

The Christian Methodist Newsletter

Volume 17, Number 7

Winter 2007-2008

2007 Annual Conference Results

Following are membership results from the annual conferences for 2007 with changes from the preceding year:

<u>Annual Conference</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Jurisdiction*</u>
Alabama - West Florida	149,718 ²	+1,253	SEJ
Alaska Missionary	4,070	+ 70	W-J
Arkansas	138,818	+ 501	SCJ
Austria Annual Conf.	686 ¹	+ 27	Eurasia
Baltimore - Washington	196,847 ¹	- 1,984	NEJ
California - Nevada	84,504	- 1,421	W-J
California - Pacific	87,300 ²	- 1,365 ²	W-J
Central Pennsylvania	143,851 ³	- 2 ³	NEJ
Central Texas	161,703	+1,584	SCJ
Czech & Slovak Republics	1,529 ¹	+ 69 ¹	Eurasia
Dakotas	42,133 ¹	- 1,003 ¹	NCJ
Desert Southwest	42,448	- 552 ³	W-J
Detroit	100,484 ⁴	- 2,044	NCJ
East Ohio	177,037 ³	- 3,062	NCJ
East Russia & Cent. Asia	78	First time report	Eurasia
Eastern Pennsylvania	125,902 ¹	- 2,594	NEJ
Florida	317,716 ³	- 4,133	SEJ
Germany North	7,777	+ 3	Eurasia
Greater New Jersey	100,074 ²	- 2,454	NEJ
Holston	166,815	- 525	SEJ
Illinois Great Rivers	147,656 ³	- 1,329	NCJ
Iowa	190,556 ³	- 2,916	NCJ
Kansas East	73,695 ³	- 1,267	SCJ
Kansas West	84,966	- 830	SCJ
Kentucky	152,432	+ 303	SEJ
Liberia	168,618 ¹	Repeated from last report	
Louisiana	125,637 ³	-1,189	SCJ
Memphis	87,639 ³	- 623	SEJ
Minnesota	79,706 ³	- 2,184	NCJ
Mississippi	186,208 ³	- 1,555	SEJ
Missouri	171,443	- 2,351	SCJ
Nebraska	83,105 ¹	- 1,322	SCJ
New England	93,458 ³	- 2,284	NEJ
New Mexico	38,889	- 329	SCJ
New York	122,756	- 1,164	NEJ
North Alabama	151,792 ³	- 1,864	SEJ
North Carolina	236,634 ³	+ 91	SEJ
North Central New York	77,225 ³	- 1,328	NEJ
North Georgia	346,430	+ 4,385	SEJ
North Indiana	97,028 ³	- 1,271	NCJ
North Texas	159,490	- 234	SCJ
Northern Illinois	105,360	- 2,242	NCJ
Northwest Texas	65,073 ³	- 706	SCJ
Norwegian	13,087 ¹	- 103 ¹	Eurasia
Oklahoma	244,986	- 60	SCJ
Oklahoma Indian Missionary	6,220	- 17	SCJ
Oregon - Idaho	33,096 ³	- 656	W-J
Pacific Northwest	56,377 ³	- 1,117	W-J

Peninsula - Delaware	91,271 ³	- 1,010	NEJ
The Polish Conference	2,528 ¹	+ 19	Eurasia
Red Bird Missionary	1,425 ³	+ 19 ³	SEJ
Rio Grande	14,256	-212	SCJ
Rocky Mountain	67,907 ³	+ 592	W-J
Sierra Leone	100,102 ¹	+ 5,588	Africa
South Carolina	241,301 ³	- 545	SEJ
South Georgia	136,805 ³	- 1,017	SEJ
South Germany	17,799 ³	- 307	Eurasia
South Indiana	111,004 ³	- 201 ³	NCJ
Southwest Texas	119,781	+ 104	SCJ
Tennessee	117,350 ¹	+ 768	SEJ
Texas	285,652	+ 2,035	SCJ
Troy	63,205 ³	- 1,632 ³	NEJ
Ukraine & Moldova	480	First time report	Eurasia
Virginia	340,084	- 1,262	SEJ
West Michigan	67,734 ¹	- 197	NCJ
West Ohio	224,342	- 6,159	NCJ
West Virginia	104,805	- 537 ¹	NEJ
Western New York	56,127	- 969	NEJ
Western North Carolina	293,772 ³	+ 683	NEJ
Western Pennsylvania	187,296 ³	- 2,617	NEJ
Wisconsin	90,255 ³	- 3,481	NCJ
Wyoming	62,913 ³	- 770	NEJ
Yellowstone	15,754	- 366	W-J

Change in church membership is a decline of an estimated 84,822 people for the year.

UM membership is currently 7,936,426.

*Sources: Annual Conference Reports, *Newscope*, *United Methodist News Service*, General Council on Finance and Administration.

Jurisdictions: "NCJ" - North Central Jurisdiction; "NEJ" - Northeastern Jurisdiction; "SCJ" - South Central Jurisdiction; "SEJ" - Southeastern Jurisdiction; "W-J" - Western Jurisdiction.

Footnotes:

- 1 Indicates figures that were reported last year, believed to be incorrect but no others are available.
- 2 Indicates errors in the data received; figures were estimated by Concerned Methodists.
- 3 Figures received differed from the computations of Concerned Methodists. The statistics shown were those received.

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Note: the following story was first published in a magazine in the early 1950s and has been passed down to us through the years. It is presented here again to show that our God works in providential ways.

The Tablecloth

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished.

On December 19, a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm – hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home.

On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the Tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured and sent to prison; she never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war. [He wondered] "how could there be two tablecloths so much alike?" He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again for all of the years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier.

He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and – saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

- This is submitted by Pastor Rob Reid

At times, God works in mysterious ways. When there is nothing left but God – that is when you find out that God is all you need.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a weekend event for UMYF and local church youth groups in which youth & adult advisors are challenged to a new or deeper faith in Jesus Christ. It is held annually and sponsored by the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. This year's event was held at the Crown Coliseum in Fayetteville on November 9th – 11th. The content of the event focused on evangelism, faith sharing and discipleship for youth and adult advisors to youth ministry. It was a time to discover that faith and discipleship can be fun!

The Crown Coliseum in Fayetteville also hosted the group sessions. The speaker was Rev. Andy Lambert, a very talented person and evangelist from the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. By dynamic presentations, he led the youth participants to new heights of spiritual awareness. Praise songs were led by music leader Chris Hughes and the youth house band. Pilgrimage featured large group sessions and lively worship.

The theme for Pilgrimage 2007 was "If We are the Body." The program saw presentations from widely divergent and talented people. Both youth groups and adults will remember this event for years to come and, hopefully, the greater depth of spirituality experienced will be felt and shown by the difference it makes in the lives of the people who were there.

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The Legend of the Candy Cane

The candy cane has long been a Christmas tradition and was said to have been the creation of a fine Christian candy maker in Indiana. Its sweet peppermint taste has been enjoyed by young and old for years.

The candy maker started with pure white candy to symbolize Jesus' innocence (Heb 4:15) and the holiness of the sinless son of God (1 John 1:7).

The white also shows the virgin birth of Jesus: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son..." (Matt 1:23).

He made the candy hard because the church is built on solid rock and God's promises are a firm foundation (Matt 16:18, 1Thess 5:24), and because Jesus is like a "rock" – strong and dependable (Psalm 31:3).

Next the candy maker made the candy in the shape of a 'J' for the name of Jesus who came to earth as our Savior (Matt 1:21, Acts 4:12). When the candy was turned upside down, it is the shape of the Good Shepherd's staff (John 10:11). "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Finally he stained the candy with red stripes. The color red symbolizes God's love that sent Jesus to give His life for us on the cross (John 3:16).

The large red stripe is for the blood Jesus shed for our sins on the cross (Eph 1:7). "In him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." The smaller stripes remind us of Jesus' suffering and our redemptive healing (John 19: 1-30).

The candy became known as a Candy Cane – a decoration often seen at Christmas time.

So this Christmas when you and your family hang candy canes on your tree remember that they're not just candy canes. Instead they are a symbol of the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The meaning has faded, but still gives joy to children young and old, whom Jesus loves and treasures.

- Author Unknown

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"... And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." - Luke 2:7

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The RENEW Network

Why Do We Exist? The Renew Network is organized to be in ministry to and with women of the United Methodist Church. We are a support network for evangelical, orthodox women within our church, providing a voice for their concerns, supplemental program resources for their program needs, and a place for them to share ministry with other women.

Renew's service to the women of the church is two-fold. First of all, we are a network for renewal: to encourage women to establish and maintain a growing, intimate, and faithful relationship with Jesus Christ; to help provide a firm scriptural foundation for their faith; and to equip them for discipleship and witness. We are also a concerted voice for renewal and accountability on the part of the Women's Division, the official women's organization of the United Methodist Church.

The Vision of RENEW Is...

- + to participate in the process of leading the women of the church into a personal and vital relationship with Jesus Christ;
- + to provide a firm spiritual foundation for discernment in their faith; and
- + to encourage, equip, and impassion them for discipleship and witness in family, church, community, and the world.

What Are We Doing?

+ RENEW provides a strong support network for United Methodist women. Anyone can be a part of this network by writing or calling the

RENEW office and requesting that their name and address be added to our mailing list.

- + We produce a quarterly newsletter.
- + We provide reviews of UMW/Women's Division resources, programs and policies.
- + We are a network for prayer and action, providing a connectional system with other evangelical women.
- + We produce supplemental program resources, recommend retreat and workshop leaders and network with other evangelical organizations to provide additional resources and information.

What Do We Believe?

- + RENEW holds to orthodox, scriptural Christianity. While we believe that God's Word is relevant to every age, we do not believe that every age has to reinterpret God's Word.
- + We hold that the transforming power of the Christian Gospel remains relevant and the truth revealed in Christ Jesus is unchanging.
- + We emphasize the authority of the Scripture as the Word of God.
- + We believe in the availability of the Holy Spirit for believers today, enabling them to fulfill God's call to holy living and empowered service.
- + We hold to a holistic Gospel proclaiming evangelism and social justice. We believe love of God and love of neighbor to be inseparable.
- + We anticipate the ultimate return of Christ to execute judgment upon the earth and to set up the eternal reign of God.

What Network Friends Say About RENEW

Diane Neese, Frazer Memorial UMC, Montgomery, Alabama: "Over the past few years, the RENEW Network has been a strong source of encouragement and enlightenment to our UMW unit. RENEW represents our conservative evangelical views, reinforces our moral, ethical and Biblical convictions, and revives with Spirit-filled programs and resources."

Christ UMC/UMW, Louisville, Ohio: "RENEW is a bright light of hope for us. We are encouraged to know that there is a strong support network of evangelical, orthodox women, offering us a helping hand. This comes to us through information and supplemental program resources. We are always confident that the money we give to support the RENEW Network will be used faithfully to the glory of God. Thanks RENEW for equipping us to more faithfully carry out the Purpose of United Methodist Women"

Virginia Miller, North Claremont UMC, San Diego, California: "The RENEW Network brings me current information about what is happening within United Methodism around the country. It is encouraging to know that we have sisters (and brothers) in Christ all over the United States who stand firm for the truth of the Holy Bible."

Mount Oak UMC/UMW, Mitchellville, Maryland: "As evangelical women of Mt. Oak United Methodist Church, we value the RENEW Network as a lamp that gives off light in a dark and perverse world. The world tells us that our faith in Christ is not enough, while RENEW reminds us that our faith is more than enough. RENEW is on the front line upholding orthodox Christian values within the organization of United Methodist Women. We love the United Methodist Church and stand with the RENEW Network in the ministry of challenging its members to renewal and its agencies to accountability."

WILL YOU JOIN US? If you would like to be a part of the RENEW Network or learn more about this ministry to and with the women of the United Methodist Church, write or call:

The RENEW Network
P.O. Box 889
133 Clarkesville Street
Cornelia, Georgia 30531

Telephone: (706) 778-4812
FAX: (706) 778-4818
Or E-Mail us at: renew@hemc.net

The President of The RENEW Network is Mrs. Faye Short, wife of United Methodist pastor Rev. Dennis Short. This information is taken from their website: <http://www.renewnetwork.org/>

Editorial Note: Allen O. Morris

The Good Stuff

In December 2006, Senior Pastor Mike Slaughter challenged people at Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, Ohio, for the third year to spend only one-half on Christmas gifts of what they would normally spend and to bring the rest in for the Sudan Project "Miracle Offering." Together with 12 churches and organizations and the UM Committee on Relief, they have raised more than \$1 million dollars in 2006 for the benefit of the people of Darfur. The project will support a child protection and development program and a four-year sanitation and clean water initiative. Churches from several denominations and states have also supported the project along with an Ohio high school.

- *UMNewscope*, February 16, 2007

Kids' Stuff

After a rainstorm filled all the potholes in the streets, a young mother watched her two little boys playing in a puddle. The older of the two, a five year old, grabbed his sibling by the back of his head and shoved his face into the water hole.

As the boy recovered and stood laughing and dripping, the mother ran into the yard in a panic. "Why on earth did you do that to your little brother?" she asked as she shook the older boy in anger.

"We were just playing church, Mommy," he said. "I was baptizing him in the name of the Father, the Son, and in-the-hole-he-goes."

- *UM Men*, the magazine for United Methodist Men, Winter 2007, p. 39.

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Exercise daily. Walk with the Lord!

Correction

In the Fall edition of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter*, we had printed "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." That should read "\$155.1 million." We apologize for this error.

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Spiritually Speaking

Dr. Charles Allen, the late pastor of First UMC in Houston, was going to give what he termed "The Greatest Sermon ever Preached" as told me by a friend of mine, Bob Fritz, an assistant professor at a local university. When he and I heard the message, I told Bob, "I was expecting to hear a dynamic sermon. All he talked about was that Christ came to earth, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. I've already heard that." Bob replied, "That's exactly the point. That is the greatest sermon anyone can preach." - Allen Morris

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Worth Remembering

The vision of the "Wish Me a Merry Christmas Campaign" is to influence retailers to put Christmas back into the holidays. During the Christmas season, we are demonstrating to retailers our desire to buy "Christmas Trees" or say "Merry Christmas." Shoppers expect to see Christmas signage, hear Christmas music and be wished a "Merry Christmas!"

Focus on the Family has identified some retailers who are hesitant to use this greeting or the name: Lowes, K-Mart, Office Max, The Disney Store, and Barnes & Noble, among others.

Jesus is the reason for the season. Let's all remember that and speak up for Him this Christmas. - Allen Morris

Our Annual Appeal

We ask that each of you pray and seek the Lord's leading as to how you might support the ministry of Concerned Methodists with a tax-deductible gift. We make the most efficient use possible of the money you entrust to our work. Since we have no paid employees and minimize overhead, 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. For those who do choose to provide financial assistance to us, we will send our "Monthly Update" that contains even more information and insights than *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* on what is happening across our denomination. Finally, it should also be noted that all donor information is kept strictly confidential:

* We do not share information with any outside organizations.

* You will not be solicited through regular mailings or "telemarketing" calls.

* You will continue to receive newsletters, informational mailings, and notices of issues pertaining to our United Methodist Church.

For those who contribute a gift of \$30 or more to our ministry, we will send a copy of our forthcoming book **Stewardship Perspectives – 2007**, which contains updated financial data and issues of significance within our United Methodist Church. Please mail your gifts to:

Concerned Methodists
P.O. Box 2864
Fayetteville, NC 28302