

Monthly Update

September 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In the past Monthly Updates, we have discussed the amendments that would separate our denomination here in the United States from our United Methodist Church around the world. We are including another report in this Update to keep you abreast of the latest information entitled “A House Divided – an analysis and commentary by Dr. Riley Case.” The rest of this issue contains some of the news that has been on the back burner for the past several months. We have not as of yet ferreted out all of the statistics on annual conference membership and actions from their reports – so that will be a priority over the next several weeks.

“Lutherans OK full communion with United Methodists” read the headlines. We read further that, “Delegates to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) in America sang ‘O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing’ after voting 958-51 in support of the historic agreement. After the vote, Lutheran Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson hugged Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, and thanked all who had labored in dialogue between the two denominations over the past 32 years. ‘You have taken up centuries of differences and found centuries of commonalities,’ he declared. (UMNS, August 20, 2009) This is true in more ways than was stated here. The leadership of the ELCA has been trying for years to work homosexual normalization into their church; it looks as if this year, they will. If we have full communion with them, then we will have to recognize the clergy credentials of their pastors – to include those who are practicing homosexuals. This is not good.

We are grateful for your response to the appeal that we sent out two months ago. You have been very generous in helping us close the gap to pay our bills – the ones that had accrued as we made an “all-out” effort to fight these “separation amendments” that would do our church so much harm. Your gifts of \$10.00, \$25.00, \$50.00, or \$100.00 are so much appreciated. One couple had sold some of their real-estate and sent us a “tithe” check of \$2,000. All of these expressions of support are so touching to us, not only that generous donation but also the “widow’s mite,” that are sent to provide for this ministry. Without you, it would not get done.

As we had previously stated to you, “This work has not come without a price.” We have made progress in reducing our \$15,000+ debt but we still have a little ways to go. We are \$ 7,283.70 short of eliminating our debt completely. As a result, we will hold off on sending out another edition of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* until we have taking care of that obligation.

I know that the recession in which we find ourselves causes many people to be concerned about their finances. That is only normal. I would ask that you join us in praying that the Lord will provide the means so that we can get this behind us and move on to aggressively pursue His agenda in working for reform in the church. And please pray that He will use us to bring people to know His son Jesus Christ.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

September 2009 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

I pray that our vision, passion and concern will be on how the world Methodist communion can do its part in spreading the good news of Christ Jesus in a world which desperately needs healing, hope and salvation."

– The Rev. Eddie Fox, Executive Director of the World Methodist Council

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The Good Stuff Church developers learn from early evangelists

Can Methodists learn anything about effective Christian evangelism from their denomination's founding period 250 years ago? "Yes," says a Duke University professor, who explained to the 2009 United Methodist School of Congregational Development how the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, gave rise to a movement that swept the young United States of America. "Early Methodism was evangelistic," the Rev. Lacey Warner said. "When the Wesleys talked about spreading 'Scriptural holiness,' they meant evangelism." She defined evangelism as preaching the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ and "living it out."

– United Methodist News Service (UMNS); August 4, 2009.

Of Interest.

+ 'Safe sexting' - permission over principle

[Note: I've worked as a volunteer with youth and kids for over 25 years; I am shocked by this new law. This area should be of interest to everyone who has children or grandchildren, or who works with youth. – AOM]

The special counsel to the Alliance Defense Fund is outraged over a Vermont state bill he says effectively legalizes production of child porn. Vermont Senate Bill 125 will make "sexting" legal for teens ages 13 to 18. Sexting refers to the sending of nude photographs via cell phone -- a growing phenomenon among teenagers. Some teens who have been caught sexting have faced penalties ranging from expulsion from school, to child pornography charges, to having to register as sex offenders. But some Vermont lawmakers think the punishments handed down have been too severe, so they are now working to make sexting legal in the Green Mountain State for consenting teens. Pat Trueman is with the Alliance Defense Fund. "This is an outrage," says Trueman bluntly. "It's the only state in the union ever to consider legalizing the production of child pornography." He is concerned that, if passed, Senate Bill 125 could be misleading. "So even if Vermont legalizes the production of child pornography by sexting, those same kids who think they're safe can be prosecuted by the federal government," the attorney points out. Trueman says dropping the penalties currently associated with teen sexting will only serve as an encouragement to engage in the practice. "The law is a great teacher," he shares. "And if you crack down on a few of these kids, the rest will stop sexting." The attorney also warns that individuals might not realize that once a "sext" message is sent, the image can wind up on the Internet and be circulated for an indefinite period of time.

– Pete Chagnon; *OneNewsNow*; *American Family News Network*; 4/15/2009.

+ Help make English our official language

A common language, not "diversity," makes our country stronger. A Zogby poll in 2006 showed that 84% say English should be the official language of government operations. The poll also showed that 77% of Hispanics support English as our official language. It is time for liberal members of Congress to quit playing politics with the future of all children -- U.S. and Immigrant--and follow the lead of 28 states which have made English their official language. Failure for Congress to act will establish a major obstacle for immigrant children as they try to move up in our society.

Without a common language, citizens cannot communicate with each other. Any child growing up in America without knowing English is at a distinct disadvantage. At a time when our society is becoming more fragmented, we need an official, common language. Diverse cultures, different backgrounds and varied traditions enrich our culture. But for the nation to thrive, we must have a common language.

As Ed Feulner points out, "instead of having one official language, in practice we have dozens."

[Note: This is a problem in any culture. It is estimated that the Soviet Union had 119 languages spoken in their empire -- causing them tremendous difficulty.]

– *American Family Association (AFA) Pastors and leaders updates*, 2.27/2007; February 26, 2007.

+ Timeline traces United Methodist-Lutheran dialogue

NEW YORK —The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The United Methodist Church have made remarkable progress in ecumenical relations over the past four decades. A timeline highlights the key developments

leading up to a scheduled vote on full communion Aug. 20 by Lutheran leaders at their churchwide assembly in Minneapolis. [Note: This is of extreme interest, as we shall see.] – UMNS; August 18, 2009.

+ *United Methodists, Lutherans approach historic moment*

NEW YORK (UMNS)—The Rev. Donald McCoid oversees ecumenical relations for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but he was born into a Methodist household. So he is especially ready to celebrate if the Lutherans vote Aug. 20 on a full communion agreement with The United Methodist Church during their churchwide assembly in Minneapolis. The historic vote is the culmination of decades of dialogue shining a light on substantial consensus on subjects from justification by faith to the Eucharist. The two traditions were founded by towering figures in Christian history—Martin Luther and John Wesley. – UMNS

+ *Lutherans discuss homosexual leadership*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is holding its biennial national meeting this week in Minneapolis, with several controversial items regarding sexuality on the agenda. Delegates of the ELCA will vote on a policy that would allow Lutheran churches to hire homosexual men or women in committed same-sex relationships to serve as pastors. They will also decide the fate of a statement on human sexuality that tries to establish a theological framework for differing views on homosexuality. Reverend Mark Chavez is director of Lutheran Coalition for Reform. "What's at stake is whether or not the ELCA is going to practice what it says it believes. Our confession of faith in the ELCA confesses that the Bible -- the whole Bible, the Old and the New Testaments -- are the inspired Word of God and the norm and authority for all our faith in life," he explains. "And what's being proposed is a clear rejection of that faith. And the other thing that's at stake here is the ELCA isolating itself from most other Christian churches in the world." Chavez says his organization will be at the meeting in Minneapolis to educate voting members about the issues.

At least one ELCA leader is lamenting his denomination's decline as it debates the issue of homosexual clergy. Bishop Mark Hanson tells Associated Press the ELCA has lost almost 500,000 baptized members in the eight years he has served as its presiding bishop. Hanson noted his denomination's decline when asked about the vote scheduled later this week on whether ELCA congregations should be allowed to hire pastors who are in homosexual relationships. He would not say whether he supports that, but he told reporters that partnered homosexual clergy are willing to serve, and that there are ELCA churches that want to hire them.

In contrast, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod views homosexual behavior as "intrinsicly sinful" and a lifestyle that is contrary to the Word of God. – Allie Martin - OneNewsNow - 8/18/2009 7:20:00 AM

+ *ELCA Assembly: Was God in Either Whirlwind?*

Tornado touches convention center as Lutherans approve sexuality statement by the exact margin it needed to pass.

Most reports from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) assembly attempted to tie together the denomination's vote to adopt a sexuality statement and the tornado strike on the Minneapolis Convention Center where the Lutherans were meeting. (No one was injured.) "We trust that the weather is not a commentary on our work," said Steven Loy, chairman of the committee overseeing the statement. (He was quoted by The Washington Times and Associated Press.) But WordAlone, a renewal group within the ELCA, reported that both sides sought to find commentary in the weather: "A supporter of the social statement typified the storm as a mighty wind of the Holy Spirit and as a positive message. Some WordAlone Network members heard a different message, a warning of God's anger at the ELCA in the wind." John Piper, whose Baptist church is just down the road from the convention center, thought the storm was a message as well. "The tornado in Minneapolis was a gentle but firm warning to the ELCA and all of us: Turn from the approval of sin. Turn from the promotion of behaviors that lead to destruction."

Hours later, delegates voted on the sexuality statement, which needed 2/3 approval. It passed by exactly that margin: 676-338. One or two votes could have changed the outcome. The Minneapolis Star-Tribune notes that the vote came near dinnertime and some delegates had already started to leave. Twenty-nine of the 1,045 registered voters did not vote on the statement. (Any who opposed the sexuality statement are almost certainly kicking themselves this morning and are probably not telling their friends about it...) The headlines are both dramatic and careful: "Lutherans move toward more open view on gays" (Associated Press), "ELCA validates 'chaste' same-sex relationships" (Minneapolis Star-Tribune).

But the new statement does not explicitly approve of homosexual relationships. Instead, it says: 2

We do not have agreement on whether this church should honor these relationships, uplift, shelter and protect them, or on precisely how it is appropriate to do so. In response, this church draws on the foundational Lutheran understanding that the baptized are called to discern God's love in service to the neighbor. In our Christian freedom, we therefore seek responsible actions that serve others and do so with humility and deep respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of others.

We understand that, in this discernment about ethics and church practice, faithful people can and will come to different conclusions about the meaning of Scripture and about what constitutes responsible action. We further believe that this church, on the basis of "the bound conscience," will include these different understandings and practices within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world.

The heart of the matter is buried in the footnotes. "The difference between interpreters should not be understood as a conflict between those who seek to be 'true to Scripture' and those who seek to 'twist the Bible' to their own liking. The disagreements are genuine," the document says. It continues:

When the clear word of God's saving action by grace through faith is at stake, Christian conscience becomes as adamant as Paul, who opposed those who insisted upon circumcision. ... However, when the question is about morality or church practice, the Pauline and Lutheran witness is less adamant and believes we may be called to respect the bound conscience of the neighbor. That is, if salvation is not at stake in a particular question, Christians are free to give priority to the neighbor's well-being and will protect the conscience of the neighbor who may well view the same question in such a way as to affect faith itself. For example, Paul was confident that Christian freedom meant the Gospel of Jesus Christ was not at stake in questions of meat sacrificed to idols or the rituals of holy days. Yet he insisted that, if a brother or sister did not understand this freedom and saw eating this meat as idolatry to a pagan god, the Christian was obligated to "walk in love" by eating just vegetables for the neighbor's sake!

The problem is that the statement focuses on conscience where it should focus on God's commandments in the moral ordering of the Christian life, three dissenting members of the ELCA task force on sexuality said earlier this year:

By focusing on trust, freedom, and love of neighbor, the social statement ... strains forward to see what God might be doing anew within the community of faith, particularly in regards to conduct of persons who are homosexual, rather than building on the foundation depicted in the creation accounts of Genesis.

The concept of freedom of the Christian, while helpful in our understanding of salvation by faith alone, cannot be the justification for a lifestyle and behavior contrary to the biblical witness and the moral tradition. ... By centering on justification by faith, the social statement minimizes the role of the Law in Christian life, contrary to Luther's exposition of the Christian life in the catechisms, and is at odds with the Lutheran Confessions.

Lutherans Concerned, the main LGBT advocacy group within the denomination, hailed the vote as a victory:

"There is still much work to do, but the door to full inclusion of LGBT members and their families is now most definitely open." [Note the language similar to our denominational motto.]

Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) decried the document: "We mourn the decision by the Churchwide Assembly to reject the clear teaching of the Bible that God's intention for marriage is the relationship of one man and one woman. It is tragic that such a large number of ELCA members were willing to overturn the clear teaching of the Bible as it has been believed and confessed by Christians for nearly 2,000 years."

Jaynan Clark, WordAlone's president, was blunt: "It is appropriate that we call this a 'social' statement for we have just swapped society's statements and trends for God's Word and teaching."

Still, the bigger battle is probably still to come: On Friday, the gathering will consider a change that would allow churches to call pastors and other church leaders "in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships."

The foregoing article is located at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/augustweb-only/133.41.0.html>

– Ted Olsen, Christianity Today, taken from the internet; posted 8/20/2009 10:12AM. Copyright © 2009 Christianity Today. "This article first appeared in August 20, 2009 issue of Christianity Today. Used by permission of Christianity Today International, Carol Stream, IL 60188."

+ *Conferences reject new structure for global church*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)—United Methodists across the United States have defeated 23 proposed amendments that would have paved the way to make the church in the U.S. a regional body. The amendments, proposed as changes to the denomination's constitution, would have created identical structures for every region of the church. Voting in annual conference sessions - most of which occurred between May and June - church members also defeated a proposal to make membership in the church open to everyone without regard to sexual orientation. – UMNS; July 28, 2009.

+ A House Divided, An Analysis and Commentary by Dr. Riley Case

Enough of the votes on the Constitutional Amendments have now been reported by the annual conferences so that it is possible to announce the results. The Constitutional Amendments that deal with two issues of special interest to evangelicals have failed....The amendment that would change paragraph. IV (inclusiveness) in the constitution has at this time not even received 50% of the vote. It needed 66.7% of the vote to pass. The amendments on the world-wide nature of the church that would have created Regional Conferences and thus segregated out overseas churches from considering issues relating only to the United States failed overwhelmingly, with somewhere around 40% of the vote (also needing 66.7% to be ratified)...here to start on this analysis are some preliminary thoughts.

We are a church deeply divided. The amendment on inclusiveness was an unnecessary amendment. It would have mandated inclusiveness, asserting that anyone who wanted to join a United Methodist Church could, and pastors, or anyone else for that matter, would have no say about whether persons were ready for membership, or upheld United Methodist standards in belief or practice. Furthermore, since the amendment would be inscribed in the constitution, all manner of complications could result if a Judicial Council declared that the constitution negates standards, say, in regard to ordination. Yet this amendment was supported by the General Conference, by the bishops (based on an earlier bishops' statement), by boards and agencies, by liberal annual conferences, and by many of the caucus groups. It was opposed by the evangelical renewal groups and more conservative conferences. The votes reveal a serious disconnect in the church. That is to say, the bishops, the boards and agencies, the seminaries, the liberal conferences, and almost all the caucuses except for the evangelical groups, cannot command even a majority of the votes of the annual conferences.

This serious divide should be reason for some soul-searching. There are two different understandings of the faith operating within United Methodism. Is there a way to bridge the gap? The seriousness of the divide is shown in the extremes that some conferences voted for or against Amendment I. Memphis voted against the amendment 73%-27%, Alabama-West Florida voted against 80%-20%, and North Carolina voted against 77%-23%. On the other hand, Idaho-Oregon voted 95% to 5% and Desert Southwest 94%-6% for the amendment. It might be worth mentioning that the two Georgia conferences together have more members than the entire Western Jurisdiction. It might also be worth noting that the Western Jurisdiction conferences are decreasing in membership at an alarming rate. According to reports from the conferences, the conferences of the Western Jurisdiction lost 2.6% of their membership in 2009 and 5% of their worship attendance. The denomination as a whole lost .8% of its membership in 2007.

The votes for the amendments that would have changed the constitution of the church to mandate Regional Conferences also divided by regions and by theology. The plan came to the General Conference from the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table and passed the General Conference with votes to spare. The purpose of the amendments was to address a real problem in the church, namely, that much of what the General Conference does is so US-centric that overseas delegates have a difficult time relating to issues that relate specifically to US churches. The proposed solution was to retain a General Conference which would deal with issues of a global nature, and "regional" conferences that would deal with issues that are regional in nature.

However, it appears that another agenda was also at play. Like homosexuality. Progressives are arguing these days that issues relating to homosexuality are culturally influenced [They aren't.] and therefore these issues should be dealt with in the Regional Conferences and not in the General Conference. To put it another way, if the Africans were removed from considerations about homosexuality in America, there might be enough progressive votes to change the church's stance. There were other concerns as well. Details about finances, levels of bureaucracy, and how practically the conferences would function were not yet worked out. For whatever reasons, the amendments failed. Alabama-Florida voted against the amendments 95%-5% and Kentucky 92%-8%. On the other hand, Idaho-Oregon voted for the amendments 95%-5%, and Yellowstone and Wyoming conferences 91%-9%.

In these amendments, it will be interesting to see how the overseas conferences voted. These votes have not yet been recorded.

– *From a newsletter of The Confessing Movement; May/June 2009*

+ *Economy causes tightening of conference budgets*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)—The recession cast a shadow over United Methodist annual conference sessions in May and June. At least 35 of the 62 U.S. annual conferences reported financial deficits, which resulted in flat or decreased budgets, frozen salaries, reduced insurance benefits and decreased apportionment payments. United Methodists also used the economic situation as a stimulus for action, however, and celebrated new church starts and mission partnerships.

– *UMNS; July 28, 2009.*

+ *Agencies announce restructuring, more layoffs*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)—Two United Methodist agencies are eliminating more than 50 jobs in restructuring plans precipitated by the economic crisis. The Board of Global Ministries announced it eliminated 45 jobs, including 19 positions held by people who took buyouts or early retirement. United Methodist Communications is eliminating seven

positions. Both agencies said the restructuring plans will allow them to continue to meet church needs despite the cuts. "It is a new day and we are going forward," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, top executive of United Methodist Communications.

– UMNS; August 4, 2009.

+ *United Methodists struggle with health care reform*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)—The United Methodist Church states in the Book of Discipline, which sets forth the laws and beliefs of the denomination, that it is a "governmental responsibility to provide all citizens with health care." And many United Methodists interviewed across the country support universal health care. Yet like other Americans in the national debate, United Methodists also struggle with how best to provide basic, affordable health care. The path to consensus will not be easy, but it is a struggle the nation is called to undertake, many people in the pews say.

[Note: This is pure political activism in the making. As time goes on, you will see more of the general boards and agencies come down on the side of universal health care. – AOM]

– UMNS; August 19, 2009.

(UM) General Board of Church and Society

+ *United Methodists urged to back health care reform*

WASHINGTON (UMNS)—United Methodists are invited to participate in the "John 10:10 Challenge" to raise the faith community's voice in support of comprehensive U.S. health care reform. The challenge, issued by the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, is based on Jesus' declaration that he came so all "may have life, and have it abundantly."

More than 47 million people are without health care in this country, and 14,000 people are losing their coverage daily, according to both industry and congressional estimates. [Note: This is a highly controversial figure and advocacy. Some well-informed United Methodists believe that this health care bill would usher in socialized medicine – a proven failure in other countries around the world. – AOM]

– UMNS; July 27, 2009.

+ *Faith leaders begin campaign for health care reform*

WASHINGTON (UMNS)—A national television ad and press conference Aug. 10 will launch "40 Days for Health Reform" - an escalation of the faith community's effort to press Congress to make health care available and affordable for all. On Aug. 11, nationwide prayer events will be held to reach members of Congress in their districts and Aug. 28-30 will be nationwide health care sermon weekend. The campaign is sponsored and organized by PICO National Network, Faith in Public Life, Faithful America, Sojourners and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good. – UMNS; August 10, 2009.

(UM) General Board of Global Ministries *Job cuts hit mission agency the hardest*

NEW YORK (UMNS) - The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries knew it was not going to be easy to lay off staff at a time of high unemployment. "There's no good way to tell someone they've lost their job," acknowledged Christopher Heckert, agency staff executive for marketing and mission communications. However, "in stark contrast to what has been done in the past," the agency acted compassionately in the latest round of staff cuts by offering employees opportunities for buyouts or early retirement, Heckert said. Twenty-six employees were laid off when the mission agency cut 45 staff positions at the end of July. Another 19 accepted retirement or voluntary severance packages.

– UMNS; August 10, 2009.

(UM) General Commission and Race *Commission on Religion and Race celebrates Sotomayor confirmation*

WASHINGTON (UMNS) - The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race congratulated Sonia Sotomayor on the Senate vote confirming her to be the first Hispanic to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. "To be able to add another person of color to a bench that represents the best legal minds in this country is only natural," says Erin Hawkins, the commission's top executive. "This decision recognizes that there is no realm where diversity should not have access. When we can truly embrace that, in The United Methodist Church as in the country, we will all benefit richly."

[Note: It is not surprising that this nomination would receive this confirmation. She has a reputation of far-left political beliefs. - AOM]

– UMNS; August 10, 2009.

(UM) Men *United Methodist Men challenge ROMEO status*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS)—United Methodist Men wants to change the perception that its members are ROMEOs, or "Retired Old Men who Eat Out." The men admit to enjoying their pancake breakfasts, their fish fries and their lunch and dinner meetings at restaurants or in church fellowship halls. But United Methodist Men also spent \$15 million in missions projects at local churches last year. And they are working hard to address one of the denomination's major needs: recruiting young men to active church lives.

– UMNS; August 11, 2009.

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Consensus is the absence of leadership!

Global Outlook

*The principal threat to United Methodism at the present time
is not doctrinal rigidity or narrowness,
but theological confusion and fragmentation.*

– Joe Pennel, Jr., past bishop of the Virginia Conference

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China. CHINA -- House church leaders arrested in Sichuan

On June 9, several dozen Chinese officials from the Domestic Security Protection Squad barged Pastor Li Ming's home in Langzhong city, Sichuan province, where more than 30 house church leaders were gathered, according China Aid Association. Pastor Li's home was searched and all of the believers arrested. Thirteen of the leaders were sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention. Five other leaders, including Pastor Li, were placed under criminal detention and are likely to face formal criminal indictment or up to three years of "re-education through labor." The remaining leaders have been released. The Voice of the Martyrs has supported persecuted Christians in China for more than 30 years. Ask God to give wisdom and guidance to the imprisoned leaders and their families. Pray for an end to crackdowns against believers in China. – Source: The Voice of the Martyrs Website: http://www.crosswalkmail.com/vptztffz_esbvzmctvn.html Received by e-mail from Capt. W. E. Saunders, Key West, Florida.

Laos. On June 12, 13 Christians were arrested by plain clothes police, after visiting Christian villages in Laos, according to The Voice of the Martyrs contacts. The visiting believers met the police when they were in the village for their routine daily work. The police questioned them about what they were doing in the village. The police have not disclosed why they arrested the believers and at last report the Christians are still being held at a provincial police station.

The Voice of the Martyrs supports persecuted believers in Laos. VOM provides money for translated Bibles in Laos. This project offers thousands of Christians access to the full Bible for the first time because it includes multiple translations of God's Word into all of Laos many language groups. VOM encourages you to pray for the release of these believers. Ask God to protect and encourage the believers in the villages. Pray God to bless Christians in Laos.

– Source: The Voice of the Martyrs Website: http://www.crosswalkmail.com/kwvvlvvrbl_esbvzmctvn.html Received by e-mail from Capt. W. E. Saunders, Key West, Florida. [Note: This country has a special interest to me. I had monitored internal affairs there during the Vietnam War. These are a gentle, freedom-loving people. Their situation is tragic.]

Zimbawwe.

+ *Zimbabwe not addressing hunger, students say*

[Note: We should take special note of what is happening in this country – since our ecumenical church's leadership supported the elevation of its Marxist leader Robert Mugabe over the elevation of Methodist Bishop Abel Muzorewa. One can only wonder why. To a certain extent, we as a church share a responsibility in what happens in this troubled country.]

+ HARARE, Zimbabwe (ENI)—Zimbabwe's coalition government has failed to address widespread hunger and human rights violations in the country, a Christian youth movement charged. "The sad reality remains that the expectations of the public remain largely unmet," the Zimbabwe Student Christian Movement, part of the World Student Christian Federation, said in a June 17 report made available to Ecumenical News International. "The government of national unity has failed to resuscitate the social services delivery system in the country," the students said.

– *United Methodist News Service (UMNS), June 24, 2009.*

+ A Methodist bishop in South Africa, who runs a shelter for people fleeing from his country's northern neighbor, wants police here to stop arresting Zimbabweans now that the law concerning their visas has been changed. South Africa's Home Affairs ministry announced on May 4 that it had suspended visa requirements for all Zimbabweans who intend to travel to South Africa. Bishop Paul Verryn of the Central African Methodist Church in Johannesburg said clear instructions must be communicated to the police in South Africa so that they stop arresting Zimbabweans without valid identity documents. "If this piece of legislation is truly legitimate to help immigrants, it is absolutely critical that the police must stop harassing these people, especially Zimbabweans, without documents," Verryn told Ecumenical News International (ENI). "The police must be educated about the new development."

Nine days before new President Jacob Zuma shifted Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula to the ministry of correctional services, the minister announced that Zimbabweans would be granted 90-day visitors' permits. The minister said the new arrangement would serve to strengthen efforts to fight human trafficking, human smuggling and other cross-border crimes between South Africa and its neighbor Zimbabwe. Home Affairs spokesperson Joseph

Mohajane said that the decision was made to allow temporary economic relief to long-suffering Zimbabweans, of whom at least three million are believed to have fled to South Africa. Other countries in the Southern Africa Development Community region, which also includes Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mauritius, have arrangements with South Africa that permit their citizens to visit without visas. The visa waiver agreement does not allow Zimbabweans to work, but they are allowed to apply for a permit to engage in casual labor. Bishop Verryn has in the past received death threats for housing Zimbabweans at the Methodist church premises in central Johannesburg. He said there was no point in allowing Zimbabweans into the country if they could not work and study as they wished. The communications officer of the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Rev. Chris Townsend, said, "We are cautiously pleased with this move and hope that the decision will now allow Zimbabweans to be more secure in South Africa. Many are victims of intimidation because of their lack of papers."

– *Munyaradzi Makoni, ENI, Cape Town, SA, as reported in Newscope, May 27, 2009.*

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*People who love soft words and hate iniquity forget this –
that reform consists in taking a bone away from a dog.*

– *John Jay Chapman*