

# Monthly Update

October 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In this edition of the October Update, we have included just some of the information we have from our overseas church where the United Methodist Church is “exploding” as I like to say: it is growing so fast that it is virtually “exploding” with its growth in members. And what causes it to expand so aggressively? Often the people over there come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ out of witchcraft or Islam, so they understand the internal change, the great improvement in their lives, and the tremendous difference between paganism and Christianity. Their relatives, friends, and neighbors also see the positive change and “want what they have” – the greater joy and happiness. We see the visible fruits of Christ’s work here. They serve as an example to all of us.

In addition we have some information on the health legislation that is facing our legislative representatives. As we often say, we are not into overt political advocacy, nor do we espouse any political party over any of the others that are available. We leave these decisions to our friends and supporters to make up their own minds. But it is precisely the point that we want to make in this and other information we publish. We offer insights from a Biblical and spiritual perspective – such as the reality of abortion and other moral practices. If this practice is included in any piece of legislation or activity – and it is in the present national health care bill – then we present a Christian perspective and leave it up to the reader to form his own conclusion. However, we do take exception to the vigorous political activism undertaken by church employees and call them on it, because when they do what they are doing, they are engaging in political activism, often from an un-Christian perspective, and purporting to speak for the people sitting in the pews.

We find this unacceptable.

We are happy to report on the status of the “separation amendments” regarding our overseas church. We have received reports from our friends in the renewal effort that conferences in Africa are nearly unanimous in rejecting these. In one conference we had heard of a vote of 98 to 1 against the amendments; in another, it was unanimous.

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 again for partnering with us in prayer and financial support during this difficult time.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris  
Executive Director

## October 2009 Update

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

*Socialist governments traditionally do make a financial mess. They always run out of other people's money.*

~ Margaret Thatcher, Former Prime Minister of England

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#### The Good Stuff. Tiger Woods.

Tiger Woods is a Highly Educated Individual who was properly raised and taught to be his own man by an educated Mother and Father. You can readily see that Tiger Woods listened to his parents and remains very proud of them both. Many citizens are not aware of the following: Tiger Woods received a special invitation to speak at the Obama inauguration. His inviters were stunned, shocked when he did not deliver the message they expected. A brief read and you will understand why the media swept Woods' remarks under the rug with no further ado and why the liberal left of our American society was again displeased with Tiger. His speech was entitled –

#### You'll Never Walk Alone

"I grew up in a military family – and my role models in life were my Mom and Dad, Lt. Colonel Earl Woods. My dad was a Special Forces operator and many nights friends would visit our home. They represented every branch of the service, and every rank. In my Dad, and in those guests, I saw first hand the dedication and commitment of those who serve. They come from every walk of life; from every part of our country.

Time and again, across generations, they have defended our safety in the dark of night and far from home. Each day -- and particularly on this historic day -- we honor the men and women in uniform who serve our country and protect our freedom. They travel to the dangerous corners of the world, and we must remember that for every person who is in uniform, there are families who wait for them to come home safely.

I am honored that the military is such an important part, not just of my personal life, but of my professional one as well. The golf tournament we do each year here in Washington is a testament to those unsung heroes. I am the son of a man who dedicated his life to his country, family and the military, and I am a better person for it.

In the summer of 1864, Abraham Lincoln, the man at whose memorial we stand, spoke to the 164<sup>th</sup> Ohio Regiment and said 'I am greatly obliged to you, and to all who have come forward at the call of their country.'

Just as they have stood tall for our country - we must always stand by and support the men and women in uniform and their families.

Thank you, and it is now my pleasure to introduce the US Naval Glee Club ..."

Tiger Woods' 2-minute, 5-second tribute to our nation's military was delivered January 18th at the Inaugural Celebration in Washington, DC. He had been subjected to intense pressure to attend and offer remarks. Especially so by [political] liberals who have demeaned and criticized him for a decade for not joining their ranks.

Yet, at the Lincoln Memorial, instead of paying homage to Barack Obama, Tiger paid tribute to our soldiers. Not once did Tiger mention Obama, the inauguration or the new administration. Understanding that expressing his love for America and his appreciation for our military men and women would disappoint the national news media and the liberal left, he did what he thought was best for the people of our country. But Tiger, being his own man, just as his father taught him to be his own man.

Somewhere over that cold, gray Washington sky, Colonel Earl Woods was smiling down on his beloved son.

– Received by e-mail from Don Talbot.

#### Of Interest

##### **+ Ecumenical pact does not open door to gay clergy**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's acceptance of pastors in same-sex relationships does not pave the way for noncelibate gay clergy to serve in United Methodist churches, officials from the two denominations said. The Lutheran vote Aug. 21 to drop its ban on gay clergy, coming a day after the denomination approved a full communion pact with The United Methodist Church, raised the question of whether practicing homosexual Lutheran pastors would be permitted in United Methodist pulpits. Leaders from both churches said Aug. 26, however, that The United Methodist Church's ban on noncelibate gay clergy is unchanged. [Note: It would not appear to be that way from “full communion” – but we shall reserve judgment. – AOM] – *United Methodist News Service (UMNS) Daily Digest, August 26, 2009.*

+ ***Lutherans and United Methodists: Full Communion and the approval of homosexual pastors***, by Riley B. Case

The headlines from the recent Lutheran churchwide assembly in Minneapolis have not been encouraging: “Lutherans Approve Full Communion with United Methodists; Approve Homosexuals as Pastors.” It is most unfortunate that the headlines have appeared together. Theoretically, there is no connection between the Full Communion action and the action to approve homosexuals as pastors. Even so, there are questions to be addressed. Since the reports of the Assembly, United Methodists (as well as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists and lots of others) are wondering what the implications of these actions are for United Methodists. If we are now in full communion with Lutherans, which includes accepting their pastors to serve in our churches, will we have homosexual pastors serving United Methodist churches? We need some clarity on this. We don’t know what the long-range implications of the Lutheran’s decisions are either for Lutherans or for United Methodists. In the meantime, some clarifying understandings are in order.

- 1) We are not talking about all Lutherans. We are only talking about Lutherans within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). This church is the largest Lutheran body in America with about 4.7 million members and is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest denomination in America. However, many of us are acquainted with the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod (LCMS) with 2.4 million members, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod with 312,000 members. Both of these are significant Lutheran denominations within the United States; both adhere to strict biblical principles; neither approves the practice of homosexuality. It is, in fact, rather ironic that the United Methodist Church declares itself in full communion with ELCA Lutherans, and other Lutheran bodies do not. In other words, let’s make sure we understand what Lutheran group we are talking about.
- 2) No pastors, Lutheran or otherwise, can preach in United Methodist churches who do not practice and uphold the moral, ethical, and belief standards of the United Methodist churches. This means that even though we are in full communion with ELCA Lutherans, no practicing homosexual Lutheran pastors can serve in United Methodist churches. This has been re-affirmed by Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops who issued a statement after numerous persons asked the question about whether United Methodist congregations would have to accept practicing homosexual Lutheran pastors.
- 3) It is good to understand what the Lutherans approved and what they did not approve. Under the change, congregations will be allowed to hire homosexuals in committed relationships as clergy. Before, gays and lesbians had to remain celibate to serve as pastors. The Lutherans are not on record as affirming homosexuality as a gift of God, nor do they, at least at this time, support gay marriage. The decision of the denomination, though discouraging to most of us who had hoped for more from Lutherans, is still not as extreme as the positions taken by the United Church of Christ and by the Episcopal Church (USA).
- 4) What is the meaning of the “mutual recognition” between ELCA Lutherans and United Methodists? The “recognition” is in no way a merger. It means both groups are “open to receiving and accepting and acknowledging each other’s ministries.” The churches recognize the authenticity of each other’s baptism and eucharist and recognize that each church has “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic faith” expressed in the Scriptures and confessed in historic creeds and the core teachings of each denomination. The United Methodists approved the “recognition” at its General Conference in Fort Worth in April, 2008.
- 5) While many of us are unhappy with the action of the denomination, there is no reason why on local levels we cannot work with, affirm, and uphold our Lutheran brothers and sisters. Lutherans can teach us much. Their churches are in many respects more acquainted with and grounded in the historic creeds than United Methodists. Many local churches and individuals are unhappy with what the Minneapolis Assembly has done. These people need our support and prayers.

The fall-out and implications of both the vote to accept homosexual clergy and full communion with United Methodists are yet to be seen. This is a developing story and relationship that warrants our steadfast attention.

– Dr. Riley B. Case is a retired member of the North Indiana Conference, and author of *Evangelical and Methodist: A Popular History* (Abingdon).

+ ***South Central Jurisdiction will realign in 2012*** Responding to a directive from the denomination's top legislative body, United Methodists in the South Central region of the United States will make do with one less bishop in 2012. Through a Sept. 18 webcast, the 6,400 local churches in the South Central Jurisdiction - representing about 1.83 million members -- learned that the Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West annual (regional) conferences will be combined into one episcopal area at that time.

– *UMNS, September 18, 2009*

+ ***NIV edition of Bible undergoes revision for 2011***

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (UMNS)—The New International Version of the Bible, the top-selling Bible in North America, will undergo its first revision in 25 years. It will be revised to reflect changes in English usage and advances in biblical scholarship, according to the Committee on Bible Translation, the independent body of global biblical scholars solely responsible for the translation of the world's most popular Bible. The revision is scheduled to be published in 2011, the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible. The NIV's sibling, Today's New International Version (TNIV), was criticized for its [problematic]gender-inclusive language, but the new NIV will have more natural language, its publishers said. "We want to reach English speakers across the globe with a Bible that is accurate, accessible and that speaks to its readers in a language they can understand," said Keith Danby, global president of Biblica, which holds the NIV copyright. Once the revision is published, the TNIV will cease publication. — *UMNS, September 3, 2009*

**Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues. "22 Weeks"**

WASHINGTON – "22 Weeks" has the images and sound effects of a horror flick, but it isn't one. Instead, it's based on a true account of a woman who sought a late-term abortion but found herself living a nightmare. In the 25-minute featurette, Angela, played by Natalie Wenninger, wakes up in her motel room covered in blood. She rushes to the clinic where she had been injected with a needle the day before to abort her baby 22 weeks into her pregnancy. She's bleeding profusely and is having contractions but is left alone in a dirty room at the clinic. Something is wrong.

Earlier in the film, we find a much different Angela at the EPOC Clinic in Orlando, Fla., as she is midway through the second trimester of her pregnancy. There, Angela is presented with two options: the suction method or an injection to the baby's heart. She chooses the latter, convinced by employees that the procedure will not cause the baby any pain. She would simply have a stillborn birth the following day. To her, the suction method is a monstrous act.

After the procedure, she is met by a group of pro-life advocates outside the clinic. When one Christian tries to convince her to save the baby, Angela replies, "God was never raped."

While there are several uncomfortable moments when Angela experiences some complications, the shocking scene near the end comes as she has given birth to her baby on a toilet. "He's alive!" Angela screams, shocked that the baby was not dead like the employees had assured he would be when born. But the mother is even more horrified when the employees, who respond slowly to her cries, deny the baby is living, do not help her and lock her in the bathroom.

"He's alive and they won't help me!" Angela tells her friend on the phone. "I don't want this anymore ... I made a mistake! Call 911!" As Angela waits for help, she holds the baby close to her, telling her son, "I'm so sorry" and "I love you so much," and wishing she had another chance. When the ambulance arrives at the clinic, the employees try to turn them away, insisting that no one placed a 911 call.

"22 Weeks" is based on an article by *World Net Daily*, which published the true testimonies of the real mother, Angele, in 2005. And while what was depicted in the film was horrifying enough, Angele said what actually happened was even worse. The baby, whom Angele had named Rowan, died 10 minutes after the 911 call by her friend due to negligence. The doctor, Jim Perper, who administered the injection, was not prosecuted.

Angele, who has not released her last name, attended the free screening of the film at Union Station's Phoenix Theaters in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday as another way of going public with her experience. The film, which was completed in August 2008, has only been shown in around seven cities in the United States as well as Puerto Rico, where producer Ángel Manuel Soto is from. This was his first film.

Soto, who has partnered with pro-life organizations BornAliveTruth.org and Operation Rescue to promote the film, hopes awareness of the movie and the disturbing practices at abortion clinics will spread by word of mouth. "This is really happening ... [even] this very day despite the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act," said Jill Stanek of BornAliveTruth.org at the Washington screening. With limited resources and funding, Soto is largely relying on viewers to get the word out and show the film, which was available for DVD purchase at the screenings. Requests for screenings can also be made at the film's website [22weeksthemovie.com](http://22weeksthemovie.com). After being moved to tears, viewers at the Washington screening expressed their willingness to help. One viewer, who said she had an abortion, told Soto she would show the film to her church of 20,000 members. Another encouraged Soto to get the film in the hands of President Barack Obama, who is pro-choice. "Since he (Obama)'s advocating abortion, he should watch it," noted the viewer, who said she will write a letter to the president. Obama and his pro-abortion decisions were indirectly mentioned in a scene in "22 Weeks," but Stanek, whose organization had publicized last year Obama's pro-abortion record, said the message of the film is not a political one.

– *Lillian Kwon, Christian Post Reporter, Jan. 22, 2009 Posted: 01:41 PM EST*

<http://www.christianpost.com/Entertainment/Movie/2009/01/abortion-film-22-weeks-disturbs-exposes-22/index.html>

**(UM) Black Methodists for Church Renewal Talbert institute to develop African-American leaders**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The new Bishop Melvin George Talbert Leadership Institute is seeking up to 20 young African Americans to commit two to four years to becoming creative leaders in The United Methodist Church. Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) announced last year plans to form an institute named after Talbert. Located at the group's Nashville headquarters, the institute was launched in July. Talbert has led The United Methodist Church as pastor, agency executive and bishop. [Note: This is problematic and a reflection on the judgment of the BMCR. It seems that the BMCR would pick a person who was more centrist than the left-leaning Talbert. - AOM] – *UMNS, August 25, 2009*

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

***Religious Left Panics over Obamacare Troubles***, Commentary by: Mark D. Tooley

For the Religious Left, socialized medicine has long been almost the moral equivalent of the Second Coming. So increasing political turbulence for Obamacare is creating panic and fear among the true believers. Must we wait still longer, they now imploringly wonder, with sadness and rage.

Emphasize the rage. Sojourners activist Jim Wallis has issued a virtual public imprecatory pray for Sarah Palin's political destruction after her comments on Obamacare's "death panels." And a United Methodist lobbyist is denouncing Obamacare's opponents as racists. Meanwhile, the President himself appeared on an August 19 Religious Left conference call, to rally true believers to our "core ethical and moral obligation." After Palin speculated that Obamacare could degenerate into "death panels" deciding who merits further medical exertion, Wallis responded with outrage and a very specific plea for Palin's political demise. "Please don't invoke your 'Christian faith' anymore and embarrass the people of God even further," he fumed. "May your efforts to scare Americans during this important debate fail. May your political future also fail, and may your star fall as fast as it rose just a few months ago – because we now know who you really are." A righteous Psalmist of the Old Testament could not have inveighed against Palin with any greater fury or precision. Wallis is often likened by his Religious Left admirers to a prophet. But prophets and Psalmists called their audiences back to worship of God, not worship of Big Government. Palin's sin, in Wallis' eyes, is that she will not bend the knee to the altar of The Welfare State, which has been the object of Wallis' fervor for over 40 years.

For good measure, and in supposed prophetic tradition, Wallis further denounced Palin as a "demagogue in the worst tradition of those who knowingly distort and deceive for their own political purposes" and who "prey" upon the weak and vulnerable. "Politics for people like you is really all about you, your fame and power, and your taste of it during the last election has revealed what kind of politician you truly are." In partial vindication for Palin, a U.S. Senate version of Obamacare apparently will delete any reference to providing end-of-life counseling that critics worried could become coercive, especially with elderly patients. But the "death panels" concern seemed to apply to a broader apprehension about government run health care, when government bureaucrats, with finite resources and infinite authority, inevitably would have to decide who merits further care and who does not. For the statist mindset to which Wallis and the Religious Left passionately subscribe, government is simply a cornucopia of gifts and services, benignly bestowed, as an extension of, or even substitute for, God's grace. But governments, unlike the private sector against whose "greed" the Religious Left perpetually warns, have coercive powers through taxation and law enforcement. The corruptions and compulsions of a private insurance company, or medical practice, can be magnified ten thousand times by the federal government. Competing private firms could hardly orchestrate "death panels." But can a national government? History of course declares that governments have often done far worse.

Understanding the moral limits of state power is foreign to the Religious Left, which imagines that expanding government welfare is always moral, and its critics, always sinister. In the conference call for Religious Left activists that Wallis convened for the President, Obama warned of "some folks out there bearing false witness," of "divisive and deceptive attacks," of "extraordinary lies," and "fabrications."

Accelerating the angry rhetoric about Obamacare's critics was chief United Methodist lobbyist Jim Winkler, whose United Methodist Board of Church and Society is part of the Religious Left coalition for Obamacare. With typical perception, Winkler discerned that "Racism and fear is at the core of the anger" against government health care. Winkler helpfully recalled that after Obama's election America suffered a "spate" of racial outrages, including "cross burnings, black figures hanged from nooses, schoolchildren chanting 'assassinate Obama,' and racial epithets scrawled on homes and cars." In Winkler's mind, the U.S. is a stewing cauldron that, at best, resembles the Mississippi Delta post-Reconstruction. "Numerous assassination threats have been issued against members of Congress," Winkler darkly revealed. "Gun-toting people have shown up at town hall meetings. There is talk of armed revolution in the air." As to the opponents of Obamacare, the United Methodist lobbyist surmised that the "consistent, inaccurate use of 'socialism' to describe health-care reform is a code word for racism." Generously, Winkler admitted that racism was not the only explanation for opposition to Obamacare: "incredibly rich insurance companies are wary of any changes that might affect their bottom lines." Describing the reaction to his support for Obamacare from his own purported church constituency, Winkler complained of a constant stream of "virulent, nasty" and "incredibly sinful, ignorant statements from persons

who claim to be United Methodists.” He denounced the “ugly rage demonstrated by many in our denomination and at town hall meetings” as “preposterous.” From dealing with recalcitrant, sputtering and ungrammatical United Methodists who do not share Winkler’s agenda, he knows “what it’s like to face people who have worked themselves up into a frenzy, who cannot control their emotions, who have lost all reason and sense of proportion.” Resorting to Wallis’ imprecatory tone against Palin, Winkler quoted Isaiah about the unrepentant:

“But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Wow, that’s violent language coming from a virtual pacifist. But evidently the vial of God’s judgment will be poured down upon all them with the temerity to question government run health care. For those, like Wallis and Winkler, who equate God’s Kingdom with Big Government, the punishment evidently cannot be soon enough.

[Note: Does Winkler not know that he has been lobbying for years from a far-left political perspectives and his activism reflective of inadequate information on what has made this country great – a free-market economy and freedom? – AOM]

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– Mark D. Tooley is president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy. He is the author of *Taking Back the United Methodist Church*.

**(UM) General Board of Global Ministries. Top executive resigns from Board of Global Ministries**

A year to the day of taking the helm of The United Methodist Church's mission agency, the top executive is leaving for health reasons. The Rev. Edward W. Paup has resigned, effective immediately, as general secretary of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, Bishop Bruce Ough of West Ohio, board president, announced Sept. 1. Paup, 63, had been on medical leave since Aug. 10. "The results of examinations indicate the presence of a brain tumor that will require close and constant monitoring in the days ahead," Ough said. Bishop Martínez becomes interim head of mission agency. – *UMNS, September 1, 4, 2009*

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

***United Methodists moving toward greater unity:*** NEW YORK (UMNS) -- Buoyed by the new relationship between United Methodists and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Rev. Stephen J. Sidorak Jr., top executive of the GCCUIC, expects that his denomination can continue to move toward the vision of unity. "All six church bodies of the Pan Methodist Commission have expressed their intent to enter into full communion and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has already voted affirmatively," he noted when the commission met Sept. 9-12 in New York. [Note: This exemplifies the reality that many UM employees put “unity” as a top goal. – AOM] – *UMNS, September 14, 2009*

**(UM) Men Top executive of United Methodist Men resigns**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The top staff executive of United Methodist Men is returning to his first love - the local church. In a letter of resignation read Sept. 10, the Rev. David C. Adams told the Commission on United Methodist Men he was honored to serve as general secretary of the agency for the past three years, but he missed serving a local church where God first called him. The resignation is effective immediately. The commission, meeting through Sept. 12 in Nashville, will appoint a search committee for a successor. – *UMNS, September 10, 2009*

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*A Candle Loses Nothing by Lighting Another Candle.*

**Global Outlook**

*If your ship doesn't come in why not swim out and get it? ~ As quoted by Weeks Parker*

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**National Council of Churches. Council urges prayer for environment**

***+ Ecumenical leaders applaud full communion vote***

NEW YORK – Top leaders of the National Council of Churches praised the new relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church: The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, the council's top executive, and its president, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian. – *UMNS, August 25, 2009*

+ NEW YORK – The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, has commemorated today as the 20th anniversary of the Day of Prayer of the Environment. He urged all people of faith to pray for the protection of the environment every year. The first environmental prayer day was instituted by the late Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989. Since then, every first day of September has been designated a day of prayer for the protection of the environment throughout the Orthodox world. "The survival of God's creation and God's children hinges

on our ability to embrace the very tenets that Patriarch Dimitrios put forth in his first address in 1989," Kinnamon said. [Note: This would seem to me to be a lack of faith in the world as God has created it, who engineered it pretty well and, I suspect, can keep it running with our responsible stewardship of His creation – but without undue anxiety. –AOM]

– UMNS, September 1, 2009

## **Pakistan.**

### **+ *Agencies respond to crisis in Pakistan***

NEW YORK (UMNS) – Marvin Parvez is afraid that what has become one of the largest displacements of people in Pakistani history could grow into an even larger crisis. Parvez, a Methodist from Pakistan who is the director of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Program of Church World Service, believes the number of displaced persons from the Swat Valley could double if the fighting between the Taliban and Pakistani military spreads into new districts. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 1.5 million people have been displaced in northwest Pakistan recently, in addition to 500,000 who had fled the area since 2008. The United Methodist Committee on Relief has allocated \$110,000 to Church World Service and Muslim Aid, another partner in the region, for their work with the displaced. The relief agency also is in contact with the Church of Pakistan about needs for assistance. – UMNS Daily Digest, May 21, 2009.

### **+ *Pakistan's Christians – August 11<sup>th</sup> protest***

NEW DELHI (ENI)—Pakistani churches had a day of protest on August 11<sup>th</sup> against the recent killing of Christians in central Punjab, and threats against their members in the Muslim-majority nation. "We need to raise our voices now," Victor Azariah, told Ecumenical News International. Pakistan's government had announced in June that August 11<sup>th</sup> would be celebrated nationally as "minorities day." The date marks the anniversary of a 1947 speech by the nation's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which called for impartial government, religious freedom and equality for all.

– UMNS; August 10, 2009.

## **Russia.**

### **+ *Faith and joy keep revival going in modern Russia***

MOSCOW (UMNS)—The gray, murky snow is plowed high in waves against the busy city streets. Women in black, spike-heeled boots and fur-covered coats stride forward as if on a Parisian runway, while below them old women crouch among the shuffling swarms, begging for rubles to buy their bread. And Christians who once faced the gulag for proclaiming their faith struggle anew in a society that now pays homage to modern capitalism. The conclusion of a three-part series explores the revival of Methodism in Russia.

– UMNS; August 12, 2009.

### **+ *United Methodists reclaim rich Russian history***

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (UMNS)—In the midst of a brutal winter, with a heavy wrap gathered around her slight shoulders, Sister Anna Eklund delivered food to the hungry during the famine of 1921. Her story of devotion to the Wesleyan faith is but one chapter of a Methodist history that is being reclaimed during the centennial of the official birth of Methodism in Russia. Before the church was slowly suffocated by labor camps, murder and other forms of persecution in the Soviet era, there was a vital movement that left its mark in Methodist annals.

– UMNS; August 11, 2009.

## **World Council of Churches (WCC).**

### **+ *Walls continue to divide the world, ecumenical leader says***

GENEVA – Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, churches need to offer a vision to a world divided in more complex ways than at the time of the Iron Curtain, the moderator of the WCC told its main governing body. "It came to symbolize the division of the world into two conflicting systems," said the Rev. Walter Altmann. "Yet we do not forget either that many other walls, be they of concrete or of prejudices or of laws which discriminate against foreigners, persist or are being raised, dividing peoples and causing great suffering, in many parts of the world." [Note: There is little mention of pagan forces that have persecuted Christians worldwide. – AOM]

– UMNS, August 26, 2009

### **+ *Norwegian pastor elected WCC general secretary***

GENEVA (UMNS)—Norwegian theologian and pastor Olav Fykse Tveit, 48, secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, was elected seventh general secretary of the World Council of Churches Aug. 27 during its Central Committee meeting. Tveit replaces the Rev. Samuel Kobia, a Methodist from Kenya, who in February 2008 informed the Central Committee that he would not seek a second term. Kobia has served as general secretary since 2004. Tveit is expected to take office Jan. 1.

– UMNS, August 28, 2009

**+ *Outgoing World Council of Churches Leader Slams Israel's "Sin Against God"***

Washington, DC - The departing chief of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC) slammed Israel's "sin against God" in his August 26 good-bye to the world's largest ecumenical group. "Occupation along with the concomitant humiliation of a whole people for over six decades constitutes not just economic and political crimes but, like anti-Semitism, it is a sin against God," declared Kenyan Methodist minister Samuel Kobia, during his farewell to the WCC's governing central committee. At its founding after World War II, the WCC robustly denounced anti-Semitism as a "sin against God." Evidently equating the Holocaust on some level with the Israeli presence in the West Bank, Kobia asked his international church audience: "Are we ready to say that occupation is also a sin against God?" The WCC has 349 member denominations, including over 30 Protestant and Orthodox communions in the U.S.

IRD President Mark Tooley commented: "Most of Kobia's farewell speech, which also obsessed over global warming and the collapse of 'turbo-capitalism,' could very easily have been delivered by Hugo Chavez, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or any number of Third World tyrants who deflect from their own failures by demonizing Israel and the U.S. Revealingly, Kobia's good-bye, so verbose about Israeli 'crimes,' said nothing about the Christian villages recently destroyed in Pakistan, about the ongoing persecution of Christians across the Islamic world, or the vulnerability of Christians living in China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. For the WCC, difficulties for Christians are only distressing if Israel and the U.S. are the villains. Preferring mainly to echo the bland bromides of European left-wing secularists, the WCC is primarily the voice of declining Western left-wing Protestantism. It does NOT speak for robust, global Christianity."

– *Mark Tooley, President, of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), 1023 15th Street NW, Ste. 601 • Washington, DC 20005-2601.*

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*"When an old man dies a library burns." ~ African proverb*