

# The Monthly Update

January 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald has said, "I sometimes think that the greatest of all sins is ingratitude." While I disagree in that I believe the failure to tell someone else about the saving relationship with Jesus Christ is the greatest sin, I do believe that ingratitude does constitute a grave omission and lack of "other-centeredness" and preoccupation with self.

Your response to our appeal for support has helped us close the shortfall we are experiencing in our expected publication of *Stewardship Perspectives – 2007*. Along with this the dual expenses of publishing our "Monthly Update" and *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* can be financially taxing on our ministry.

There are many fine causes that seek our support financially – but by supporting what we do, you are ensuring that there is a voice speaking out in defense of the orthodox Christian faith and calling aberrant leadership into question. Both your financial participation and your prayerful support in the ministry of Concerned Methodists are very reassuring. The finances enable us to provide needed assistance to churches and individuals; continue publishing our information to over 20,000 people, families, and congregations; maintaining our website; preparing studies; and participating in conferences important to our mission. Your prayers are of crucial importance in helping us win the victories we have and, hopefully, shall win in 2008.

I am particularly grateful for those of you who have supported our ministry and efforts to communicate information with the people called "Methodist" – those whom we find ourselves called to serve. Although at times it does seem to be very challenging to us here at Concerned Methodists, we are deeply mindful of your support and sense the prayers offered up on our behalf. From those of us involved in this ministry, may I say a heartfelt "Thank you"?

As we go into this next year we are looking forward to the 2008 General Conference to be held in Fort Worth, Texas. We are hopeful that the right actions will be taken there that will ensure the future health of our denomination in its fight over the issues that divide us and reduce our effectiveness for the Lord. The "flag issue" of sexuality issues and those of illegal immigration and political activism to include the war in Iraq are those which are in the forefront of the battles in our denomination. Sadly, the issue of true evangelism is far in the background – while it should be the driving force in compassionate Christian action behind all that we do.

These are difficult days in the life of our denomination. Again, I thank you for continuing to pray for those of us in Concerned Methodists and for standing with us financially in this continuing battle for the heart and soul of our United Methodist Church.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

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## January 2008 Update

### Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

*If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unsprayed for.*

*– Charles Spurgeon. Received in a newsletter from Walt and Millie Wilson, Galax, Virginia.*

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#### The Good Stuff

+ ***Congress on Evangelism 2008*** – A great way to begin the New Year would be to join hundreds of other United Methodists for the Congress on Evangelism 2008 Conference set for Savannah, Georgia, January 2-5, 2008. With the theme "Spirit of Faith Come Down," the Congress will focus on the great contribution of Charles Wesley's hymnody to

world Methodism. The Congress is sponsored by the Council on Evangelism, the Foundation for Evangelism, and the General Board of Discipleship.

- Dr. James Heidinger II, Good News Perspective, No. 9, December 18, 2007. [www.CongressOnEvangelism.org](http://www.CongressOnEvangelism.org).

#### + ***Christian Courage for Today – Christians standing firm for the Lord***

- A Sudanese Christian boy has his knees and feet nailed to a board and he is left to die. When rescued he says he forgives the man who did this because Jesus was also nailed and forgave him.
- A Vietnamese pastor is sentenced to two years in prison. When he is offered an early release, he declines stating that he has a group of new Believers in the prison he has to disciple.
- A Colombian missionary is kidnapped and told she only has two hours to live. She tells her captors that if she only has two hours to live, she wants to spend it telling them about Jesus.

The persecution of Christians around the world is a tragic reality. Our brothers and sisters are beaten and tortured simply for their faith in Jesus Christ. And some pay with the ultimate price. However, in the midst of this persecution is some of the boldest stories of faith you will ever read. Now you can learn about today's persecuted church, discover practical ways you can help, and be encouraged by their incredible stories with a free subscription to The Voice of the Martyrs monthly newsletter. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.persecution.com/>.

[Note: This is a very worthwhile ministry which I have supported for many years. - AOM]

#### **Of Interest**

##### + ***Britain celebrates Charles Wesley's life, legacy***

London - Three-hundred years to the day since prolific hymn writer, poet and priest Charles Wesley was born, worshippers gathered at St. Marylebone Parish Church to celebrate the life of a man whose 7,000-plus hymn legacy has shaped Christian worship ever since. Like his older brother John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, Charles was ordained in the Church of England and remained an Anglican all of his life. When he died in 1788, he was buried in the St. Marylebone's churchyard.

At the Dec. 18 evening service at the church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rt. Rev. Rowan Williams, and the president of the British Methodist Church, the Rev. Martyn Atkins, were among those who acknowledged Wesley's substantial contributions. "We thank God for the life and ministry of Charles Wesley, for his winsome, passionate, integrated and authentic faith, for his infectious love of Christ," Atkins said during a sermon. Atkins called Wesley a model Christian who shared his faith through songs that "touch eternity and the deepest place in our spirits."

The service was jointly organized by both St. Marylebone and the Hinde Street Methodist Church. The two congregations recently signed a covenant agreeing to work together more closely.

##### **Year-long remembrance**

The worship service closed a year of events honoring the tercentenary anniversary of Wesley's birth, ranging from an ecumenical Evensong in Westminster Abbey to academic conferences to BBC radio and television programs about Wesley. A series of Advent programs currently airing on the BBC's prestigious Radio 4 network has taken its theme and title from the great Wesley hymn "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus."

In October, the BBC television's flagship religious program "Songs of Praise" aired two hour-long programs about Charles Wesley and his influence. Producer David Taviner noted that for a television series with a 46-year history of celebrating hymn-singing, Wesley is a central figure. "On Songs of Praise, hymns are our bread and butter," he said, "so Charles Wesley is right up there for us." Taviner, who also is a Methodist local preacher, said he wanted to make a program that helped a broad range of television viewers get to know the man who gave the world "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," "Oh, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" and other beloved hymns. "Three-hundred years later, Charles Wesley's impact is still felt worldwide," Taviner told United Methodist News Service. "Brought up in rural Lincolnshire at the back end of nowhere, it's amazing what (Charles and his brother, John) did during with their lives and all those they have affected."

##### **Christian troubadour**

One person interviewed for "Songs of Praise" was S T Kimbrough, an American scholar, musician and performer. With his one-man show "Sweet Singer," Kimbrough has brought Charles Wesley to life for audiences around the world. Wesley, he explained, was "a man who sought above all else to live in the presence of God every day of his life."

Daily Bible study and prayer, meditation, fasting and taking part in the Eucharist were all part of the spiritual discipline that gave birth to Wesley's prolific hymn-writing, according to Kimbrough. Wesley understood that hymns establish bridges among people; that they could not only "convict but also bring people to Christ." What many do not know is that Wesley did not confine his poetic skills to religious hymns and poems.

Regarding his relationship with his brother, Kimbrough added that although Charles and John were very different men, they complemented each other. "Charles was the troubadour, and John is the guy carrying the bag of songs, editing them, collecting the tunes, doing all the organizational stuff. Charles is curves and ellipses, while John is all straight lines and angles," he said.

##### **A lyrical faith**

Like Kimbrough, Donald Saliers, the William Cannon Professor of Theology and Worship, Emeritus at Emory University, believes

that the two brothers really were "yin and yang" to each other; very contrasting in terms of their sensibilities. "Charles' hymns and poems are full of both great doctrinal integrity and biblical imagination, but also great affection, emotional fervor and deep piety," observed Saliers. He believes Wesley's greatest contribution is in his hymn texts which "awaken that lyrical side of faith and doctrine and make it accessible." Saliers cites the phrase "lost in wonder love and praise" from the last line of Wesley's hymn "Love Divine All Loves Excelling" as an excellent example of his lyrical theological sensibilities at work. They are also words that Saliers takes as a motto for his own personal vocation. "Charles Wesley gave us a lyrical faith and doctrine and, above all else, a hidden imaginative force that is still carried in the body of the Methodist and Wesleyan family," he said. "If we can recover it and practice it, it will make all the difference in a time of literalism, dullness and cultural silliness."

- By Kathleen LaCamera, United Methodist News Service (UMNS); London {628}; Dec. 19, 2007.

#### **+ *United Methodists looked outward, inward, in '07 – A Summary***

[Note how many of the priorities reflect a far-left agenda with advocacy against the interests of the United States (supportive of illegal immigration and against the Iraq War) and the traditional Christian faith. In all of this, where was the emphasis on an evangelistic zeal to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? It is conspicuously missing.]

A crucial concern for justice has arisen in the Philippines. United Methodists continue to speak out about the estimated 800 extrajudicial killings and abductions that have occurred there since President Gloria Arroyo took office in 2001. One of the most powerful United Methodist voices in 2007 was that of Philippine Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno, who held a summit in Manila on the extrajudicial killings, putting a spotlight on the nation's human rights crisis. The summit included representatives from the judicial, executive and legislative branches of government, as well as scholars, members of the legal profession, the militant left, religious leaders and media. On Sept. 25, the Supreme Court in Manila approved a Puno-supported court rule on the writ of amparo, under which the military or police cannot simply deny involvement in abductions or extrajudicial killings. Rather, they also must prove they are not involved and, under court order, open their detention facilities for inspection.

#### Withdrawal from Iraq

In November, the bishops of The United Methodist Church declared war "incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ" and called on leaders of all nations to begin an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The bishops also urged against deploying additional troops to Iraq and against establishing permanent military bases in the Middle Eastern country. In addition to calling for the immediate safe and full withdrawal of troops, the bishops called on the United States and other coalition force nations to initiate and support a plan for the reconstruction of Iraq, giving strong priority to the humanitarian and social needs of the Iraqi people. They urged increased support for veterans of the Iraq war and all wars. The resolution is the council's latest action questioning the Iraq war. In 2005, the bishops urged U.S. President George W. Bush, who is United Methodist, to create a timeline to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq. Among the United Methodists joining an Oct. 8 interfaith fast for peace and an end to the war in Iraq was Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, who noted earlier that his agency "has been the most resolute and consistent voice of opposition to the war" within the denomination.

#### Virginia Tech, Jena Six

The Wesley Foundation of Virginia Tech University became a safe haven for students immediately after a deadly shooting spree there on April 16 - which left 33 dead and 15 wounded - and a spiritual hub for grief and prayer as the campus community began to come to grips with the tragedy. In response to the shooting, the Board of Church and Society also renewed the denomination's call for governments around the world to ban ownership by the general public of handguns, assault weapons, automatic weapon conversion kits and weapons that cannot be detected by traditional metal-detection devices.

Both Church and Society and the Women's Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries called for justice in the case of the "Jena Six," a group of six black students facing criminal prosecution in the beating of a white student in Jena, La. When

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tens of thousands of protesters showed up in Jena on Sept. 20, most businesses closed, but the predominantly white Nolley Memorial United Methodist Church remained open and provided hospitality to some of the primarily African-American marchers.

#### Immigration concerns

In a June 19 letter to the U.S. Senate, seven United Methodist agencies and organizations opposed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 and called for "genuine reform" that would allow immigrant families to "achieve their American dreams." The groups said Senate Bill 1348 "fails to achieve" any of the goals advocated by the church and other proponents of genuine comprehensive immigration reform. These goals include reunification of families, a fair earned pathway to citizenship and humanitarian border policies that maintain the civil liberties of all people. The bill failed to pass. Elvira Arellano, an illegal immigrant and member of Adalberto UMC in Chicago, was arrested in California and deported to Mexico on Aug. 19 - four days after she left the Chicago church where she had received sanctuary for a year with her 8-year-old son, Saul, a U.S. citizen. Arellano announced during an Aug. 15 news conference and immigration rally at Adalberto that, after several weeks of fasting and praying, she had decided to leave the church and speak out for immigration reform. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, episcopal leader of the United Methodist Northern Illinois Annual (regional) Conference, said the conference has supported Arellano and the church for the past year.

### Providing disaster relief

Throughout 2007, the United Methodist Committee on Relief continued to fund long-term recovery projects related to 2005's Hurricane Katrina and the South Asian tsunami which occurred at the end of 2004. At a special Katrina summit in September, United Methodist volunteers from across the United States were welcomed, thanked and challenged to keep coming to the Gulf Coast. More than 63,000 United Methodist volunteers from 42 states, two foreign countries and 60 annual (regional) conferences have come to the aid of the Gulf Coast since Hurricane Katrina stormed ashore on Aug. 29, 2005. United Methodist bishops also distributed \$2 million in February to assist Gulf Coast churches and pastors affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. An additional \$4.7 million in aid to economically vulnerable Sri Lankans still finding their footing after the tsunami was approved in April by UMCOR directors.

The agency was called to assist in new, smaller emergencies throughout the year, working in tandem with annual conferences. They responded to tornados that struck central Florida and rural Arkansas in February; Alabama in March and Kansas in May. After a powerful tornado roared through Enterprise, Ala., on March 1, killing nine people, including eight high school students, Enterprise First United Methodist Church welcomed hundreds of youth for a special worship service to remember their dead and injured classmates and begin the emotional process of healing. Another church near the high school offered hot meals to storm victims, relief workers and school employees. Churches also responded to flooding that plagued parts of the United States from mid-June through August. UM response to the October wildfires in southern California is occurring primarily in the San Diego area, with a focus on secondary victims of the fires. International relief efforts extended beyond the tsunami-related programs. As part of a continuing collaboration, UMCOR and Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio, began a four-year relief project to reestablish water supplies and improve sanitation in refugee camps in Darfur, Sudan. Since 2005, Ginghamburg Church has raised more than \$1.8 million for its work with UMCOR in Sudan.

UMCOR's partnership agreement with Muslim Aid, the London-based global relief and development agency, allows the two agencies to work together on peace building and poverty reducing programs around the world. The partnership was signed June 26 at the House of Commons.

### U.S. membership down, giving up

In an attempt to focus the mission and ministry of the church at the dawn of the 21st century, the denomination has selected four areas of focus - leadership development, congregational growth, global health and ministry with the poor. The areas of focus have been affirmed by church leadership at all levels, including the Council of Bishops, the Connectional Table, agency boards and many annual (regional) conferences. "This is Our Story," a 2007 report from the denomination's Council on Finance and Administration, showed the church's membership is growing throughout the world but shrinking in the United States. And a shrinking U.S. church base means a smaller impact on society, according to a denominational task force on funding patterns within the church. Statistics for 2005, the latest available, show worldwide professing and baptized membership at 13.75 million in more than 50 countries, compared with 11.35 million in 1995. U.S. professing membership is 7,995,429, compared with 8,075,010 the previous year, a decline of nearly 1 percent. Membership has decreased by more than 1.9 members, or 19 percent, since 1974. The church gave almost \$5.9 billion during 2005 - representing an increase in giving for the 15th straight year when adjusted for inflation - and data indicates the average income of a United Methodist is growing faster than in the general population. To stimulate membership growth, the United Methodist Board of Discipleship has organized a strategy team on new congregational development. The goal of "Path One" is to start 650 new congregations by 2012. Other goals include doubling the number of young people serving as pastors and church leaders, and expanding ministries with the poor, according to denominational leaders during an April 17 "town hall" teleconference.

### Reflecting church's diversity

Three March gatherings reflected on the diversity found within The United Methodist Church. In the first meeting of its kind, leaders of the Korean American United Methodist community gathered in Englewood, N.J., to share celebrations and challenges and develop a vision to embolden their ministry in the United States. There are approximately about Korean-American United Methodists, with 310 churches in 40 states. A conference on women in Methodism, "Struggle, Faith and Vision: Celebrating Women in the United

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Methodist Tradition," was held at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn., where a new research library was dedicated to the study of organized lay women in mission in the Methodist tradition. United Methodism's African-American caucus, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, celebrated four decades of advocacy for racial justice and inclusion by challenging itself to develop ministries that make a difference in people's lives. More than 500 people attending the event heard speakers recount the genesis and growth of the nearly 5,000-member caucus and list its challenges and possibilities for the future.

### Issues of sexuality

A gay man who had been denied membership in 2005 at South Hill (Va.) United Methodist Church was accepted in March by the new pastor, the Rev. Barry Burkholder, through transfer of membership from a Baptist church. The denial of membership by the previous pastor prompted controversy across the denomination on the issues of homosexuality and pastoral authority and led to a series of rulings on the case by the denomination's highest court. In Seattle, the Rev. Kathleen Weber disclosed her homosexuality during a Sept. 30 worship service at Blaine Memorial United Methodist Church, where she serves as associate pastor. A commissioned candidate for ministry, she is on track to be ordained next year. The United Methodist Church, while affirming that both homosexuals and heterosexuals are people of "sacred worth," does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers the practice "incompatible with Christian teaching," according to the Book of Discipline, the denomination's book of law. Church law

specifically prohibits the appointment of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" as clergy.

In October, the United Methodist Judicial Council upheld a bishop's decision that a pastor who changed gender from female to male remains eligible to serve the church. The council stated that it was not ruling on whether changing gender is a chargeable offense or violates minimum standards set by the church's legislative body, the General Conference. Rather, the court said "a clergyperson's standing cannot be terminated without administrative or juridical action having occurred and all fair process being accorded." Because the Rev. Drew Phoenix, pastor of St. John's United Methodist Church in Baltimore, is a clergy member in good standing, the ruling means Phoenix will continue to serve his church. But the subject of whether transgender clergy are eligible for appointment is likely to be among issues debated when General Conference convenes next April in Fort Worth, Texas.

#### Africa rising

In September, a three-day African Bishops Roundtable brought together 12 active and retired United Methodist bishops to the campus of Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The bishops, representing congregations from west, east, central and southern Africa, developed strategies against poverty and committed to make the university a partner in their efforts. Africa University itself celebrated its 13th graduating class in June by awarding 282 degrees to students from 15 African countries and seeing its first recipients from two new master's degree programs. The university plans to open its first satellite campus in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2008. The project is a collaborative effort with the Methodist University of São Paulo, Brazil, and the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Other proposed sites are in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

A new 300-watt community radio station, located at the denomination's Liberia Annual Conference headquarters, was dedicated during a March 3 service attended by United Methodist bishops of the West Africa annual conferences.

The Rev. Kefas Kane Mavula was elected and appointed bishop of The United Methodist Church in Nigeria on March 3, his 40th birthday. Bishop Ntambo Nkulu Ntanda, 59, who leads the North Katanga Area in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was elected to his country's senate in January. He is also the chancellor of Africa University.

#### Malaria campaign

The Nothing But Nets campaign started the year with a \$3 million challenge grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, announced Jan. 4, for the purchase and distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria in Africa. The campaign's global launch also occurred that day at the NBA store in New York. The grant will match contributions raised by the campaign's partners: The people of The United Methodist Church, the United Nations Foundation, NBA Cares, Sports Illustrated and others. The United Nations Foundation also has said it wants to work with United Methodists on an initiative focusing on the diseases of poverty: malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. At least 200,000 families in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, will receive malaria-preventing mosquito nets from the people of The United Methodist Church. The \$1.5 million project was announced by Bishop Janice Riggle Huie of Houston during the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in New York in September. The church's Texas Annual (regional) Conference, where Huie is resident bishop, plans to raise \$1 million by December 2008.

#### Other significant events in 2007:

Dr. James W. Holsinger Jr., 68, the United Methodist nominee for U.S. surgeon general, testified July 12 before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. Questioned about his views on homosexuality, he said his 1991 paper on the topic was written for a denominational committee and does not reflect his position today. The Senate had not voted on his nomination as of the beginning of December.

United Methodists in Maryland joined religious leaders across the state in opposing the governor's proposal for state-owned slot machines. In September, Gov. Martin O'Malley, a Democrat, proposed legalizing slots as one measure to close the state's \$1.7 billion shortfall.

Some 6,200 youth and youth leaders from four continents attended the July 11-15 Youth 2007 event in Greensboro, N.C., designed to build disciples by encouraging young people to live out their faith in ways they might not have thought possible.

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A protest against locating the George W. Bush presidential library at Southern Methodist University took the form of an online petition started by the Rev. Andrew Weaver, which had gathered more than 11,000 signatures by November. But 10 of the 11 active bishops of the denomination's South Central Jurisdiction affirmed the SMU board's process to bring the Bush library to the campus.

After two years of research, a United Methodist task force in the New England Annual (regional) Conference urged its members, churches and investment managers to divest from 20 companies identified as supporting Israel's occupation of Palestinian land.

A March 1-4 consultation in Panama City, Panama, focused on the relationship between The United Methodist Church and independent Methodist churches in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Directors of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, through action of the personnel committee, abruptly dismissed the Rev. R. Randy Day, the mission agency's chief executive, Oct. 9. Retired Bishop Felton May became the interim chief executive.

The Rev. Sam Dixon was elected to lead the United Methodist Committee on Relief; Harriett Olson is the new top executive of the Women's Division, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, and Erin Hawkins became the head of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.

- By Linda Bloom, UMNS; New York {#599}; Dec. 4, 2007.

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

“Dates like September 11 and December 7 conjure up vivid memories of national tragedies. So also should January 22 -- thousands of times over.” This was quoted in the OneNewsNow.com; December 18, 2007 news release. I could not agree more fully. I did not fully comprehend the reality of this tragedy until about two years after I became a Christian and saw a videotape of the remains of an aborted baby. Until then I had bought into the common verbiage that a woman’s “choice” just removed “unwanted tissue” within her. After viewing the after-effects of the abortion, I could not help but say, “That is a little baby!” The reality of abortion is the killing of unborn babies, the least of God’s children who are unable to defend themselves. This is a national tragedy and deeply grievous to God. We must pray for its end. - AOM

### **(UM) General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (GCCUIC).**

#### ***Unity Commission Deals with Major Changes in Ecumenical World***

This was not just your ordinary fall meeting of the GCCUIC when it met in Birmingham December 4-6. For starters, the Commission dismissed its General Secretary, the Rev. Larry Pickens, who was not re-elected for 2008. Bishop Albert “Fritz” Mutti has been appointed as the commission’s interim leader. (This is the second major UM agency head not to be re-hired. At the fall meeting of the General Board of Global Ministries, its chief head, Rev. Randy Day, was not re-hired.)

After the vote in the commission meeting not to re-hire Pickens, three members from the historic African-American Methodist Churches—the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the AME Zion, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) —unhappy with the process used in Pickens’ dismissal, left the meeting.

The Commission also expressed concerns about the health of the National Council of Churches, which is undergoing another round of staff reductions and restructuring because of budget deficits due to decreased financial support from a number of denominational members, although it does have several million dollars in reserve funds. Bishop William Oden acknowledged the economic burden placed on United Methodists as some of the other denominational members have decreased financial support to the council because of their own budget constraints, but called for a recommitment to the organization. “The United Methodist Church is really at the core of the work of the National Council of Churches,” he said. [Note: This is an interesting observation and, I believe, an indictment. The NCC has a troubled past and present.] The focus and future of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) was also discussed. When the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) was reformed in 2002 to become CUIC, the nine member denominations identified “eliminating racism” as their top moral agenda item. However, the African Methodist Episcopal and AME Zion Churches have pulled out of Churches Uniting in Christ, noting concerns that participants in CUIC have changed the major focus from eradicating racism to agreement on the issue of historic episcopate (belief in an unbroken line of bishops to the earliest days of the Christian Church).

United Methodists will also be considering our involvement with Christian Churches Together, a new ecumenical group of which the United Methodist Church is currently a provisional member. Again, the AME Church and AME Zion Church have chosen not to join Christian Churches Together.

- Dr. James Heidinger II, Good News Perspective, Dec. 18, 2007. Also, UMNS #603, Dec. 6, & #613, Dec. 11, 2007.

### **Illegal Immigration.**

+ ***Study: Illegal alien population may be as high as 38 million.*** A new report finds the Homeland Security Department “grossly underestimates” the number of illegal aliens living in the U.S. - OneNewsNow.com; October 5, 2007.

#### ***+ Hispanic group decries hostile climate for immigrants***

In an open letter to United Methodists, a church-related organization is declaring that a hostile U.S. climate toward immigrants has resulted in “millions of Latinos and Latinas living in fear, threat and intimidation.” The letter from Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans-- known as MARCHA--calls upon United Methodists to remember the plight of immigrants this Christmas and beyond. “Latinos face daily suspicion of their

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citizenship and rights as residents of our communities,” the letter says. “They are subjected to racial profiling and suspicion as they seek employment, housing, or simply driving down the street.” Requiring Latino families “to prove their citizenship in order to rent a house, to be employed or enroll their children in school” is nothing less than “legalized racism,” in MARCHA’s opinion.

MARCHA is urging United Methodists to oppose this treatment, as well as anti-immigrant [Read “illegal immigrant”] and anti-Latino laws enacted by cities and states, and to support those subjected to such treatment.

- By Linda Bloom, UMNS, New York {630}; Dec. 19, 2007.

### **Islam.**

#### ***+ 100+ DOD officials attend Ramadan event at Pentagon***

A Pentagon advisor and national defense analyst is concerned that more than 100 Department of Defense (DOD) employees recently attended a Ramadan celebration at the Pentagon, in which two of the speakers had at least fringe connections to radical Islam. Lt. Col. Bob Maginnis (USA-Ret.) says he got wind of the October 1 event when he received an invitation on his DOD computer. The former infantry officer says that was the first problem. “The person who sent it

basically put the tenants of Islam [in the message] -- there are five -- and as far as I am concerned that's the same as sharing the gospel of Christ on a government email server, which of course is frowned upon and considered ethically unlawful by the federal government," says Maginnis. He says his second problem had to do with two of the guest speakers at the actual event. One was an imam accused of having radical Wahabbi material in his mosque near Dulles Airport; the other was the vice president of the Islamic Society of North America -- an un-indicted co-conspirator in the USA v. Holy Land Foundation case. "The coziness in which certain Defense Department officials are showing toward Islamic groups that are on the fringe of radicalism is contrary, I think, to our best national security interests and certainly suggests complicity in endorsing something that they may not be fully aware of," warns Maginnis. According to Maginnis, the DOD observance is only the tip of a giant iceberg. The following day, the U.S. House of Representatives passed overwhelmingly a resolution recognizing the beginning of the Islamic holiday of Ramadan and commending Muslims in the U.S. and around the world for their faith. - By Chad Groening, OneNewsNow.com; October 5, 2007.

+ **Canadian TV news outlet omits Muslim details from murder story**

Canadian police are investigating a murder in which a Muslim father reportedly beat his 16-year-old daughter to death because she would not wear the traditional head covering for Islamic women, the hijab. But at least one Canadian news outlet found that information too hot to handle. Other Canadian news services reported that Muhammad Parvez is Muslim and that friends of his 16-year-old daughter, Aqsa Parvez, said her father beat her because she would not wear the hijab. But the for-profit Canadian television network CTV alluded to those facts this way: "Friends tell CTV News the girl came from a religious background. They add she had trouble at home and recently ran away. Friends say the fight was over the girl's choice of dress." Tim Graham with the Media Research Center says the CTV report seems almost intentionally confusing. "From that perspective, it could be, she could be a Methodist and she was wearing a miniskirt," Graham responded. "You just have no idea from this report what it's really about." [Note: News censorship is dangerous.]

- By Jeff Johnson, OneNewsNow.com; December 19, 2007.

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*If a man loses reverence for any part of life, he will lose his reverence for all life. – Albert Schweitzer*

**Global Outlook**

*The quickest way to double your money is to fold it and put it back in your pocket. - Will Rogers*

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**Zimbabwe. Africa University acts to keep staff in face of weak economy**

Mutare, Zimbabwe - Africa University officials are taking steps to keep teachers and other staff at a time when many professionals are leaving Zimbabwe because of the country's struggling economy.

[Note: Again, this is really no surprise. When our denominational officials decided to support Robert Mugabe, a Marxist, over and against the Methodist Bishop Muzorewa, it was a stand against our denominational heritage and in support of a failed political and economic ideology. This was regrettable then, and we are seeing its repercussions today. – AOM]

- By Linda Green, UMNS; Nashville, Tenn. {609}; Dec. 10, 2007.

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*We fear men so much, because we fear God so little. One fear cures another.*

*– William Gurnall, Received in a newsletter from Walt and Millie Wilson, Galax, Virginia.*