct, Voice of the Martyrs News and Prayer & Update, December 19, 2006.*

The World Methodist Council. Bishop Bolleter Will Take Post With World Methodist Council

Bishop Heinrich Bolleter, who retired in May as episcopal leader of the Central and Southern Europe Area, will begin his part-time position as the new Geneva secretary for the World Methodist Council on Jan. 1. George Freeman, general secretary, said Bolleter was chosen "because of his wide ecumenical experience in Europe," depth of knowledge about the church, and linguistic skills. As bishop, Bolleter oversaw UMs in France, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and all the Balkan states, along with Tunisia and Algeria. In March, Bolleter was honored by the Republic of Austria for being a "bridge builder" in Europe, particularly for his ability to build connections with Eastern European nations.

He said that he will represent the council at specific ecumenical events, such as central committee meetings of the World Council of Churches and meetings of the World Lutheran Federation and Reformed Alliance. Interfaith issues also are a concern. "I think we have been awakened in Europe to the presence of Muslims in our societies," Bolleter explained. This presence requires dialogue not only at the state and organizational levels but also at the local level, he said. Bolleter said he will work closely with Robert Gribben of Australia, the new chairperson of the council's ecumenics and dialogue committee. One of his concerns is that European Protestants hear "the voices of Protestants from the South."

- Linda Bloom, *UMNS, NewScope, December 15, 2006.*

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The only reason some people get lost in thought is because it's unfamiliar territory.

- Paul Fix, as quoted in *Reader's Digest, November 2006*