

The Monthly Update

July 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update contains an extended continuation of the summaries of the annual conference meetings from the United Methodist Church.

While we here in the United States are relatively safe, let us pause in our celebrations to remember the brave members of the military as they are fighting to preserve our country against those who would destroy our way of life and impose on us a backward, pagan, dictatorial society.

As we celebrate our independence on July 4th we have ample cause to be proud. Despite the nay-sayers who constantly criticize our country, with all of its faults it is still the best place to live. We can feel a sense of patriotism and not be ashamed. I grew up with the “December 7th” ethic, and my father’s fighting with millions of other men for the defense of our country and the very survival of freedom in the world. After World War II, we as a country were unprepared to “fight for the peace” that followed that great conflict; as a result, Eastern Europe went behind the veil of the “Iron Curtain” of communism that Sir Winston Churchill so aptly named. For millions of people, freedom would be a distant illusion they would not be able to enjoy for decades to come.

I remember the day in 1950 that my Dad left to go to Japan, where we as a family were scheduled to move. While he was on a troopship about to land in that country, the North Korean Army invaded the southern part of that peninsula. As a result, my father and the rest of the men on the ship were outfitted for combat and were diverted to Pusan City on the southern tip of South Korea to defend that country. Fighting under the leadership of General Douglas McArthur to try to preserve freedom for the people of South Korea, our father was among the first to be involved in that conflict and saw intense action. He was engaged in almost constant fighting for eighty-nine days and saw many of his men killed. As a result, he suffered “battle fatigue” and was evacuated back to the United States to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Such is the price for the freedom that we enjoy! When our country’s critics can see nothing good about The United States, I would invite them to settle in any other country in the world – and compare that one with ours. With all of its imperfections, it is still the place I want to be.

We need your help. We are facing the twin problems of a large printing bill of over \$4,000 from our recent mailing of the May and June 2007 issues of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* along with a drop in giving that is characteristic for our ministry over the summer months. Could I ask you to send a generous contribution to us at this time? It would be very much appreciated.

All of us here at Concerned Methodists wish you a happy, safe, and joyous Fourth of July as we all celebrate the independence of this great nation of ours.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

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July 2007 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

"To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men." - Abraham Lincoln
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The Good Stuff

The Flag of the United States of America

I am the flag of the United States of America.
My name is Old Glory.
I fly atop the world's tallest buildings.
I stand watch in America's halls of justice.
I fly majestically over institutions of learning.
I stand guard with power in the world.
Look up and see me.

I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice.
I stand for freedom.
I am confident.
I am arrogant.
I am proud.

When I am flown with my fellow banners,
My head is a little higher,
My colors a little truer.
I bow to no one!

I am recognized all over the world.
I am worshipped - I am saluted.
I am loved - I am revered.
I am respected - and I am feared.

I have fought in every battle of every war for more than 200 years. I was flown at Valley Forge,
Gettysburg, Shiloh and Appomattox.

I was there at San Juan Hill, the trenches of France,
in the Argonne Forest, Anzio, Rome and the beaches of Normandy.
Guam, Okinawa, Korea and KheSan, Saigon, Vietnam know me.

I'm presently in the mountains of Afghanistan and the hot and dusty deserts of Iraq and wherever freedom is
needed.

I led my troops, I was dirty, battleworn and tired,
But my soldiers cheered me and I was proud.

I have been burned, torn and trampled on the streets of countries I have helped set free.
It does not hurt for I am invincible.

I have been soiled upon, burned, torn and trampled in the streets of my country.
And when it's done by those Whom I've served in battle - it hurts.

But I shall overcome - for I am strong.

I have slipped the bonds of Earth and stood watch over the uncharted frontiers of space
from my vantage point on the moon.

I have borne silent witness to all of America's finest hours.
But my finest hours are yet to come.

When I am torn into strips and used as bandages for my wounded comrades on the battlefield,
When I am flown at half-mast to honor my soldier,
Or when I lie in the trembling arms of a grieving parent
at the grave of their fallen son or daughter,

I am proud.

+ *Theodore Roosevelt's ideas on Immigrants and being an American in 1907.*

"In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American and nothing but an American...There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people."

- Theodore Roosevelt 1907

Annual Conference Reports

Alabama-West Florida was held June 3-6 in Montgomery, Ala., with the theme "Serving the Present Age." Prior to this year's conference, Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster challenged the churches of the conference to buy 10,000 insecticide-treated bed nets through the Nothing but Nets campaign. At time of press, with donations still coming in, the conference overwhelmingly responded by raising over \$203,000, buying more than 20,000 bed nets. This marked the largest single special offering in the conference's history. In business matters, the conference: 1) established a \$16.5 million budget for mission and ministry for the next year, up 5.31% from 2007; 2) adopted the UM Property and Casualty Trust as the conference-wide insurance carrier for all churches and ministries; 3) adopted a conference-wide Safe Sanctuaries policy; 4) recognized five churches as a "Church for All God's Children"; 5) voted to send The United Methodist Publishing House contribution of \$9,545 to the Central Conference Pension Initiative; 6) heard an update on the \$3 million "Campaign for Blue Lake," the conference's assembly and campground; 7) adopted 16 resolutions, including ones dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Uganda, upholding language in the Discipline, and supporting anti-tobacco laws; 8) presented donations made available through the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal to Coden and Citronelle UMCs in Alabama; 9) welcomed the Magruder family, UM missionaries in Cameroon with whom the conference is in partnership. Laity elected as delegates to the 2008 General Conference are Steve Furr (delegation chair), Gip Kingry, Antonius Barnes, Woods Lisenby, Dawn Hare, Robert Powell, and John Sherer. Clergy are John Ed Mathison (vice-chair), Reba Wiley, Karl Stegall, Jeff Spiller, Larry Bryars, Frederick Outlaw, and Rurel Ausley. Bishop Goodpaster ordained one deacon and ten elders. Membership is 149,195, up 1,253.

- Mередyth Earnest, as reported in UMNewscope, June 15, 2007.

Baltimore-Washington met May 24-26 in Washington, D.C. Bishop John R. Schol highlighted the conference vision/mission to grow 600 Acts 2 congregations by 2012. Schol reported that 135 churches had achieved all three fruits the conference is measuring based on Acts 2:41-47: 1) one profession of faith per 25 worshipers (414 churches achieved this fruit); 2) 2% worship growth (256 churches); and 3) engage in mission in the community and world including 100% apportionment payment (544 churches). Members heard a statement from Drew Phoenix, a transgendered pastor, who was recently reappointed to St. John's UMC, Baltimore City. The congregation and pastor asked for the reappointment and indicated the congregation has been growing. Schol indicated that there is no denominational policy on transgendered clergy. The bishop encouraged UMs to learn more about transgender issues and to be in conversation and prayer. In legislative actions, conference members: 1) adopted Safe Sanctuaries procedures to protect youth and children in conference-sponsored programs and missions from sexual abuses and a requirement that all local churches also develop a comprehensive policy; 2) did not support a petition to General Conference submitted by 11 churches that would delete the sentence in the Discipline that "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice to be incompatible with Christian teaching"; and 3) approved a petition to General Conference to officially make Bermuda part of the Northeastern Jurisdiction (the Baltimore-Washington Conference oversees two congregations in Bermuda). Lay delegates elected to General Conference include Delores Oden, Sandra Ferguson, Mary Baldridge, Keya Belt, Sherman Harris, Ruth Dixon, Sharon Darlyn McCrae, and Michael McCurry. Clergy delegates are Laura Easto, Joan Carter-Rimbach, Joseph Daniels, Peggy Johnson, C. Anthony Hunt, Bruce Birch, Mark Derby, and Cynthia Belt. Bishop Schol ordained eight elders and two deacons and commissioned 12 probationers. Worship attendance is 74,008, down 746. Church school attendance is 25,932, up 147.

- Melissa Lauber, as reported in UMNewscope, June 8, 2007.

Central Texas met June 3-6 in Fort Worth with Bishop Ben R. Chamness presiding. In an unprecedented move, the conference offering for Nothing but Nets was carried into the business session when Bishop Chamness's wife, Joye, honored her husband on their 47th anniversary with a \$10 net for every year of their marriage. Her gift set off fervor as others made pledges in honor of a loved one or special event. The result was \$100,000 for Nothing but Nets. In other actions, the conference 1) narrowly approved indefinite postponement of resolutions concerning the church's position on Iran, just minimum wage, inclusive local church membership, restorative justice, federal budget priorities, global climate change, withdrawal from Iraq, voter-owned elections in Texas, discontinuing the Social Principles and deleting them from the Book of Discipline, rejecting torture, wise use of resources, immigration, and support of the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry; 2) celebrated the 33rd consecutive year of membership growth; 3) passed a 2.79% budget increase for a \$10,215,894 budget and a 100% payout of 2006 general church apportionments; 4) approved the acquisition of a 35,000-sq. ft. facility on 7.2 riverfront acres for a conference retreat center in Glen Rose; 5) received a report on the hosting operations for the 2008 General Conference; and 6) closed four churches and celebrated eight new church starts. Membership is 161,703, up 1,584.

- Carolyn E. Stephens, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

Desert Southwest met June 6-10 in Scottsdale, Ariz., under the leadership of Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño. The youth brought several resolutions before the session to be passed on to General Conference, including: 1) one wherein all have a right to worship; 2) requiring boards and agencies to set meetings for times when youth can attend; 3) defining membership regardless of age, class, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation; and 4) asking for equality in ordination. The Hispanic/Latino Ministries Committee had passed to General Conference a resolution asking for the continuation of the National Hispanic Plan. Other resolutions were sent on to conference boards and agencies for further evaluation and action. Devin Maunty, a young adult, was elected as lay delegate to General Conference and delegation head. The clergy delegate is Sharon Ragland. Membership is 42,448, down 1.3%.

- Stephen J. Hustedt, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

Detroit met May 17–20 at Adrian College. The theme was “Abundance Given to Give.” Donald Messer spoke. The body adopted resolutions 1) requesting the trial or release of detainees at Guantanamo Bay; 2) calling upon Gideon International to open its membership to “people of either sex and all trades, business, and professions”; 3) expressing regret at the elimination of affirmative action in Michigan; 4) regarding refraining from water bottled by the Nestle Corp.; 5) calling for an end of U.S. military action in Iraq; and 6) opposing war with Iran. The conference voted to forward seven petitions to General Conference, including petitions related to 1) military and non-military budgets; 2) “A Call to Peacemaking”; 3) “Direct Hire of Clergy” to set candidacy standards for clergy outside the Wesleyan tradition serving UM churches; 4) Guantanamo Bay detainees; 5) sustainability of water resources and its privatization; 6) amending the UM constitution to insure equal access of all persons to participate in church programs; and 7) making clear “no person shall be excluded from membership . . . for reasons related to his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.” Lay delegates to General Conference are Jackie Euper, Alexander Plum, Jacquelin Washington, Cathy Hazen, and Lewis Tibbits. Clergy delegates are Joy Barrett (delegation chair), Charles Boayue, Terry Euper, Tara Sutton, and James Tuttle. Membership is 100,384, down 2,044.

- Ann Whiting, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

East Russia and Central Asia Annual Conference met May 18–20. At that time, five new church groups were registered. Three of them were new church plants in the Urals, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan; one was a local church that re-opened in Vladivostok; and one was an independent congregation that applied to become part of the UMC connection. The conference speaker was Lena Chudinova, from Tomsk, who is the superintendent of the Siberia and Far East District. The lay delegate elected to General Conference is Irina Gorbuleva of Tomsk, Russia. The clergy delegate elected to General Conference is Daniil Strarikov of Pavlodar, Kazakhstan. The membership is 155, up from 77. Statistics from East Russia are not yet available.

— Kathleen W. Harris, as reported in UMNewscope, May 25, 2007.

Greater New Jersey met in Valley Forge, Pa., May 30–June 2. Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar presided. Mark Miller led music. Petitions forwarded to General Conference include several around the general topic of human sexuality. These petitions were treated using a model of “holy conferencing” similar to that previously used in Minnesota. One of the petitions is meant to change Discipline ¶ 214 to say that no person may be excluded from membership in the UMC on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Another seeks to broaden the

language of the Social Principles with respect to civil liberties afforded all persons. Other petitions included a call to peacemaking; support for a rapid and just end to the war in Iraq; a call to grant sacramental authority to deacons; a proposal to grant more voting rights to local pastors, associate members, and probationary elders and deacons; and a proposal for a Decade of Evangelism (2010-20). One resolution called the annual conference to declare itself a "New Abolitionist Conference," in response to the growing evil of global slavery. It included the submission of a petition to the General Conference to declare the UMC to be a "New Abolitionist Denomination." It also called on companies to certify themselves as "Slavery Free." Resolutions adopted include the establishment of a bishop's Task Force on Mental Health; the approval of including Bermuda in the Northeastern Jurisdiction; the creation of a task force to study strategies for effective fulfillment of mission responsibilities; revisions to the Safe Sanctuaries policy; recommendations from the board of pensions and health benefits that addressed, among other things, issues pertaining to start dates and eligibility; health insurance guidelines; and a statement of support for the work of the New Jersey Task Force to Abolish the Death Penalty. Lay delegates elected to General Conference are Constance L. Ace, Jay W. Brown, John W. Bishop, June D. McCullough, and Lynn Catterson. The clergy delegates are Galen L. Goodwin (delegation head), Charles A. Bender, Renee L. McCleary, Bo-Joong Kim, and Lyssette N. Perez. Membership is 102,561, down 2,454.
- Glenn C. Ferguson, as reported in UMNewscope, June 15, 2007.

Illinois Great Rivers met June 6-9. The conference voted to give its \$20,000 distribution from The United Methodist Publishing House to the Central Conference Pension Initiative with nearly \$100,000 being given in the last five years. In other action, members: 1) approved a budget of \$14,448,579, a 4.24% increase over 2007; 2) approved the purchase or construction of a new episcopal residence with a cost cap of \$425,000 for which funds from the sale of two district parsonages will be used; and 3) approved a model for pastoral care and counseling that includes counseling as well as assessment and referral to other care providers. Lay delegates elected to General Conference are Rhonda Whitaker, Paul Black, David Hood, Bunny Wolfe, Carolyn Yockey, L. Jerome Gibson, J. LaVon Wilson. Clergy delegates are Timothy L. Bias, Shane Bishop, Roger S. Ross, Robert Freeman, J. Keith Zimmerman, Sara Isbell, and Cynthia Jones. Bias and Whitaker are co-chairs. Membership is 147,656, down 1,329.
- Paul E. Black, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

Kansas West met May 23-25 in Hutchinson, Kan., under the leadership of Bishop Scott J. Jones. The conference adopted a \$5.7 million budget for 2008. The body also adopted resolutions: 1) establishing a process to implement the certified lay minister designation established by the 2004 General Conference; 2) calling for support of Zimbabwe; 3) establishing a Rural Life Sunday with offering for the Rural Division of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries; 4) authorizing sale and purchase of a district parsonage; and 5) declaring September Open House Month. Clergy delegates elected to General Conference were Pat Ault-Duell, A. Mark Conard, Cheryl Jefferson Bell, and Lance Carrithers. Lay delegates elected were Dixie Brewster, Penney Schwab, Mollie Haberer, and Kim Moore. Membership is 84,966, down 830.
- Lisa Elliott Diehl, as reported in UMNewscope, June 8, 2007.

Louisiana met June 3-6 in Baton Rouge with Bishop William W. Hutchinson presiding. Bishop Fritz Mutti (retired), chair of the UM Global AIDS Initiative, spoke to the conference. Clergy delegates elected to General Conference were Bob Burgess, Andy Goff, Chris Andrews, Ellen Alston, and Bernadine Johnson. Lay delegates were George Anding, Anita Crump, Sarah Kreutziger, Carolyn Dove, and Terrel DeVille. Membership is 125,637, down 1,189 3.
- Betty Backstrom, as reported in UMNewscope, June 15, 2007.

Minnesota met May 29-June 1 with Bishop Sally Dyck presiding. The budget, \$6.5 million, is about \$500,000 less than the 2007 budget. In business, conference members: 1) protested the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids on Minnesota workplaces and encouraged study of justice issues surrounding immigration policies; 2) commended Walker Methodist Health Center's recognition of its employees' union vote and urged acceptance of a fair contract; 3) required its elected teams to spend time praying for the poor and to donate to poverty ministries; 4) created a congregational communicators' association for sharing best practices and organizing trainings; 5) established September 2007 as Open House Month; 6) identified November as "Miracle Month," during which congregations will raise funds for the UM Global AIDS Fund and a program to build a multi-use church center in St. Petersburg, Russia; 7) approved medical benefits for the domestic partners of lay people on the conference benefit plan (referred to the Judicial Council); and 8) sent resolutions to General Conference urging UMs to study and promote peacemaking and directing the General Board of Discipleship to create a curriculum on peacemaking. Lay delegates elected to General

Conference were Mary jo Dahlberg (co-chair), Otis Anderson, Dwain Petersen, and Mary Gates. Clergy elected were Judith Zabel (co-chair), David Bard, Cindy Gregorson, and Victoria Rebeck. Membership is 79,706, down 2,184.

- Victoria Rebeck, as reported in UMNewscope, June 15, 2007.

Missouri met June 1-4 with Bishop Robert Schnase presiding. A new apportionment formula was adopted. It drops attendance and membership factors from the formula and bases apportionments entirely on church expenses (with several expenditures, such as mission giving and capital improvements, not included). Lay delegates elected to General Conference are Larry Fagan (delegation chair), Beverly Boehmer, Randy Biggerstaff, Jerry Ruth Williams, Margie Briggs, Casey Andrews, Carol Smith, and Shannon Meister. Clergy delegates are Cody Collier, James Bryan, Steve Breon, Bob Farr, Sally Haynes, Michele Sue Shumake-Keller, Amy Gearhart Sage, and Ron Watts. Membership is 171,443, down 2,351.

- Fred Koenig, as reported in UMNewscope, June 15, 2007.

New Mexico met June 6-9 at LifeWay Conference Center in Glorieta, with Bishop D. Max Whitfield presiding. Conference banners celebrated the pastoral nature of the theme and a part of the lifestyle of the Navajos of the Four Corners area. The conference approved 1) requiring each local church to adopt a Safe Sanctuary policy for their church by December 31; 2) endorsing Daniel Ivey-Soto as a lay candidate for the Judicial Council; and 3) a resolution requesting the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to adopt as their slogan "Empowering Christian Leaders for Today" and cease using the phrase "Preparing a New Generation of Christian Leaders." Lay delegate elected to General Conference is Daniel Ivey-Soto, and the clergy delegate elected to General Conference is Jeff Lust (delegation head). Membership is 38,889, down 329.

- Julianne McAchran, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

North Alabama gathered for its business sessions at ClearBranch UMC on June 1-2 with Bishop Will Willimon presiding. During the business sessions, the cabinet presented new priorities, which they had developed during the last year. These priorities are: 1) new communities of faith; 2) Natural Church Development (healthy congregations); 3) effective leadership for the 21st century; and 4) empowering a new generation of Christians. The rest of the business was organized around these four conference priorities. During the business sessions the conference: 1) announced it was starting nine new communities of faith during the 2007-08 conference year; 2) recognized Denman evangelism award winners Kenneth Dunivant, Mirna Bourn, and Brandon Young; 3) learned about the Natural Church Development process; 4) heard from guest Bishop Janice Riggle Huie (Houston Area) about the Texas Conference's advances in Wesleyan accountability; 5) adopted a resolution on the Iraq war calling for U.S. leaders "to use all of the diplomatic, economic, and political resources available to assist the people of Iraq in restoring order and justice to their land"; and 6) elected general and jurisdictional conference delegates including four lay people under the age of 30. Bishop Huie was the guest preacher for the ordination service. Membership is 151,792, down 1,864.

- Danette Clifton, as reported in UMNewscope, June 15, 2007.

North Indiana met May 30-June 2 at Purdue University in West Lafayette, with Bishop Coyner presiding. The body adopted resolutions asking congregations to pray for Darfur and asking the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to divest targeted funds in Sudan. Another resolution increased the priority of campus ministry. The conference voted to forward three petitions to General Conference that would 1) establish a study group to review tithing as a basis for general church apportionments; 2) give elders and licensed pastors the responsibility to determine readiness for membership; and 3) support basic health-care coverage to all citizens. Lay delegates to General Conference are Kayc Mykranz, Carolyn Johnson, James Ottjes, Paula Shrock, and Edwin Fenstermacher. Clergy delegates to General Conference are Frank Beard, Kimberly Reisman, Bryan Siefert, Cindy Reynolds, and Michael Dominick. Membership is 97,028, down 1,271.

- Daniel R. Gangler, as reported in UMNewscope, June 8, 2007.

Northwest Texas met May 28-31 in Amarillo at the Amarillo Civic Center and Polk Street UMC with Bishop D. Max Whitfield presiding. The conference approved four petitions to General Conference on Global Warming, Energy Resources Utilization, Church Support for Caregivers of Children, and Withdrawing From the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Lay delegates elected to General Conference were Ron Enns and Karl Baumgardner. Clergy delegates elected to General Conference were Jimmy Nunn (delegation chair) and Lane Boyd. Membership is 65,066, down 706.

- Eddie Allsup, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

South Carolina met June 3-7. "A Resolution to Require the Establishment of a Safe Sanctuary Policy in Every United Methodist Church and in Every United Methodist Conference Event in the South Carolina Conference" was passed. "A Resolution Concerning the Confederate Flag" (similar to one passed in 1999) called for the removal of the Confederate battle flag from Statehouse grounds. Three resolutions came from the board of church and society. "A Resolution Concerning Predatory Lending Practices" lends support to S.C. House Bill 3294, which will limit the interest rate charged by such lenders. "A Resolution on Immigration" calls for "a workable, comprehensive immigration bill that is not harsh and retributive but seeks to meet the standard of effective public policy and biblical faithfulness." Lay delegates elected to the General Conference are Carolyn Briscoe, Joe Heyward, Kathryn Scarborough, Elizabeth Patterson, June Willson, Rubielee Addison, Kelsey Taylor, John Redmond, James Salley, and Carolyne Rogerson. Clergy delegates are Tim McClendon (delegation head), Stephen Taylor, Kathy James, Frank Griffith, Ernest Etheredge, Sara Ann White, Tim Rogers, Ken Nelson, John Culp, and Hayes Gainey. Membership is 241,301, down 545.

- Allison K. Trussell, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

South Indiana met June 6-9 in Bloomington and voted a recommendation to unite with the North Indiana Conference. Bishop Michael Coyner presided. The body adopted resolutions 1) asking congregations to pray for Sudan, while asking the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to divest targeted funds; 2) asking congregations to support the Global AIDS Fund and give at least \$2 per member and to distribute 25% of those gifts to HIV/AIDS work in Indiana; 3) affirming the importance of Christ-centered ministries that do not compromise the biblical standards for sexual morality; and 4) requiring high-speed Internet connection or an additional phone line for dial-up connection in parsonage standards. The conference voted to forward three petitions to General Conference asking that: 1) no person shall or will be excluded from membership for reasons related to sexual orientation or gender identity; 2) membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice be withdrawn; and 3) the church recommit to raising funds for the UM Global AIDS Fund during the 2009-12 quadrennium. Lay delegates to General Conference are Ike Williams, Patricia Miller, Rita Gaither-Gant, Vickie Newkirk, John Lawson, and David Crane. Clergy delegates are Ann Glass, Greg McGarvey, David Penalva, Darren Cushman Wood, James Bushfield, and Beth Ann Cook. Membership is 111,004, down 201.

- Daniel R. Gangler, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

South Georgia met June 3-7 in Savannah, with Bishop B. Michael Watson presiding. The conference approved a budget of \$11,505,287. In other action members approved: 1) a conference and district Safe Sanctuaries policy; 2) recommendations by the District Study Task Force, including shifting the funding for districts to permit drawing new lines; 3) empowering the bishop and cabinet to form a committee to engage in dialogue with North Georgia to study conference lines; 4) moving the conference pastoral counselor to a full-time position; 5) a motion that the council on finance and administration study the apportionment formula; and 6) three resolutions, one calling for inclusiveness in the selection of general and jurisdictional conference delegates, one reopening the discussion on parsonages, and one opposing the expansion of alcohol use and abuse. Lay delegates elected to General Conference include Charlene Black (chair), Bill Hatcher, Roy Blackwood, Sunshine Bird, Taylor Phillips, and Steve Rumford. Clergy delegates are Hal Brady, Joseph Roberson, Bob Moon, Mike McAfee, Brad Brady, and Robert Beckum. Membership is 136,805, down 1,017.

- Kelly Roberson, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

Troy Annual Conference met May 2-5 in Burlington, Vt. with Bishop Susan W. Hassinger presiding. Henry Frueh, chair of the conference boundaries team, presented the report related to conversations with the New England, North Central New York, Western New York, and Wyoming conferences about merging into the New England Conference. Members 1) called for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq; 2) supported including Bermuda in the Northeast Jurisdiction; 3) called on General Conference to urge trial or release for Guantanamo detainees and Congress to rescind the Military Commissions Act of 2006, thus restoring the Writ of Habeas Corpus to all detainees; 4) urged legislation offering same gender families the same civil protections that other families enjoy and that UM clergy be permitted to bless whatever marriage arrangements are legal in their states; 5) supported funding of stem cell research; and 6) opposed the restoration of the death penalty in New York. Elected to General Conference were Henry Frueh, superintendent of the Adirondack District; Michelle Bogue-Trost (clergy); conference lay leader Ilah Sisson Walser; and 18-year-old Emily DeSalvatore (lay). Membership is 53,205, up 1,632.

— Sandra Brands

West Virginia met on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan College June 7-10 with Bishop Ernest S. Lyght

presiding. The conference approved a \$11.75 million budget for 2008, a 2.25% decrease. Resolutions approved include: 1) urging the defeat of local referendums that would allow table gambling in certain counties; and 2) calling for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States that would include reducing the obstacles for "all who want to settle here". Lay delegates elected to General Conference are Jim Berner, Fred Kellerman, Zachary Allen, Judi Kenaston, and Bill Deel. Clergy delegates are Ellis Conley Elkins, Clifford Schell, Monty Brown, Mary Ellen Finegan, and Helen Davis Bell. Membership is 104,805, down 537.

- Tom Burger, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

Western North Carolina met June 7-10 at Lake Junaluska with Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey presiding. Members adopted a \$28.4 million budget for 2008, a 3.9% increase over 2007. The conference voted for 1) clergy to begin furnishing the den/family room, master bedroom, and two other bedrooms in parsonages; 2) appointment of a study group on sustainability; 3) calling the General Board of Church and Society to honor the guidelines and purpose of restricted funds for work on temperance and alcohol-related problems; 4) calling for protecting children from mercury-containing drugs; and 5) designating the sixth Sunday after Easter as Rural Life Sunday. The conference approved petitions to General Conference calling for 1) changing the name of the committee on lay leadership to nominations and leadership development; 2) detailing the work of a coordinator of witness ministries in the local church; 3) amending ¶ 341.6 prohibiting pastors from participating in ceremonies that celebrate same-sex unions; and 4) continuing the ongoing dialogue on the relationship of science and technology. For the first time, women outnumber men on both clergy and lay delegations to General Conference. Clergy elected are Thomas A. "Andy" Langford III, Sally Langford, Arnetta Beverly, Angela Pleasants, Kenneth Carter, Kimberly Ingram, Charles D. "Denny" White Jr., James Howell, Julianne Brittain, Nancy Burgin Rankin, Ashley Crowder Stanley, Alan Rice, and Patricia Lewis. Laity elected are Betty Jo Hardy, John Howard, Jack Young, Jim Windham, Sarah McKinney, Amy Johnson, Telia Hand, Kim Daniels, Sandy Hieronymus, Sarah Kim, John Ammons, William Greene, and Joetta Rinehart. Membership is 293,772, up 683.

- Mark L. Barden, as reported in UMNewscope, June 22, 2007.

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"Our loyalty is due entirely to the United States. It is due to the President only and exactly to the degree in which he efficiently serves the United States. It is our duty to support him when he serves the United States well. It is our duty to oppose him when he serves it badly."

- Theodore Roosevelt - 1918