

The Monthly Update

December 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update focuses on the decisions of the Judicial Council because of their importance to the future of our United Methodist Church, and not only on the political activism but also on the perspectives of denominational employees.

We in Concerned Methodists are on the forefront of the struggle to preserve and strengthen our church's foundation in the orthodox Christian faith. In addition we stand firmly against those forces that are hostile to our teachings – even if those forces receive the tacit and vocal support of church officials. The truth is still the truth even when attacked by members of the clergy and other denominational personnel.

Each December, we make our annual request for contributions. We ask that each of you pray and seek the Lord's leading as to how you might support the ministry of Concerned Methodists. We believe that we make the most efficient use possible of the money you entrust to our work. 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. In addition, I feel that it is important that I share with you another of our "internal practices" in minimizing overhead in the operation of our ministry. When we travel to conferences in which we have a part, we pay for our own individual travel and personal expenses. Even though this is not done in any other ministries that I know of, we do so because we want to translate the maximum amount of donations into our ministry of informing people of what is happening in the church.

We are experiencing a financial slowdown as it gets toward the end of the year and people are turning their thoughts toward the holidays, as most assuredly they should. Thanksgiving and Christmas are two of the most-anticipated times of the year. The past six months have been especially trying for us in that we simply have not rebounded from our extraordinary expenses involved in the activism prior to and during the 2008 General Conference in Ft. Worth this year. Nevertheless, we ask that you pray about how the Lord would lead you to help Concerned Methodists financially and prayerfully during this coming year. Again, all gifts and contributions are tax-deductible.

Again, we are asking for your support. An investment in the ministry of renewal in which we are engaged will help as we "contend for the faith" during this very crucial time in the life of our United Methodist Church. May we have your continued help?

From all of us here at Concerned Methodists, we wish you the very best during this Christmas and throughout the year.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

December 2008 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Peace starts with a smile.

* * * * *

The Good Stuff

+ **On the lighter side, it is good to kind of back off, look at our often-times frenetic activity during this very busy season of the year, and take a light-hearted view. We have entitled this little section – “Preparing for Christmas”:**

– Preparing for a large Christmas Eve family gathering, I had been giving out orders like a drill sergeant: “Pick up your things! Don’t get your clothes dirty! Put away those toys!”

My four-year-old daughter had been underfoot, so I sent her to the next room to play with our wooden Nativity set. As I scurried around setting the table, I overheard her make-believe conversation in an all-too-familiar tone of voice: “I don’t care who you are, get those camels out of my living room!”

– *Contributed by Catherine Halverson as appearing in Reader’s Digest; sent in to us by James and May Ella Bruner, Indiana.*

+ + +

– People were coming over and I was frantically trying to get the house ready. I was also driving my family crazy, barking out orders to pick up, help set the table and not to mess up the living room. While I was cleaning the kitchen, I realized I’d pushed them too far. “Mary,” I snapped at my 12-year-old daughter, “where’s the broom?”

“I don’t know, Mom,” she fired back. “Where’d you put it when you landed?”

– *Contributed by Mary Gzik, Liverpool, New York and as appearing in Reader’s Digest.*

+ ***Wish Me A Merry Christmas - The Attack on Christmas***

Although the liberal media and even some churches are leading the charge against Christmas, they are not the main force behind the attack on Christmas. When the angel came to announce our Lord’s birth, he said, “For behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). This angel was stating that the spiritual atmosphere of the whole planet was about to be transformed. The good news was that the human race was about to be redeemed from the forces of darkness by the Savior. It is these same forces of darkness that are attempting to silence the good news today. We are organizing a campaign that stands up to the powers and principalities, “the rulers of the darkness of this age” (Eph 6:12), that lovingly announces the Light of the World through the wishing of “Merry Christmas” again.

To wish someone a “Merry Christmas” is to proclaim the “good news of great joy that will be for all people.” It is to announce that “there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (v.11). To tell someone [that] they have a Savior is indeed good news! However, if they do not know of their need for a savior, it may be offensive. This is why we find people being offended by the kind gesture of wishing them a “Merry Christmas.” This is also the exact reason why we must continue to unashamedly wish people a “Merry Christmas.” In doing so, we are telling them that there is good news and that the God of the universe has put into motion a wonderful plan to offer them salvation. The statement “Merry Christmas” is indeed nothing less than the first step in opening a door to offer someone salvation. As Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel [good news], for it is the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16). The Message says it like this, “It’s news I’m most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God’s powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him.”

To wear a button that says, “It’s OK, Wish Me a Merry Christmas” is to identify yourself as someone who has heard and received the good news. It tells people you are not just shopping for a winter festival, but what you are buying is celebrating your Lord’s birth. It says that you are in need of the Savior whose birth the angels announced so long ago. It gives the other person the opportunity to proclaim to you the “good news of great joy that will be for all people,” and say “Merry Christmas.”

As the cycle of wishing and being wished a “Merry Christmas” begins, the forces of darkness in our nation will be affected. Light will be proclaimed. Hope will be announced, and the spiritual atmosphere will be changed.

Say “Thank You” to retailers who are helping us turn the tide.

Comment by one person who has seen results from this campaign:

“My church has focused on this subject a lot and I thank you for your web site! I think it is important to thank those who do allow Christmas. An example I have just seen was the first Lowe’s commercial for Christmas. A little boy and his mother are walking through the store and everything is changing for the Christmas season right before his eyes and when they get to the lights department an employee is holding lights that change into Christmas lights and he tells the little boy Merry Christmas! I was overwhelmed by this as I have not heard this from a major retailer in some time. I think we should take notice of this and thank Lowes.” – Robbie Williams

Contact information is:

Campaign for Christmas, LLC • PO Box 5398 • Williamsburg, VA 23188 • (800) 487-7137
Website for ordering buttons: <http://www.wmamc.com/index.html> E-mail: contact@wmamc.com

+ 30 Ways to Pray for People in Authority

[Note: After the recent November elections, we felt it necessary to reprint this paragraph that we had originally included in our February 2003 issue of the “Monthly Update.” We believe it is timely to review these prayer principles. – AOM]

The life of every citizen is impacted by a multitude of individuals who wield significant influence each day. Consider: millions of elected officials, appointed judges, lawyers, police officers, bureaucrats, military officers, business executives and managers, those involved in church leadership, educators, medical practitioners and hospital administrators. How might we pray for these individuals? Here are 30 things based on Scripture. Don’t overwhelm yourself. Select one person or group of people and then pray one of these things each day for them.

1. That they be God-fearing and recognize that they are accountable to Him for each decision and act (Proverbs 9:10).
2. That they be granted wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (James 1:5).
3. That they be presented with the gospel and a loving Christian witness (Romans 10:14).
4. That, if unsaved, they be drawn to a saving encounter with Christ; if born-again, they be strengthened and encouraged in their faith (1 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 1:17-23).
5. That they recognize their own inadequacy and pray and seek the will of God (Proverbs 3:5-8; Luke 11:9-13).
6. That they be convicted of sin, transgression, and iniquity (Psalm 51:17; John 8:9).
7. That they heed their conscience, confess their sins, and repent (Proverbs 28:13; James 4:8).
8. That they read the Bible and attend prayer meetings and Bible studies (Psalm 119:11; Colossians 3:2).
9. That they value and regard the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Christ (Psalm 19:7-11; John 8:31-32).
10. That they respect and honor their own parents if living (Ephesians 6:2-3).
11. That they respect authority and practice accountability (Romans 13:1-7).
12. That they be given godly counsel and God-fearing advisors (Proverbs 24:6).
13. That they be honest and faithful to spouses and children (Malachi 2:15-16).
14. That they be practicing members of local congregations (Hebrews 10:25).
15. That they desire purity and avoid debauchery, pornography, perversion, and drunkenness (1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Titus 2:12).
16. That they be timely, reliable, and dependable (Matthew 21:28-31).
17. That they be honest in financial, tax, and ethical matters (1 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Timothy 6:6-10).
18. That they seek pastoral care and counsel when needed (Hebrews 13:7).
19. That they seek out and nurture godly friendships (Psalm 1:1-3).
20. That they have thankful and teachable spirits (Romans 1:21).
21. That they be generous and have compassionate hearts for the poor and needy (Psalm 112:9; Luke 10:33-37).
22. That they redeem their time and know priorities (Ephesians 5:15-17).
23. That they desire honesty, integrity, and loyalty (Psalm 26; Proverbs 11:3).
24. That they have courage to resist manipulation, pressure, and the fear of man (Proverbs 29:25; 2 Timothy 1:7).
25. That they be shielded from occultism, New Age cults, false religions, and secret societies (Isaiah 1:29, 2:6).
26. That they be presented with biblical worldviews and principles (Ephesians 3:10).
27. That they endeavor to restore the sanctity of life, families, divine order, and morality in our nation (Ephesians 5:22-6:4).
28. That they would work to reverse the trends of humanism in our nation (1 Chronicles 12:32; Isaiah 59:19).
29. That they desire humility and meekness and be willing to serve and cooperate (John 13:14; Titus 3:2).
30. That they be prepared to give account to Almighty God (Hebrews 9:27).

– By Gary P. Bergei; Excerpted from *Pray! Magazine* issue #13; www.PRAYMAG.com

Of Interest

+ *Ballot initiatives draw United Methodist advocacy*

[Note: The following chronicles some of the political initiatives and positions of various church officials and agencies.]

Ballot initiatives on hot-button issues such as same-sex marriage, casino gambling and state income taxes drew the attention of United Methodists this U.S. election season.

– United Methodists in Arkansas were dismayed that an amendment to the state constitution to start a state-run lottery won voter approval by a two-to-one margin. In a statement issued on election night, United Methodists Against Gambling and the church's Arkansas Conference expressed deep regret about the outcome. "We felt, and continue to feel, that a state-run lottery is not in the best interest of the people of Arkansas," the statement said. "Our next step must be to persuade the legislature to reject lotteries or, at the least, severely restrict them, while finding other revenue to fund college scholarships," said Scott Trotter, an attorney and co-chairperson of United Methodists Against Gambling with the Rev. Roger Glover.

– In Ohio, a ballot measure to permit casino gambling was voted down for the fourth time since 1990. United Methodist Bishop Bruce Ough and members of the denomination's West Ohio Conference, commended Gov. Ted Strickland, a former United Methodist pastor, for his opposition to gambling and had called for a "no" vote on that issue. The conference represents nearly 1,200 congregations in 58 Ohio counties. "I am dismayed and outraged at the repeated, relentless and reckless efforts to expand gambling in Ohio," Ough said at a Sept. 25 press conference. "With blatant disregard for the citizens of Ohio who have consistently and resoundingly said 'no' to the expansion of gambling, the gambling industry has once again mounted a well-funded campaign to introduce casino gambling to our state." United Methodists also supported Strickland's signing of a tough new law that limits the interest rates which payday lending institutions can charge Ohio citizens. That law was supported under another ballot initiative.

– In Maryland, less than a day after voters approved a referendum to amend the state constitution to allow slot machine gambling, Baltimore officials proceeded with a \$4.1 million purchase of land for a casino, which will be built south of downtown. United Methodists from the Peninsula-Delaware Conference joined church members in the Baltimore-Washington Conference in the attempt to defeat the slot machine proposal, following the denomination's official opposition to gambling. Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Philadelphia Area and Bishop John Schol, of the Washington Area, who both oversee churches in parts of Maryland, were among religious leaders signing an Oct. 23 statement opposing the slot machine referendum. "Introducing slots into our state sends a message that dollars are precious and people are expendable," the statement said. "In fact, gambling revenue will worsen the plight of children, youth and adults within Maryland by increasing addiction, divorce and poverty."

– Massachusetts voters soundly defeated a ballot question that would have eliminated the state's income tax. United Methodists in the state worked with the Massachusetts Council of Churches and other groups to educate citizens about why the tax should not be dropped and secure pledges for a "no" vote. Calvary Church, United Methodist, in Arlington, for example, worked with the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization to hold community forums on the issue and collect pledges. "This is a justice issue, a moral issue," the Rev. Christine Elliott stated. "The drastic cuts to services required if this measure passes would affect children and the most vulnerable and at-risk citizens in our commonwealth."

Same-sex marriage ban

– In California, voters approved a ban on same-sex marriage after the State Supreme Court there had declared such marriages legal last May. Same-sex civil unions still will be allowed in California, and Attorney General Jerry Brown said he believed the marriages already performed will remain valid, according to The New York Times. The United Methodist Church opposes same-sex unions and forbids its pastors from performing such ceremonies or allowing them to take place in United Methodist churches. When the denomination's Western Jurisdictional Conference met last July, however, it passed a resolution celebrating the California court decision. The resolution stated, in part, that the conference supports "same-gender couples who enter into the marriage covenant and encourage(s) both congregations and pastors to welcome, embrace and provide spiritual nurture and pastoral care for these families." In June, the church's California-Pacific and California Nevada conferences, which are part of the Western Jurisdiction, passed resolutions supporting clergy who choose to perform same-sex marriages. Bishop Beverly Shamana ruled the California-Nevada statement to be void.

– Voters in Arizona and Florida also approved bans on same-sex marriage.

– *By Linda Bloom; UMNS Daily Digest; November 7, 2008.*

+ ***Commentary: Claiming the name 'United Methodist'***

[Note: Perhaps it is the conduct of some of our church leaders and bureaucratic personnel that brings leads to this.]

"What is so troubling about United Methodism that pastors and congregations would no longer want to claim the name?" So asks the Rev. Clayton Childers in a commentary distributed by United Methodist News Service. He refers to an increasing number of large-membership churches in United Methodism in the U.S. that make little or no mention on their Web sites about being United Methodist. He goes on to share his positive impressions of United Methodism that led to his decision to leave another denomination to be a clergy in The United Methodist Church. He talks about his global experiences in behalf of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and how so many people and churches that he's come in contact with proudly display the United Methodist cross and flame. "God is using United Methodist Christians bound together in an amazing web of connection to accomplish great and beautiful things. We all can and should feel honored to be part of that marvelous work," Childers writes. — *UMNS Daily Digest; October 21, 2008.*

+ ***United Methodist Publishing House reports declining sales***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. The United Methodist Publishing House reported a \$3.2 million shortfall in sales for the first three months of the 2008 fiscal year, even though revenue for the fiscal year ending in July was above budget and expenses were down. The current economic climate has had a "detrimental impact" in the fiscal year beginning Aug. 1, said Neil Alexander, president and publisher. Alexander expressed concerns about meeting budget targets in 2009 when the board of directors for the Publishing House met Oct. 27-29 in Nashville. "Economists expect consumer spending to continue to fall at an accelerated rate, and early surveys of churches suggest both shortfalls in giving and cutbacks in spending," Alexander said, noting that other religious publishers and retail organizations report similar cutbacks.

— *UMNS Daily Digest; October 17, 2008.*

+ ***United Methodist hymnal co-editors named***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)—Dean B. McIntyre and Gary Alan Smith have been named co-editors of the new hymn and worship book authorized by the 2008 United Methodist General Conference. McIntyre is the director of music resources at the United Methodist Board of Discipleship, and Smith is senior music editor at Abingdon Press. The first meeting of the hymnal revision committee will be held Jan. 20-22 in Nashville. — *UMNS Daily Digest; Nov. 6, 2008.*

(UM) Bishops

+ ***Palmer: Church increasingly seizes chance to change***

ST. SIMONS ISLAND, Ga. It's OK for the church to stumble a bit as it struggles to address rapid changes in society and the world, says the new president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops. In his first address before the council, Bishop Gregory Palmer noted that the image of stumbling is a powerful metaphor for a struggling church when considering its life and mission. The council, meeting Nov. 2-7 at St. Simons Island, is the top clergy body of the 11.5 million-member global denomination. "Stumbling has gotten a bad rap," but the truth is that "we are a community of stumblers," Palmer told the council on Nov. 3. "We stumble because there is not sufficient light. We stumble because we sometimes refuse the full gift of the light. But the amazing thing is that even when we stumble, the real light still shines."

— *UMNS Daily Digest; November 3, 2008.*

+ ***Methodist bishops celebrate election, pray for Obama***

[Note: This is especially revealing of their political biases. Compare this with their public opposition to President Bush.] With tears, hymns and prayers, a jubilant United Methodist Council of Bishops celebrated the election of Barack Obama as U.S. president, while affirming his vision of change for the nation "based on hope for all the people, especially those who are disinherited and disenfranchised." During their semiannual meeting in St. Simons Island, the clergy leaders hugged and many cried in their opening worship on Nov. 5, one day after Obama became the first African American elected to the top government office in the United States. The council's officers quickly signed a letter of congratulations to the new president and asked to present Obama and the future first lady with Holy Bibles during the council's next meeting, scheduled for next May in Washington. — *UMNS Daily Digest; November 5, 2008.*

(UM) General Board of Church and Society

+ ***Final legal arguments presented over Church and Society funds***

WASHINGTON (UMNS)—A District of Columbia judge heard final arguments Oct. 22 in a hearing on whether the social action agency of The United Methodist Church can use United Methodist Building Endowment Funds to promote causes other than temperance and alcohol. Final arguments were presented by attorneys representing the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and the Coalition for United Methodist Accountability. The board's trustees filed a request in 2007 for a declaratory decision on the appropriate use of the funds and whether the trustees have overseen them correctly over the years. The Board of Church and Society is the successor to the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and

Public Morals and two other agencies of the former Methodist Episcopal Church. The temperance board led efforts to construct The Methodist Building in Washington, completed in 1923. In spring 2007, five individuals supported by the Coalition for United Methodist Accountability were allowed by the judge to join the case as interveners. The coalition includes the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Good News and the Confessing Movement—unofficial groups that are frequently at odds with the board over its advocacy work on social issues. – *UMNS Daily Digest; October 24, 2008.*

+ *Church leaders welcome Obama, urge prayers*

[Note: This is highly partisan. If a survey were taken of all members of the UMC, I doubt that they would agree with Jim Winkler's conclusion that, "Virtually the entire world is grateful for and approves of the election results." One wonders if the Muslim world approves of the results. If so, this should be an important barometer of future world events.]

Across The United Methodist Church, leaders hailed Barack Obama as an agent of change, a friend of the disenfranchised, a "gift" to the world and a bridge-builder among cultures, social orders and national ideologies. Others urged United Methodists to commit to pray regularly for the incoming U.S. president as he faces the daunting challenges of two wars, a stumbling economy and a battered international reputation under the administration of George W. Bush, who is United Methodist. "A new page in history has been turned," said Jim Winkler, chief executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, the church's social advocacy agency. "Virtually the entire world is grateful for and approves of the election results." – *UMNS Daily Digest; November 5, 2008.*

(UM) General Board of Global Ministries. United Methodist mission agency announces staff realignments

+ *New mission head makes poverty fight a priority*

STAMFORD, Conn. The Rev. Edward Paup is convinced poverty can be eliminated. As the new top executive of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, he expects the mission agency to provide denominational leadership toward that goal through networking with other organizations both inside and outside the church. "We have the responsibility to work toward the kind of world where poverty can be eliminated," he said. "I believe what our world is in desperate need of is a missional extreme makeover." – *UMNS Daily Digest; October 20, 2008.*

+ *Global Ministries launches effort to start 400 churches*

United Methodists can become evangelists and church planters around the world through a fund launched with an initial gift from an Atlanta businesswoman. Mary Watson pledged \$400,000 to the 400 Fund—\$1,000 per new congregation outside the United States—in a church development effort by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. Watson and her husband, the Rev. Ralph Watson, a retired United Methodist pastor, are engaged in mission around the world and have notable involvements in Russia, Estonia and Brazil. A mission board goal of 400 new congregations outside of the United States during the next four years is part of the denomination's commitment to create "new places for new people by starting new congregations and renewing existing ones." Another initiative aims at starting 650 new congregations in the U.S. – *UMNS Daily Digest; October 20, 2008.*

+ *Mission agency reviews impact of economic crisis*

While the global economic turmoil will not immediately affect operations of the mission agency of The United Methodist Church, the crisis does present new opportunities for the church to be in mission, its leaders say. "Now is the time for the church to be the church," said Bishop Bruce Ough after his election as president of the Board of Global Ministries. He declared that those on the margins who will suffer the most "are the very people God has called us to minister to." This year's economic meltdown, triggered by a collapse in the housing market followed by mayhem in the investment and banking industries, dominated the headlines during the board's annual meeting Oct. 13-17 in Stamford. As a jittery stock market seesawed by hundreds of points each day, the financial climate was a concern for the mission agency. Continued decline in investments could "impact the board's general operating fund significantly," according to a report delivered by Global Ministries Treasurer Roland Fernandes. – *UMNS Daily Digest; October 20, 2008.*

Homosexuality. "Extraordinary ordination" has no United Methodist status, bishops say

ST. SIMONS ISLAND, Ga. –United Methodist bishops declared the ecumenical ordination of a lesbian and another woman who champions gay rights, which took place Oct. 19 at a United Methodist Church in Baltimore, "was not approved by any United Methodist annual conference, board of ordained ministry or cabinet." The ordinations "belong to Church Within A Church," according to the council. Church Within a Church is a six-year old organization of Methodists who describe themselves as "dedicated to being the inclusive church." – *UMNS Daily Digest; November 10, 2008.*

(UM) Judicial Council.

[Note: We see these decisions by the Judicial Council relating to the amendments making the United States into a regional conference as being favorable. The amendments themselves are damaging to the connection in the United Methodist Church and will, hopefully, be defeated at the annual conferences. If they are passed and sustained by the General Conference in 2012, we will see the future viability of the United Methodist Church as being severely harmed.]

Bloomington, Minnesota. The top court of The United Methodist Church has ruled that the denomination's legislative body would need to enact enabling legislation in 2012 to change the church's structure in the United States.

The Judicial Council, meeting Oct. 22-25 in its first session since the election of five new members last spring, also remanded two cases on key issues—church membership and same-gender marriages—back to their respective conferences, citing an absence of official documentation needed to decide the cases.

The denomination has been studying its structure to reflect the increasing global nature of the church, and it brought proposed constitutional changes before its top legislative body last spring. The 2008 General Conference mandated creation of a regional conference in the United States as part of its efforts to make the denomination less U.S.-centric in structure and has sent the amendment to annual conferences for a vote in 2009 as part of the ratification process. The Judicial Council, however, said the amendment does nothing to "harmonize its content" with the rest of the Book of Discipline, the denomination's book of law, and that enabling legislation is necessary. In responding to a request for a ruling of law brought from the floor of General Conference about the amendment's meaning, application and effect, the council clarified that the structural changes could not take effect before 2012, even if ratified at the annual conference level in 2009. "We conclude that the General Conference did not intend ... to create a regional conference in the United States before the next General Conference," Decision 1100 states.

Holy Communion, local pastors

The council rejected two changes to the Book of Discipline approved by General Conference when the worldwide assembly met last spring in Fort Worth, Texas.

The first was designed to make it easier for laity to distribute Holy Communion in remote areas. Responding to questions of constitutionality from the Western North Carolina Conference, the council said that amendments made to Paragraph 1117.9 create a doctrine of "reserved sacrament" and alters the Discipline without proper authority. The church's Articles of Religion explicitly say that the sacraments are not to be "reserved" or "carried about."

In Decision 1109, the council said it would "not become the arbiter of theological debates" and that the amendments create "a fundamental shift in the way that the Church talks about the elements of the Sacrament of Holy Communion."

"It is quite permissible for The United Methodist Church to change its doctrine regarding Holy Communion," states Decision 1109. "But the means for doing so is not to act on a petition by a simple majority of the General Conference. Rather, the proper procedure is akin to that for amending the Constitution, except for the provision that a larger aggregate vote of the annual conferences—three-fourths—must be achieved. An argument from expediency, to make it easier for laity in remote areas to receive the sacrament, does not abrogate the Church's methods for changing its doctrine."

The second General Conference change rejected by the council offered local pastors the option of choosing their status as lay or clergy if they have completed the Course of Study but are no longer under appointment. In Decision 1101, the council said the legislation is in direct violation of the Discipline, including Paragraph 32 of the Constitution, which lists the criteria for being a pastor.

The Judicial Council also:

Ruled that a pastor who is acquitted in a church trial is entitled to restoration of all previous status, rights and privileges. The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference case involved a clergy member accused of child abuse at a church preschool. The pastor was found innocent by a church court but was not appointed because he could not provide child abuse clearance verification. Because the pastor remained an elder in good standing, he was required to be appointed, the council said in Decision 1105, and could only be deprived of an appointment by the fair process described in the Discipline. A concurring opinion signed by council members Angela Brown, Kathy Austin-Mahle and Susan Henry-Crowe supported the decision but expressed unease at the lack of a "clear, expunged record" that would compromise the pastor's "ministry, appointability and relationship with the annual conference." Belton Joyner wrote a dissenting opinion stating, "I believe that an annual conference can establish requirements for professional responsibilities other than those delineated in Paragraph 334.2 and thus create additional conditions for continued eligibility."

Offered a mixed ruling on an item from the California-Pacific Conference that asked multiple questions related to procedures used to discontinue the probationary membership of a transitional deacon. The council said that a hearing before a board of ordained ministry's executive committee does not constitute an appeal but is part of the board's process. The council also said that Paragraph 318 of the 1996 Discipline, which was being used in this matter, calls for a three-fourths vote of the board of ordained ministry, but only a simple majority vote in the clergy session. On a third question, the council said that it did not have jurisdiction.

Affirmed a decision of law by Baltimore-Washington Conference Bishop John R. Schol that nominations for the board of ordained ministry come from the presiding bishop after consultation with the board's chairperson, according to Paragraph 634.1a, and cannot be offered from the floor of annual conference or other sources.

The Judicial Council is scheduled to meet next April 22-25 in Denver.

– By Neil Caldwell; UMNS Daily Digest; October 28, 2008. Neil Caldwell is editor of the Virginia United Methodist Advocate magazine and covers the Judicial Council for United Methodist News Service.

* * * * *

Oh Lord, please make me the person that my dog thinks I am. – Seen on a bumper sticker.

Global Outlook

It is good to seek the "golden hours," the golden moments of our lives. They can slip away all too easily and become "if-only's." So capture them as they come by. They are worthy of being seized. And, once seized, these frozen moments are worthy of our repeated visits. They stay there, soft in line and bathed in a gentle glow, engraved in their twilight time.

- Dee Appel, in A Heart Awake to Beauty (Sisters, Oregon: Multnoma Publishers), 2001, p. 50.

* * * * *

India. Christians continue to express concern over violence in India

Christians gathering in New Delhi have promised not to forget the persecution their Indian brothers and sisters have suffered in recent months. The killing of a Hindu nationalist leader on Aug. 23 sparked waves of anti-Christian mob violence in the state of Orissa, displacing tens of thousands from their homes and causing nearly 50 deaths. Thousands of homes and scores of churches were burned. "It's a heart-wrenching story of interreligious conflict," said the Rev. W. Douglas Mills. *UMNS Daily Digest*; November 20, 2008.

* * * * *

Heaven is full of answers for which no one has ever bothered to ask.

– Cameron Thompson