

The Monthly Update

August 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update is a continuation of annual conference summaries from the Methodist Church around the world. In the past three issues (May – July), we had expressed concern about amendments to be voted at annual conference meetings that would separate our denomination here in the United States from our overseas church. We had asked you to pray that they would be defeated. We then went on to outline some of the efforts we had expended to do just that – defeat these “separation amendments” that would have ruptured our world-wide connection. I then included some statistics that showed that defeat may happen. We have included in this Update more statistic to show this trend is continuing. I don’t want to be premature in proclaiming victory but I am very optimistic. We are happy for the part we expended in this effort.

We also appreciate the notes we receive: From the family of a retired United Methodist pastor in Alabama, we have, “He would have appreciated your book, and all the good research you’ve done” (regarding *On the Brink*). From El Paso, Texas we have, “God Bless you for seeing the mission through!” From the Western North Carolina Conference we have, “Thank you for all you’re doing for the Lord and for our church.” From Virginia, “Thank you for your efforts in regard to the conference votes.” From Tennessee, “Thanks for sending the book and for all of the work that you do.” We have received similar notes from supporters in Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, and other parts of the country.

From the bottom of my heart I want to thank each of you for your prayers and your generous contributions to help reduce our financial debt from the effort we had put forth.

But above everything else and all of the other workers and ministries who have helped to make this happen, I would like to thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He above everyone else deserves our praise and thanks. I would ask that each of you lift up a prayer to Him and express your appreciation for what He is bringing about! The battle is assuredly not over and there is much to be done. And we have not paid all of our bills, but we have the faith and confidence that they will be and have no worries in that area.

Please continue to pray about the issues that are affecting our United Methodist Church and our country. Both have served the Lord in spreading His word throughout the world. Let us hope that they will continue to do so in the future.

I thank you.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

August 2009 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

When you Read the Bible Through

*I supposed I knew my Bible, reading piecemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew, now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah, certain Psalms (the twenty-third),
Twelfth of Romans, First of Proverbs – Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
But I found that thorough reading was a different thing to do,
and the way was unfamiliar when I read the Bible through.
You who like to play at Bible, dip and dabble, here and there,
just before you kneel, weary, and yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the Crown of Writings as you treat no other book –
Just a paragraph disjointed, just a crude impatient look –
Try a worthier procedure, try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture when you read the Bible through!*

– Amos R. Wells

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Of Interest

+ A Brief Update: Annual Conference Votes on Proposed Constitutional Amendments

All 62 U.S. annual conferences have now voted on the 32 proposed amendments to the church's constitution. Fifty of those conferences, representing at least 88% of the total votes cast in the US and approximately 82% of the votes worldwide, have publicly shared with all United Methodists their vote tallies on the proposed amendments. At least 24 of the proposed amendments have not been ratified. For a proposed amendment to be ratified, 66.67% of all the worldwide annual conference delegates present and voting must vote yes. Here are the overall results from those 50 annual conferences on the most contentious proposed amendments:

Proposed amendment 1, which would have dramatically liberalized membership standards, has failed to receive two-thirds support in 37 of the 50 annual conferences reporting results. For the 50 reporting actual tallies, the overall results are as follows:

Proposed amendment 1: 18,248 (49%) Yes / 19,349 (51%) No

The 23 proposed amendments on the World Wide Nature of the UM Church were soundly defeated in 38 of the 50 annual conferences posting results. Five of the 23 proposed amendments would have authorized the creation of regional conferences. Here are the total results from the 48 annual conferences that have reported vote tallies for those five amendments:

Proposed amendment 4: 14,091 (38%) Yes / 23,383 (62%) No

Proposed amendment 10: 14,138 (38%) Yes / 23,520 (62%) No

Proposed amendment 13: 14,373 (38%) Yes / 23,281 (62%) No

Proposed amendment 23: 14,018 (37%) Yes / 23,604 (63%) No

Proposed amendment 26: 13,949 (38%) Yes / 23,247 (62%) No

Proposed amendment 19, which would extend to provisional members and certain local pastors the right to vote for clergy delegates to the General and jurisdictional conferences, has received substantial support. Based on the total number of ballots cast in prior years, when proposed constitutional amendments were considered, and the heightened interest in the current issues, proposed amendment 19 needs to secure only 30% of the approximately 9,000-10,000 ballots still outstanding. Here are the total tallies from the 50 annual conferences that have willingly shared voting information with the worldwide UM connection:

Proposed amendment 19: 28,868 (78%) Yes / 8,345 (22%) No

In 2005, the last time annual conferences worldwide voted on a constitutional matter, there were approximately 2,000 total votes cast in the central conferences. Given the heightened interest in the current proposed amendments and the dramatic growth in many annual conferences beyond the U.S., it seems possible that as many as 3,000 to 4,000 votes may come from the central conferences this year. Worldwide, approximately 45,000 to 46,000 annual conference delegates will have voted on the proposed amendments before The Council of Bishops meets in November to officially certify the results.

– *The Good News Magazine website. <http://www.goodnewsmag.org/news/17julyconstitutionalamendments.html>*

+ **Mainline clergy divided on gay, lesbian issues**

A quarter of United Methodist clergy support same-sex marriages and less than a third back gay and lesbian clergy, a study has found. In a survey of clergy from seven mainline denominations, senior United Methodist clergy were among the strongest advocates of traditional church policies on marriage and ordination, ranking below only their colleagues from American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. The 2008 Mainline Protestant Clergy Voices Survey, conducted by Washington-based Public Religion Research, found substantial support for same-sex marriages and homosexual clergy in the Episcopal Church and United Church of Christ, while the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are divided on gay and lesbian issues. The random survey of 2,658 senior clergy from the seven denominations has an overall margin of error of plus or minus 2 percent, according to the recently released report.

“United Methodist clergy are supportive of some rights for gay and lesbian Americans,” said Robert P. Jones, president of Public Religion Research, which conducted the survey. “Strong majorities of United Methodist clergy support hate crimes laws and workplace protections, and a plurality support adoption rights. On the other hand, United Methodist clergy are evenly split on legal rights for same-sex couples, with 51 percent supporting either marriage or civil unions.”

The study found there are significant “and sometimes stark differences” across denominational lines on gay and lesbian issues. United Methodists and American Baptist clergy were found to be generally less supportive on issues relating to marriage and ordination “rights,” the study said. While two-thirds of United Church of Christ clergy support same-sex marriage, only one in four United Methodist respondents favored the practice. Seventy-two percent of Episcopal clergy backed the ordination of gays and lesbians, compared to 32 percent of United Methodist pastors. Eighty percent of Evangelical Lutheran clergy support gays and lesbians as lay leaders, compared to 51 percent of United Methodist leaders.

“United Methodist clergy are more highly concentrated in the South, 47 percent vs. 32 percent of all mainline clergy,” Jones said. “The South is the most socially, politically and culturally conservative area of the country. Clergy, like all Americans, are influenced by their regional cultures.”

There were some areas of strong agreement. Nearly all mainline clergy said gays and lesbians are welcome in their churches, and 79 percent, including 69 percent of United Methodists, said homosexuals should have all the same rights and privileges as other Americans. Ninety-two percent of clergy said they would be responsive to congregation requests for more conversation on gay and lesbian issues, and less than one in 10 said the best approach is “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

However, respondents were evenly divided on the question of whether their congregation risks losing members by talking too much about homosexuality. Fifty-five percent said their congregation has difficulty talking about gay and lesbian issues.

No matter where they stand, a large number of Protestant clergy, just more than half, believe homosexuality is a crisis in the church. Differences in the Episcopal Church have led to major defections and a rift in the Anglican Communion.

The United Methodist Church has consistently affirmed that marriage is between a man and a woman. The 2008 General Conference, the denomination’s top lawmaking body, also voted to keep language in its law book that states, “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” In the survey, a majority of United Methodist clergy, 57 percent, said they adopt a “love the sinner, hate the sin,” approach to distinguish between negative attitudes about homosexuality and the treatment of homosexual persons.

34% of United Methodist clergy strongly agreed the gospel message requires full inclusion of gays and lesbians, compared to 16% who strongly disagreed with the statement. “One key element to realize is that, like all Americans and other mainline clergy, United Methodist clergy attitudes are moving in a more open and affirming direction on gay and lesbian issues,” Jones said. “41% of United Methodist clergy report their views have become more liberal on lesbian and gay issues over the last 10 years, versus only 15% who report their views have become more conservative.”

– *By Kathy L. Gilbert, United Methodist News Service (UMNS); Nashville, Tenn.; June 29, 2009.*
<http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=hwL4KnNlLtH&b=2072531&ct=7161935>

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If you see a bandwagon, it's too late. – Sir James Goldsmith

Annual Conference Reports

Everything comes to those who hustle while he waits. – Thomas A. Edison

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Alabama-West Florida

The 2009 Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference (AWF) was held June 7-10 in Montgomery, Ala., Bishop Paul L. Leeland, presiding over his first annual conference session. Conference members voted on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, four of which (8, 9, 14, 22) received affirmative support. Membership is 149,868, down 63.

– *Meredyth Earnest, as reported in Newscope, June 24, 2009.*

Alaska U. M. Conference

The Alaska Missionary Conference was held June 5-7, in Anchorage. All 32 proposed constitutional amendments from the 2008 General Conference passed. Membership is 3,927, down 143.

– *Rev. Jim Doepken, as reported in Newscope, June 24, 2009.*

Arkansas

The 32 proposed constitutional amendments were a major topic of discussion during the Arkansas Annual Conference, held June 14-17 in Rogers. Members overwhelmingly, in most cases by margins of 4 to 1, rejected the 23 amendments dealing with the formation of regional conferences in the United States and abroad. They also rejected proposed amendments 1 and 2, and approved amendments 8, 9, 15, 17, 19 and 22. Membership is 137,979, down 839.

– *Heather Hahn, as reported in Newscope, July 8, 2009.*

California-Nevada

Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr. presided over the 161st session of the California-Nevada Annual Conference (June 17-20). The body approved all of the 32 proposed constitutional amendments. Membership is 82,229, down 832.

– *Cate Monaghan, as reported in Newscope, July 15, 2009.*

California-Pacific

More than 1,700 laity and clergy from across Southern California, Hawaii, Guam, and Saipan gathered June 17-20 at the University of Redlands in Redlands, Calif., for the 2009 California-Pacific Annual Conference. Members adopted a 2010 apportionment budget of \$12,897,982 representing a .06% decrease from 2009. Membership is 82,405, down 2,411. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– *Dr. Larry R. Hygh Jr., as reported in Newscope, July 22, 2009.*

Central Pennsylvania

A new annual conference will be formed in 2010 which would be formed from the present Central Pennsylvania Conference and two districts of the Wyoming Conference, with the name as the Susquehanna Conference. The 23 proposed constitutional amendments that deal with the worldwide nature of the church passed. Amendment 1 fell short of a two-thirds majority; amendments 2-9 passed. Membership is 136,626, down 4,416.

– *Gerald Wolgemuth, as reported in Newscope, July 1, 2009.*

Central Texas

Bishop Michael Lowry led his first annual conference June 7-10 at White's Chapel UMC, Southlake. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments. Conference membership is 163,793, up 1,282

– *Carolyn Stephens, as reported in Newscope, June 24, 2009.*

Dakotas

The 2009 Dakotas Annual Conference met June 4-6 at Rapid City, S.D. The disaster recovery efforts after last winter/spring's blizzards and floods were never far from attendees' minds. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments. Membership is 39,379, down 889.

– *Jason Currie-Olson, as reported in Newscope, July 8, 2009.*

Desert Southwest

The Desert Southwest Annual Conference convened June 24-28 at the Renaissance Glendale Hotel and Spa in Glendale, Ariz., under the leadership of Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño. The conference passed all of the 32 proposed constitutional amendments with a 2/3 vote except amendments 6, 15, 17, and 19. Membership is 40,082, down 3.2%.

– *Stephen J. Hustedt, as reported in Newscope, July 22, 2009.*

Detroit

The first new church start in the Detroit Annual Conference since 1997 was planted July 1, as the Rev. Michael T. Sawicki began his appointment as the pastor of FaithWay Church in the Tri-City area of Michigan (Bay City, Midland, Saginaw). There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Paul Thomas, as reported in *Newscope*, July 15, 2009.

Eastern Pennsylvania

There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments nor on the conference membership. The report on the annual conference consisted of a review of the “Nothing but Nets” campaign.

– Suzy Keenan, as reported in *Newscope*, July 1, 2009.

Florida

The Florida Annual Conference met June 10-13 with Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker presiding and more than 1,700 members gathered at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach. Votes cast for the proposed constitutional amendments show a majority of Florida Conference members oppose changes to the structure of The UMC and language related to membership. Amendment 2 failed to receive the necessary two-thirds approval, and the remaining six amendments (8, 9, 15, 17, 19, 22) passed with two-thirds approval. Membership is 302,001, down 8,710.

– Tita Parham, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Greater New Jersey

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference with Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar presiding, met at the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia, Penn., May 28-30. Although members voted on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, no report was released. Membership is 94,280, down 2,647.

– Jessica Stenstrom and Jack Shaw, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Holston

With Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. presiding, leaders of 904 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia met as the Holston Annual Conference, June 14-17 at Lake Junaluska, under the "Offer Them Christ" theme for the second time. Most members voted against the 23 proposed constitutional amendments dealing with name and structural changes to The UMC. Most voted in favor of amendments 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 19, and 22, and most voted against amendment 2. About 63% voted against amendment 1. Membership is 166,805, down 326.

– Annette Spence, as reported in *Newscope*, July 15, 2009.

Indiana

More than 2,000 UMs from across Indiana, representing 1,200 congregations, met at the Ball State University campus in Muncie June 25-28 for the first Indiana Annual Conference session. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments. With both former conferences combined, membership is 204,527 down 1,872.

– Daniel R. Gangler, as reported in *Newscope*, July 22, 2009.

Iowa

Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble presided at his first session of the Iowa Annual Conference, held June 4-7 in Ames. The conference voted on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments and approved 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 17, and 19. Membership is 186,590, down 2%.

– Arthur McClanahan, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Kansas East

The Kansas East Annual Conference met June 3-6 at UM-related Baker University in Baldwin City, under the leadership of Bishop Scott Jones. Membership is 71,305, down 760. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Lisa Elliott Diehl, as reported in *Newscope*, July 1, 2009.

Kansas West

Kansas West Annual Conference met May 20-22 in Salina, under the leadership of Bishop Scott Jones. Although the conference voted on the 32 proposed Constitutional Amendments, the results of the votes were not announced. Membership is 82,763, down 961.

– Lisa Elliott Diehl, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Kentucky

The Kentucky Annual Conference met June 3-6 in Covington with Bishop Lindsey Davis presiding.. A majority of those casting ballots voted in favor of proposed constitutional amendments 8, 9, 19, and 22. The results will be submitted to the general church for tabulation with the other annual conferences. Membership is 152,498 people, up 484 people from the previous year.

– Cathy Bruce, as reported in Newscope, June 24, 2009.

Louisiana

More than 1,200 UMs at the Pontchartrain Center, June 7-10, for the 2009 Louisiana Annual Conference. Conference delegates voted on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, approving amendments 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 22, 24, 27, 31.

– Betty Backstrom, as reported in Newscope, June 24, 2009.

Nebraska

The Nebraska Conference met with Missouri bishop Robert Schnase as the keynote speaker. Membership is 79,999, down 1,056. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Kathryn Witte, as reported in Newscope, July 1, 2009.

New Mexico

Conference preacher Bishop Charles Crutchfield, from the Arkansas Annual Conference, reminded members that "sometimes for the church to rise and shine it has to be converted again." The bishop noted how people often get caught up in the desires of the world, not the desires of God. "Have you ever seen anger on the floor of conference?" he asked. "Suppose we converted the anger . . . to a spirit for evangelism." Bishop Crutchfield ended his first sermon of the conference with a challenge. "Now is an opportunity for people of faith to declare what is really important in life. Sometimes the converted need to be converted again." Although members voted on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, there was no report given. Conference membership is 37,720, down 727.

– Karla Abernethy-Thetford, as reported in Newscope, July 22, 2009.

New York

The clergy and laity of the New York Annual Conference gathered at Hofstra University. Conference approved a 2010 conference budget of \$9,060,238, a reduction of about 1% from last year. In voting on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, all but amendment 15 and 6 passed by a two-thirds majority. Membership is 118,367, down 2,037.

– Joanne S. Utley, as reported in Newscope, July 15, 2009.

North Alabama

The North Alabama Conference met June 4-6, at Clear Branch UMC with Bishop William H. Willimon presiding. Proposed constitutional amendments 9, 15, 17, 19, and 22 passed. All other amendments were defeated. Membership is 149,473, down.

– Danette Clifton, as reported in Newscope, June 24, 2009.

North Carolina

Using the quadrennial theme of "A Future with Hope" and this year's emphasis on learning, the North Carolina Conference met in the Greenville Convention Center, June 10-13. Due to difficult economic conditions, the conference connectional table and conference council on finance and administration proposed a reduction of \$367,409 in the previously approved budget for 2010, and the salary for district superintendents in 2010 was set at the 2009 level of \$100,388. The approved amount for the 2010 budget was \$19,590,427. The budget for 2011 was set at \$20,276,199, a 3.5 percent increase over the 2010 budget. Conference members decided to freeze the minimum salary of clergy to the 2009 figure of \$40,319 and \$26,207 for student pastors. Conference trustees reported that construction for a new conference headquarters should be completed in April 2010. Proceeds from the recent sale of the current headquarters building will be used for the construction costs of the new facility. Four proposed constitutional amendments received a majority of yes votes: 8, 9, 19, and 22. Membership is 237,159, up 331.

– Bill Norton, as reported in Newscope, July 1, 2009.

North Central New York

Presiding Bishop Marcus Matthews encouraged members of the North Central New York Annual Conference during his episcopal address to live the "new attitude" that comes with a relationship with Jesus Christ. A zero increase budget totaling \$4,023,763 was adopted for 2010. Membership is 72,234 down 2,249. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Marilyn J. Kasperek, as reported in Newscope, July 15, 2009.

North Georgia

More than 3,000 North Georgia Conference UMs and guests gathered June 16-18 at the Athens Classic Center with Bishop B. Michael Watson presiding. Delegates voted on 32 proposed constitutional amendments, only seven of which passed: 2, 6, 8, 15, 17, 19, and 22. Membership is 354,094, up 4,007.

– Sybil Davidson, as reported in *Newscope*, July 15, 2009.

North Texas

The North Texas Annual Conference (NTC) met June 7-9, at Plano Centre with Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe presiding. Total membership is 158,606, down 106. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Joan G. LaBarr, as reported in *Newscope*, June 24, 2009.

Northern Illinois

The Northern Illinois Conference voted to approve apportionments in 2010 of \$7.09 million, a decrease of 2.5 percent from the 2009 budget. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments. Membership is 101,883, down 1,685.

– Matt Kuzma Jr., as reported in *Newscope*, June 24, 2009.

Northwest Texas

The Northwest Texas Annual Conference met June 10-13 in Midland. Although members voted on 32 proposed constitutional amendments, there was no report released. Northwest Texas membership is 64,213, down 322.

– Karla Abernethy-Thetford, as reported in *Newscope*, July 22, 2009.

Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference

The conference was held June 4-7 at the Southwest Regional center near Anadarko, with the theme of "Come to the Table." Membership is 6,196, down 27. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Josephine Deere, as reported in *Newscope*, July 22, 2009.

Oregon-Idaho

A major action of the conference was a vote to merge the Oregon-Idaho Conference Foundation with the Pacific Northwest Foundation (subject to the vote of the PNW Annual Conference). The conference members supported many of the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, with only 15 and 17 failing. Membership is 31,086, down 940.

– Greg Nelson, as reported in *Newscope*, July 1, 2009.

Pacific Northwest

Bishop Grant J. Hagiya convened his first PNW conference session. The Council on Finance and Administration reported a 2 percent decrease in apportionment giving. The conference voted with an average of 86 percent affirmative votes on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments. Membership is 53,040, down 2,081.

– Rev. David Valera, as reported in *Newscope*, July 22, 2009.

Peninsula-Delaware

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson opened the 225th session of the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference and her very first conference as bishop. Membership is 89,801, down 1,470. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Rev. John W. Van Tine and Tamara D. Ward, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Poland Annual Conference

The 88th session of the Annual Conference in Poland took place June 19-21 in Ostroda. The theme of the conference was "Seek God and You Will Live." In voting on the proposed constitutional amendments, amendments 1 and 2 were defeated by large majorities. All other amendments were approved by large majorities. Membership is 2163, up 3.

– Urs Schweizer, as reported in *Newscope*, July 15, 2009.

Rio Grande

Now in its 156th year of ministry, the Rio Grande Annual Conference met June 11-13 at University UMC-San Antonio. Conference business included affirming all the proposed constitutional amendments except amendments 4, 10, 13, 15, and 23. Conference membership is 13,988, down 38.

– Abel Vega, as reported in *Newscope*, July 22, 2009.

South Carolina

The South Carolina Annual Conference met in Florence, May 31-June 3 with Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor presiding. Of the 32 constitutional amendments, the conference voted in favor of amendments 8, 9, 17, 19 and 22, but voted down the other 27, in some cases by a 10:1 margin. Membership is 239,155.

– Matt Brodie, as reported in *Newscope*, June 24, 2009.

South Georgia

"Seek Ye First" was the theme for the 2009 South Georgia Annual Conference (June 7-10, Columbus) with Bishop James R. King Jr., presiding. Conference members voted on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments, approving only five: 2, 8, 9, 19, and 22. Membership is 134,924, down 956.

– Kelly Roberson and Kara Witherow, as reported in *Newscope*, July 1, 2009.

The South German Annual Conference

The 7th South German Annual Conference came together June 17-21 in Bruchsal and Karlsruhe, Germany with Bishop Rosemarie Wenner presiding. One important piece of business was a vote on the 23 proposed constitutional amendments having to do with a new worldwide structure, but no report was released. Membership is 17,245, down 247.

– Dr. Jonathan Whitlock, as reported in *Newscope*, July 15, 2009.

Troy

Members met at the Saratoga Springs City Center in New York for the 177th session of Troy Annual Conference. The June 10-13 session was the last full conference session to be held by the Troy Annual Conference. Their Vermont UM churches will join the New England Annual Conference, while their New York UM churches will join the Upstate New York Conference. All 32 proposed constitutional amendments were approved with a two-thirds majority.

– Sandra Brands, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Virginia

The Virginia Annual Conference gathered for its 227th session June 14-17 at the Scope arena in Norfolk. Only proposed constitutional amendments 8 and 22 received more than two-thirds support. 61% voted in favor of amendment 19; amendments 2, 6, 9, and 17 also received majority support but not two-thirds. Other amendments failed. Membership stands at 338,602, up 968.

– Neill Caldwell, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

West Virginia

The West Virginia Conference met June 11-14 at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, with Bishop Ernest S. Lyght presiding. Delegates voted on and passed three of the 32 proposed constitutional amendments: 17, 19, and 22.

– Laura Harbert Allen, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Western New York

The Rev. Dr. Marcus Matthews, bishop of the New York West Area, presided. Membership is 55,032, down 624. There was no report on balloting for the constitutional amendments.

– Marilyn J. Kasperek, as reported in *Newscope*, July 22, 2009.

Western North Carolina

The Western North Carolina Annual Conference met at Lake Junaluska on June 11-14 with Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster presiding. The conference voted in favor of proposed constitution amendments 2, 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, and 22. Membership is 293,180, down 408.

– Mark L. Barden, as reported in *Newscope*, July 8, 2009.

Western Pennsylvania

The Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference met June 11-14, at Grove City College with Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton presiding. He urged the 1,800 members attending that the old mainline denominational church of today needs to be set on fire like the 1st-century church. Members voted the 32 constitutional amendments, but results were not announced. Membership is 185,591, down 1,850.

– Jackie Campbell, as reported in *Newscope*, July 15, 2009.

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Annual Conference took place in Appleton, June 14-17. It passed a 4% reduction in the proposed 2010 budget. Members voted in favor of all 32 proposed constitutional amendments. Estimated membership is 84,292, down 2.9%.

– Michele Virnig, as reported in Newscope, July 15, 2009.

Yellowstone

Bishop Elaine Stanovsky presided over the 41st session of the Yellowstone Annual Conference in Billings, Mont., June 11-13. In aggregate votes, the proposed constitutional amendments were largely approved overwhelmingly, with the most opposition registered against amendments 2, 17, 15, and 19. The projected 2010 conference budget represents a 1.94% decrease over the current year. Conference membership is 14,279, down 554.

– Bob Phelps,
as reported in Newscope, July 1, 2009.

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Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.

- "Unanswered Prayers" by Garth Brooks, Pat Lager & Larry Bastian