

# The Monthly Update

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## February 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Again, I want to thank you for your support of the work of Concerned Methodists. Your gifts have made it possible to finish out the year and overcome the shortfall in our budget. Thanks to you we will be able to start out 2007 in a good financial position.

This February edition of the “Monthly Update” continues with information on issues in our United Methodist Church to include a report by the Study of Ministry Commission for the 2008 General Conference on the ordering of ministry. Of prime importance are the events leading up to that General Conference next year in Fort Worth, Texas. We truly believe that this will be the most significant one held in the life of the United Methodist Church, and pray that we will hold the line in our Biblical stance against homosexual normalization. So much is at stake here.

On a different subject, I recently read of a custom in times past called “burning of the greens” done on Twelfth Night or Epiphany, which celebrated the coming of the Wise Men to the stable to pay homage to the Christ Child. Evidently, celebration of Epiphany dates back to the third or fourth century A.D. Ms. Lillian Elders of St. Louis, Missouri wrote of an old family custom of burning the Christmas tree in a celebratory way. This included inviting people to:

1. Take pen and paper, find a peaceful place to sit and meditate. Let your mind go back over the past year, but don't dwell on disappointments; rather, write down the five most pleasant memories of the year.
2. Then, write down your plans and goals for the new year.
3. Finally, consider the burning of the tree itself. If you can burn your tree without violating fire ordinances, do so. Otherwise, burn some branches of it in your fireplace or other safe place. As they burn, think of it as burning away the unwanted “residue” of unpleasant memories from the past year. Remember the fragrant smell that is left. Let that be the memory you keep.

I thank the Lord for the opportunities that He continues to present to us! Those of us in Concerned Methodists strive to be obedient to what the Lord has called us to do and try to do as much as we can as efficiently as possible. We also thank the Lord that the work that needs to be done is too great for the human effort; this forces us to constantly seek His guidance as to His priorities.

We appreciate so much the support you provide - both prayerfully and financially. We ask that you continue to partner with us as we “contend for the faith” that the Lord has entrusted to our care - and please pray for the spiritual revival of The United Methodist Church.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

# February 2007 Update

## Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

*God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage. If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.*

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### Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues.

#### **+ *Some mainline church officials condemned on abortion stance***

The head of a church watchdog group has used this week's Roe v. Wade anniversary to condemn some mainline church officials for their increasing pro-abortion stance.

Mark Tooley is the director of UMAction at the Institute on Religion and Democracy. He says the decision by some mainline church officials to step away from the traditions and teachings of the church to support unrestricted abortion on demand is "appalling." He notes that mainline church agencies belong to the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, which has opposed all proposed restrictions on abortion, including partial-birth abortion, and even parental notification. Tooley says as a result of such decisions, mainline church officials have ended up sounding more like Planned Parenthood or the National Organization of Women than like the "spiritual heirs of the apostles."

He says these church leaders have betrayed their responsibility to their membership and the church at large by serving as "mere echoes" of the secular culture rather than as agents of Gospel transformation. Tooley also attributes the plunge in those denominations' membership over the last four decades to their refusal to affirm "historic Christian teachings about the sacredness of all human life."

- Fred

*Jackson, OneNewsNow.com; January 23, 2007*

#### **+ *Senate Bill Reintroduced on Pain Unborn Children Feel During Abortion***

Washington, DC (LifeNews.com) -- A leading pro-life lawmaker has reintroduced legislation that would require abortion practitioners to tell women considering an abortion that their unborn child may experience significant pain during the procedure. Sen. Sam Brownback, a Kansas Republican who is running for president, reintroduced the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act, which requires the pain information be given to women contemplating an abortion 20 weeks after fertilization. "It is a scientific, medical fact that unborn children feel pain," Brownback said in a statement provided to LifeNews.com. "We know that unborn children can experience pain based upon anatomical, functional, physiological and behavioral indicators that are correlated with pain in children and adults," Brownback added. "Mothers seeking an abortion have the right to know that their unborn children can feel pain." The bill also includes a provision allowing women to ask for anesthesia for the baby so she doesn't suffer any pain during an abortion. The House of Representatives voted last month on a similar bill and approved it on a 250-162 vote. However, the measure was brought up under special rules requiring a two-thirds vote and, as a result, the bill was not sent to the Senate for its consideration. With abortion advocates now in control of Congress bills like Brownback's may not get a hearing or a debate and vote.

- *Pro-Life News Report, #3949; Jan. 24, 2007. LifeNews.com*

#### **+ *Speaker tells abortion-rights opponents not to give up***

WASHINGTON (UMNS) - While ardent opponents of abortion...filled subways and streets for the March for Life rally on the 34th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, a small group of United Methodists quietly worshiped together, renewing a call to change the church's position on abortion as a choice under certain circumstances. But the group acknowledged that revising the church's stance on abortion, as outlined in the Book of Discipline, is not an active battle within the denomination. "This is not a front-burner issue in The United Methodist Church, and it is unlikely to become one," said the Rev. William J. Abraham, a professor at United Methodist-

related Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. “What is important is that (anti-abortion) groups keep their nerve and don't get weary in lifting the issue up.”

The United Methodist Church, in its Social Principles, officially recognizes and respects the sanctity of unborn human life and the sacredness of the life of the mother, but is open to abortion when an “unacceptable” pregnancy may cause “devastating damage” to the mother. The denomination opposes late-term or partial-birth abortions and does not affirm abortion as a means of birth control.

The worship service was held Jan. 22 in the chapel of the United Methodist Building, across the street from the U.S. Capitol. It was the 19th annual service sponsored by the Taskforce on Abortion and Sexuality, an unofficial network of United Methodist clergy and laity that opposes abortion and publishes a newsletter called Lifewatch.

Using Hebrews 12:14 as his sermon text, Abraham encouraged debate over abortion while “living at peace with all.” Abraham said abortion-rights opponents must hold fast to their belief that “the moral core of the debate about abortion hinges on the destruction of human life. Casting the debate as a debate about choice is a strategy of evasion and deceit.”

Representatives of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, which works to promote the Social Principles and engage in Christian social concerns, say abortion is a gray issue that can polarize Christians when it is presented as a black-and-white issue. “There's no real consensus in the medical community, and even the field of theology, as to when life begins, and that is part of the tension of this issue,” said Linda Bales, a board staff executive who oversees issues of reproductive health, family planning and abortion. “As a board, we're trying to move away from the polarization and the labels and focus our energies on family planning and comprehensive sex education and ways to prevent girls and women from finding themselves in this position in the first place,” said Bales, who attended the pro-life service along with other representatives of the board. [Note: These are familiar “secular-progressive” arguments to sidestep the core issue.]

Abraham urged his listeners to use “wit and wisdom” to confront opponents in a way that is effective in today's society, and also to ally themselves with other denominations and faiths, including Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Jews and Muslims. He cited the “bursting of Islam” in the West as a “momentous development. Islam has put itself in the pole position in the race to think afresh about the legitimacy and nature of democracy in the future. Religion is back in the public square.”

One worshiper said a renewed debate about abortion has yet to resonate at the local church level. “Our church is too silent on the issue,” said Dawn Ginter, a member of First United Methodist Church in Port St. Lucie, Fla. “The church is not discussing it in the pews.”

Lifewatch is offering three resolutions at the annual and General Conference levels to promote debate and to change language in the *Book of Discipline*. One would revise the paragraph on abortion in the Social Principles. The others call for the church to withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, an ecumenical group working to keep a woman's legal right to abortion under the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973.

Proponents of the resolutions say the winds of change are blowing.

“Our church tends to shift with the culture. American culture is becoming more pro-life by the year,” said the Rev. Paul Stallworth, pastor at St. Peter's United Methodist Church in Morehead City, N.C., and editor of *Lifewatch*.

- By Mark Schoeff Jr., *United Methodist News Service (UMNS)*; 034; NASHVILLE, Tenn.; January 24, 2007.

### **(UM) General Board of Church and Society.**

+ On the eve of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, James Winkler, general secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, called on UMs to say no to more troops in Iraq and to participate in a Jan. 27 rally in Washington to end the war. Winkler called upon the U.S. Congress to oppose sending more troops by withholding funds. “We further urge Congress not to provide any additional money to continue the war this year. Congress should provide funding only to bring U.S. troops home and to aid in rebuilding Iraq.” [Note:

This type of far-left rhetoric undermines our war effort and put our servicemen in greater danger. This is sad.]  
- Kathy L. Gilbert (UMNS), as reported in *UMNewscope*, January 26, 2007.

+ ***The Religious Left Speaks Out Against "Islamic Fascism"...***

In August, President Bush for seemingly the first time deployed the term "Islamic fascism" to describe the ideological convergence of violent theocratic religion and police state autocracy. In the wake of the British-discovered plot by ethnically Pakistani Islamists to blow up trans-Atlantic flights, Bush said the discovery was a "stark reminder" that "this nation is at war with Islamic fascists," seeking to destroy freedom-loving societies.

The usual suspects complained about the president's phrasing. The mullah-controlled Iranian government, for example, demanded that Bush apologize to the Islamic world for his supposed defamation of their faith. "As usual, the American president said something without any evaluation in advance - using terms such as 'Islamic fascism' is definitely not compatible to the rank of a president, ethnically Pakistani Islamists to blow up trans-Atlantic flights, Bush said the discovery was a "stark reminder" Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid-Reza Assefi told a press conference in Teheran. (Iran, of course, which suffers under a 27-year-old dictatorship of Shi'ite clerics who repress any form of political and religious belief not conforming to their own, ranks as one of the chief "Islamic fascist" states.)

Joining in the criticism of Bush and the "Islamic fascist" phrase was the chief political spokesman for Bush's own United Methodist denomination. In a recent commentary, United Methodist Board of Church and Society chief Jim Winkler expressed great perturbation about the likening of political Islam to right-wing dictatorships of the past. "Suddenly, 'Islamic fascism' is all the rage," Winkler wrote. "I've been puzzled by the emergence of this phrase (apparently first used by President Bush in August). It seems to be used to brand Iran, Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and any other countries or groups who don't like the United States."

Actually, Winkler would be hard pressed to find someone who has called Syria "Islamic fascist." Whatever its various crimes and repressions, the Syrian regime is not ideologically theocratic in the same sense that Iran and others are.

"It's a scary phrase, hearkening back as it does to the fascist World War II nations of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy," Winkler helpfully explained. He also observed that Francisco Franco's Spain and Juan Peron's Argentina were "sometimes branded fascist" during their heyday. "All in all, some pretty nasty regimes and people are associated with fascism," Winkler admitted with distaste. Ideologues of the Left, of course, have for decades reserved "fascist" as a term of their own, for exclusively labeling regimes and movements of the far-Right. Unwilling to condemn dictatorships of the far-Left, they jealously claim the "fascist" label as the very worst kind of political epithet.

So naturally, Winkler was deeply disturbed that "fascism" should be ascribed to Islamist theocrats who dream of destroying the United States. "I have a feeling the recent re-emergence of the term "fascism" in relation to the Muslim world may have more to do with polling results and focus groups," Winkler surmised. "I suspect the phrase has been test-marketed and found to generate a strong response, a jolt, something that sways people to support the 'war on terror.'"

Lest there be any misunderstanding, Winkler admitted that "Islamic extremism or fundamentalism is a serious problem," just like "Christian, Jewish, and Hindu extremism and fundamentalism." In truth, Winkler probably fears Christian "extremism" far more than he is alarmed by Islamist terrorism. After all, Christian "extremists" organize for marriage referenda, support crisis pregnancy clinics, and even sometimes vote Republican.

Winkler ominously warned, with great restraint and nuance, that the Muslims of today are the ostensibly persecuted "Communists" of America in 1965 or the Jews of genocidal Nazi Germany in 1938. "We ought to be very careful, especially as people of faith, about throwing around phrases like 'Islamic fascism' or asserting that Muslims are out to get us," he fretted. Seemingly, he is oblivious to the obvious point that "Islamic fascist" is a phrase coined specifically to describe a particular virulent form of political Islam, not to brand all of Islam. But to single out any form of Islam as inherently more dangerous than, say, the Southern Baptist Convention, is of course deeply offensive to the United Methodist lobbyist.

"There are those whose aims are furthered if they succeed in whipping large numbers of Westerners into a frenzy against Islam," Winkler opined. Far more productively, Christians need to be examining the "uglier side of our history and community," he predictably concluded. After all, Winkler must wonder, why should we waste time worrying about Iranian nukes or al-Qaeda terror? This is time far better spent organizing another round of apologies for the sins of nominally Christian 18th century slave traders, or the misdeeds of 11th century crusaders galloping towards the Holy Land.

You may search in vain for any serious expressions of concern about radical Islam on Winkler's United Methodist social action website, or anywhere else within the Religious Left. The suicidal fanaticism, terror, repression, brutality, hatred and intolerance of radical Islam simply do not concern them. Jihadist Islam enslaves women, jails and kills sexual libertines, and banishes all forms of free expression. Why does the Religious Left refuse to condemn it as uniquely insidious?

Radical Islam despises the West, the United States, and Israel in particular. It also opposes and persecutes all orthodox forms of Christianity. Perhaps it is simply emotionally difficult for the Religious Left to passionately criticize those, even violent jihadists, who share its own irrational fears and emotional preoccupations.

In another recent column, Winkler easily labeled the Chilean dictatorship of the late Augusto Pinochet as "fascist" But this term is, evidently, too severe for the likes of Hezbollah, Iran under the ayatollahs, the Taliban, or even al-Qaeda, who apparently deserve more gentle adjectives.

[Note: Jim Winkler's salary and support for the General Board of Church and Society are supported with apportionment dollars. This type of activism and rhetoric undermine our war effort and put servicemen in greater danger.]

- By Mark D. Tooley, *The Institute on Religion & Democracy*, as reported in *FrontPageMagazine.com*

## **Of Interest.**

### **+ *Ministry commission puts recommendations, survey online***

A draft report by the Study of Ministry Commission for the 2008 General Conference proposes eight recommendations about the ordering of ministry, including the creation of three classifications of ordained elders and separation of ordination from full conference membership. "The commission is determined to draw on the collective insight and wisdom of all United Methodists in preparing this important report. And so we offer this initial draft of the report for examination and comment," said Bishop William H. Willimon, who leads the denomination's Birmingham (Ala.) Area and chairs the Study of Ministry Commission. "The commission will consider all contributions in preparing the final document." The commission is inviting people to read the report and take the online survey by logging onto the Web site and clicking on the Study of Ministry button.

### **A catalyst for discussion**

The Rev. Mary Ann Moman, a commission member and staff executive with the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry, said the draft reflects the commission's work in addressing the General Conference request to bring clarity to the ordering of ministry. "We are pleased with the Wesleyan model of questions and response. It is our expectation that this teaching document will become the catalyst for The United Methodist Church to discuss these important issues," Moman said.

The commission recommended classifications of itinerant elder, associate elder and local elder. Itinerant elder is essentially the same as the current classification of elder. All three could administer the sacraments, but associate elders and local elders could do so only in the charge to which they are appointed.

### **Other recommendations:**

- Pastors-in-charge who are not ordained as elders will be licensed lay pastors. This will incorporate certified lay ministers, student local pastors, part-time local pastors and full-time local pastors who have not completed either the denomination's Course of Study or a master of divinity degree.
- Every licensed lay pastor shall be authorized, blessed, and sent out annually for his or her appointment through a liturgy to be conducted at annual or district conference each year.

- The United Methodist Church must sustain the traditional Wesleyan understanding that the authority to celebrate the sacraments derives from ordination as an elder by the presiding bishop upon election by an annual conference. Therefore, licensed lay pastors shall not administer baptism or Holy Communion in the charges to which they are appointed. Itinerant elders designated as presiding elders shall be assigned by the cabinet to circuits of local churches served by licensed lay pastors to administer the sacraments on a regular, rotating basis. The bishop may grant provisional authority to administer the sacraments to certain licensed lay pastors under exceptional circumstances, in order to advance the mission of the church in a particular place. Deacons are not ordained to administer the sacraments but to assist in their administration and to lead the congregation in extending the table of Holy Communion into the world.
- Deacons and itinerant elders will be ordained at the conclusion of educational and examination requirements rather than at the end of a probationary process. This realigns ordination and conference membership, granting sacramental authority to at least an additional 2,000 pastors under appointment in any given year. Under the commission's proposal, these ordained elders and deacons will have full authority for ministry. Elders will continue on trial to become full members of the Order of Elders, while deacons will also be on probation for a period.
- Elders shall be ordained to Word, Sacrament and Order, while deacons are ordained to Word and Service.
- All deacons and itinerant elders will be reviewed every five years by a group of peers from within their respective annual conference orders.

The commission will propose that 2008 General Conference authorize a study of the diaconate during the 2009-2012 quadrennium, including a review of how the office is being practiced across the connection and what challenges remain in fulfilling the potential of the office of deacon.

The 2004 General Conference established the commission because of questions, concerns and uncertainty regarding the two ordained clergy orders - deacons and elders - and local pastors. Both the 2000 and 2004 General Conferences received a large number of petitions related to certified lay ministers, local pastors, deacons and elders. The Study of Ministry Commission was established to "theologically discuss and clearly define the ordering of our shared life together in The United Methodist Church."

- *By Vicki Brown, United Methodist News Service (UMNS); #036; NASHVILLE, Tenn.; January 23, 2007.* Brown is an associate editor and writer in the Office of Interpretation at the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The report is available at [www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org), along with an online survey for reactions to the report.

**+ *United Methodist pastor to appeal IRS levy on pension check***

A United Methodist clergyman in Oregon and longtime "war tax" resister is fighting an Internal Revenue Service levy placed on his pension provided by the denomination....The couple did not file any tax returns for 2004 and 2005. "We've sort of taken the attitude that we feel like we're doing the right thing in not paying." [Note: I believe it was Jesus who said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.]"

- *By Linda Bloom, UMNS; #035; New York; Jan. 23, 2007.*

**+ *On the Use of the term "United Methodist Ethos"***

When Dr. Susanne Johnson of the Perkins School of Theology initiated a petition objecting to the pending decision to locate the George W. Bush Presidential Library on the Southern Methodist campus, she laid out a litany of George Bush sins including: "denial of global warming," "alienation of longtime U.S. allies," "environmental predation," "disregard for the rights of gay persons," and "other perceived forms of disrespect for the created order and global community." The argument was then made that whatever George W. Bush is about, it is in violation of the United Methodist Social Principles and inconsistent with whom United Methodists are. Any reminders of George Bush should be excluded from anything having to do with Southern Methodist University. William McElvaney, professor emeritus who co-authored the petition, called George

Bush's policies "morally reprehensible" and then, when he spoke on National Public Radio, said that the presence of the library on campus and an accompanying think tank was not consistent with "United Methodist ethos."

There is nothing new about the partisan political rant coming out of Perkins or any of our United Methodist seminaries, for that matter (would that they were as passionate about the doctrinal standards). What is worth noting, however, is that this rant is being identified with the phrase "United Methodist ethos." "United Methodist ethos" has

now become a code word for what might be called, lacking any better definition, our liberal institutional corporate culture, which seems to operate quite independently from anything in the Discipline or any reality in local churches. By reference to "United Methodist ethos" we declare evangelical seminaries not adequate to prepare United Methodist students for ministry (the University Senate), "inclusiveness" as the bedrock of Methodism (some bishops and some seminary teaching), and George Bush's presence unacceptable on the Southern Methodist campus.

Is there not a need for some conversation?

- Dr. Riley Case, *The Confessing Movement*, January 23, 2007.

+ A copy of the petition objecting to establishing the George W. Bush library at Southern Methodist University and apparently some who "signed on" to it is contained below. On a personal note [AOM] I think it is sad that there should be such objections to this action. In many ways President Bush is truer to our Wesleyan heritage than some of the names who appear below. This information was garnered from the website [WWW.protectSMU.ORG](http://WWW.protectSMU.ORG) The petition follows:

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THE PETITION: We the undersigned express our objection to the prospect of the George W. Bush library, museum, and think tank being established at Southern Methodist University. As United Methodists, we believe that the linking of his presidency with a university bearing the Methodist name is utterly inappropriate. We urge the Board of Trustees of Southern Methodist University and the South Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church to reject this project.

**Signed:**

BISHOPS

Joe A. Wilson, Bishop, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Georgetown, TX 78628  
William Boyd Grove, Bishop, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Charleston, WV 25311  
Alfred W. Gwinn, Jr., Bishop, The United Methodist Church, Raleigh, North, Carolina 27605  
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CLERGY

Rev. Andrew J. Weaver, California-Nevada Annual Conference, Brooklyn, NY 11215  
Rev. Fred Kandeler, Retired, Central Texas Annual Conference, New Braunfels, Texas.

Rev. Milton S. Jordan, Retired, Texas Annual Conf., Georgetown, Texas 78628

Rev. E. Tracy Hunter, Florida Conference, South St. Petersburg, FL

Rev. William K. McElvaney, North Texas Conference, Dallas, Texas

### UM CHURCH MEMBERS

George W. Crawford, Member, Northaven United Methodist Church, Dallas, TX 75238

Mary Lou Grove, Member, Christ Church United Methodist, Charleston, WV 25311

Susan Slater Edenborough, Member, First United Methodist Church, Napa, California

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*A simple measure of a country..... is to look at how many want in ... And how many want out.  
– Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Great Britain in his commentary on America*

### Global Outlook

*If you always tell the truth, you will never be trapped in a lie. - Our Daily Bread, May 6, 2006*

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### **Africa. Church can do more to help poor in Africa, commissioners find**

[Note: This describes hardships present in a country that has a Marxist dictator - which United Methodist officials helped to put into power over a Methodist bishop Abel Muzorewa. This reflects a problem that our church helped cause.]

MARANGE, Zimbabwe (UMNS) - The governing members of United Methodist Communications was in Zimbabwe Jan. 4-11 for its first board meeting outside the continental United States. The members observed the living conditions of people in the Mutare area, and saw the impact that the Zimbabwe Orphans Endeavor (ZOE) - a United Methodist-supported ministry - is having in helping children orphaned by AIDS. Zimbabwe is a country in economic turmoil.

Poverty and its effects have been identified by the church's African bishops as the most significant issue in daily life, but "poverty" is not a term the people use to describe their circumstances. "It does not define who they are nor define their communities," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, top executive at United Methodist Communications.

### ZOE makes a difference

Commission members visited two mission centers outside Mutare that are operated through the Zimbabwe Orphans Endeavor. ZOE is an advance special program of the North Carolina Annual Conference that seeks to embrace and assist children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic through providing school fees, purchasing uniforms and feeding them. The program is supported by partners from across the United Methodist connection. Every 14 seconds a child is orphaned in Africa because of AIDS, and 6,000 children become orphans every day, according to ZOE literature. Africa has 12 million orphans, and that number could reach 40 million by 2010.

The nearly two-and-a-half-year-old ministry is led by North Carolina clergyman Greg Jenks. He was introduced to the plight of AIDS in 2001 by a 15-year-old girl who said her calling was to help AIDS orphans in Zambia. In 2003, "I sensed that Christ was calling me to offer leadership in The United Methodist Church in caring for these suffering children," Jenks said in a testimonial. "I am convinced that this is the hour that the church needs to respond to the devastating suffering of the little ones in southern Africa. "As God has begun opening doors, ZOE Ministry has responded by offering care to thousands of suffering orphans," he said. "Hungry children are being fed, eager children are being educated, and little ones are finding hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." The ministry's infrastructure in Zimbabwe is under the leadership of the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church. ZOE is also branching out to assist AIDS orphans in Kenya through the Maua Methodist Mission, and it is involved in an inner-city ministry in Zambia.



The vision of the ministry, according to its Web site, includes:

Establishing care for orphans and vulnerable children in cooperation with United Methodist and ecumenical ministries in Africa.

Equipping orphans with essential life skills.

Linking churches with ministries caring for orphans in Africa.

Reaching children for Christ.

Coordinating work teams from the United States.

‘The work of God’

At United Methodist-related Marange Mission Center, the commission members arrived for the first day of school and assisted mothers of the schoolchildren attending Mt. Makomwe Primary School in preparing the noon meal for 500 children. Nearly 40 percent of the students have been orphaned by AIDS.

Across Zimbabwe, nearly 15,000 children are fed daily through ZOE. For some of the children, this will be the only meal they receive on some days, Jenks said.

"This is the work of God," he said. "When I look at what is going on, I do not ever sit back and say, 'Look at what I have done.' It is more of feeling like an observer of something that God is doing. It is a calling, and it is a lot easier than being a pastor." Before he was appointed to lead ZOE, Jenks was pastor at Christ Community United Methodist Church in Clayton, N.C.

Commission members arrived early in the morning, like the mothers do, to begin the process of making porridge. While some broke wood for a fire, others hauled water to fill a large cast-iron pot. In sweltering heat, they stood over the fire, stirring the porridge until it was done. They also carried water to fill a large barrel to make mahewu, a vitamin-fortified, cereal beverage that is served to students ranging from 2 to 14 years old.

Richard Mawondo, headmaster of the primary school, said ZOE provides funding for student uniforms, medicine, stationery and other necessities. More than 1,500 children across Zimbabwe have received school fees and uniforms from ZOE, and the ministry has donated more than \$500,000 in medical supplies and served at least 3,000 children in the past year.

ZOE is establishing sewing projects to empower local communities as they are paid to produce the uniforms. It provides sewing machines for the women at these projects, and they are expected to train orphan girls to participate in the endeavor. The commission visited a cooperative while in Mutare, and members distributed uniforms to children at the Marange center. "ZOE assists orphans within the school who would otherwise not come to school because they don't have fees and things needed for learning to take place," Mawondo said. Last year, ZOE helped 197 orphans from around the area to attend school.

- By Linda Green, UMNS; #031; Jan. 23, 2007. *UMs can assist AIDS orphans by giving to the "ZOE Advance Special S00148." Checks mailed to NC Conference, The United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 60053, Charlotte N.C. 28260-0053.*

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*Fatigue makes cowards of us all. - Vince Lombardi*