

Monthly Update

August 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This Monthly Update has more of the annual conference summaries from the Methodist Church around the world. We are continuing to monitor the results but have not been able to publish them because of space devoted to other, more pressing issues in our nation and church, such as the “immigration reform” pushed by church leaders.

In all of the events that we examine we cannot help but be concerned about the impact the actions that some of our church employees have on our United Methodist Church and the country as a whole. By no stretch of the imagination can they be called Christian. Yet we question why they engage in this activism – often to the detriment of our denomination and in the larger context of our country and world. In the summarized narratives of the annual conferences, there was insufficient space for all of the reports – but a look at just some of the issues in one will serve to show why we as a denomination are declining.

During the annual meeting of the California-Pacific Conference with Bishop Mary Ann Swenson presiding, time was spent “for UM gay and lesbian families to share their stories” to include long-time partners, clergy and laity, gay, straight, and transgender; passing a resolution in support of Bishop Minerva Carcano and the leadership of the Desert Southwest Conference in their opposition to Arizona's legislation against (illegal) immigration; and other “social” issues. Time was devoted to the Pacifica Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (another mainline denomination) with which an accord was reached. Later members adopted the budget of \$12,471,668, a 3.31% decrease from 2010. Membership is 81,194, a decline of 2,173. Isn't there a message here for us?

Secular humanistic causes devoid of spiritual enrichment result in misdirection and misplaced priorities – and these result in decline. Church leaders do not see this problem.

We would ask you to please continue to pray about the issues that are affecting our United Methodist Church and country, for church leaders that their eyes will be opened, and for us that we will stay focused on His tasks to be finished.

I thank you for your faithfulness and ask that you continue to be with us as we go through the lean summer months. It is only by your prayers and partnering with us that we are able to do what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has called us to. We need to remember that He above everyone else deserves our praise for who He is and our thanks for all that He does for each of us on a daily basis.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

August 2010 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

I lie the loudest when I lie to myself.

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Of Interest. Mission Fields Expand Across the Globe

The rapid growth of African, Asian and Latin American missionaries and the evolution of Western Europe into a mission field are two of the major changes that have occurred in the hundred years between a historic World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh, Scotland, and a global mission conference this month in the same city. A century ago, as numerous speakers at Edinburgh 2010 pointed out, planet Earth could be divided into the “Christian world” of Europe and North America and the mission fields of Africa and Asia. In the view of the entirely Protestant participants in 1910, mission energy flowed from north to south, with denominational mission agencies usually in charge. Today, the “global South” – Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America (about 40 percent of UM missionaries are from these areas) – contain vibrant, growing churches and Christian communities, both mission-founded and indigenous. Many are Pentecostal or independent. Meanwhile, the older churches of the Northern Hemisphere have lost members to secularism or new forms of spirituality. The Rev. Bertil Eksrom, a missionary in Brazil with the World Evangelical Alliance, spoke of the growth of all kinds of religious expressions as one sign of the growth of religious liberty in formerly closed societies. Presbyterian, Pentecostal and Methodist churches in South Korea send thousands of missionaries into the rest of the world. Korea’s Yoido Full Gospel Church, whose leader, the Rev. Young-Hoon Lee, spoke in Edinburgh, has missionaries throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, with some in the United States and Western Europe.

The Rev. Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, president of the South Africa Council of Churches, said Africa had both benefited from and been a “victim of” mission. Much of the past, notably northern Christian assumptions of superiority, must be undone, he said. Ideally, he added, mission is an exchange among equals and cannot be understood as what “the rich do to the poor, what men do to women, what people from the North do to people of the South.” The awareness that mission today goes in all directions without clear lines of accountability figured in deliberations on how various Christian denominations or theological perspectives relate to one another in the context of evangelism and church growth. The World Council of Churches, the Vatican and the World Evangelical Association are currently working on what could become guidelines on how churches respect one another’s members. The council represents Protestant and Orthodox churches. Mission from Africa to the north is also happening today, although in what degree is not easily determined. Such work relates to migration, with African Christians, including UMs, moving to Europe for professional or economic reasons and then setting up churches or linking to existing denominations. The Rev. Fidon R. Mwombeki, top executive of the United Evangelical Mission based in Wuppertal, Germany, said many of these emerging churches are independent of European church structures. Maluleke, speaking in a press conference, commended this trend as good for north and south and wished it were more common. – Elliott Wright for United Methodist News Service (UMNS); *as reported in Newscope, June 16, 2010.*

Homosexuality.

+ Military Hearing on Capitol Hill

The Senate Armed Services Committee held yet another hearing on the issue of homosexuals in the military, with the chairman, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), pushing aggressively for repeal of the current law and even a moratorium on its enforcement pending repeal. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) countered that the Pentagon's current review of the issue shouldn't focus on how to change the law, but on whether to do so and why. Two "victims" of the current policy--an Air Force major "outed" by personal emails on a business account and a Naval Academy grad who openly announced her lesbianism--were ably countered by retired Marine Gen. John J. Sheehan.

During his testimony, Gen. Sheehan described an incident from his service in Vietnam when a unit was seriously disrupted by an incident in which a homosexual soldier attempted to molest another. Members of the FRC staff were at the hearing to hear him reject the common claim that allowing homosexuals in the armed forces has had no effect on the armed forces of our European allies, noting the failure of a Dutch unit in the war in Serbia that he attributed to a number of "liberalization" measures, including acceptance of homosexuality. When Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) asked a serious question about the threat to recruiting and retention posed by homosexuality in the military, comedienne Kathy Griffin (who for some reason is a "pro-gay-military" activist) muttered something and stormed out of the hearing in disgust. [She could not understand that...]-the need for good order, morale, discipline, and unit cohesion in the military is no laughing matter.

– E-mail received from the Family Research Council, 801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001.

+ Scouts Plant Doubts on Abuse

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) took a different oath--this time on the witness stand. As a civil trial kicks off against the BSA in Oregon, all eyes are on hundreds of files recently released by the Scouts that detail case after case of child sexual abuse between 1965 to 1984. The plaintiff in Portland's case is arguing that these documents are evidence of a troubling pattern in the Scouts to cover up incidents of molestation, of which he claims to be a victim. Until recently, those archives had been locked away in the Boy Scouts headquarters to protect the confidentiality of their members.

Although the BSA was not justified in hiding this information, it does show that they weren't arbitrarily opposed to homosexual scout leaders when they banned them from serving in the late 1990s (a decision that the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed in June of 2000). Far from being intolerant, the Scouts took the necessary steps to cut down on the episodes of sexual abuse that had been plaguing the Association since the middle of last century. For years, the Scouts have taken a public beating from the Left--all because it was trying to create membership criteria in the best interest of their kids' safety.

– E-mail received from the Family Research Council, 801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001.

Annual Conference Reports

Alabama-West Florida The Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference (AWF Conference) was held June 6-9, with the theme "Partnership in the Gospel: Nurturing Disciples." Bishop Paul L. Leeland, presided and welcomed clergy and lay members to Frazer Memorial UMC in Montgomery, Ala. Bishop William Morris, who previously served as resident bishop of the AWF Conference, delivered the sermon at opening worship. For the first time, more women than men were ordained at service of ordination and commissioning. The Annual Conference adopted four resolutions during the 2010 session: two deal with gambling in the state of Alabama; one advocates for the continuation of the National Day of Prayer; one deals with tax reform in Alabama. Membership is 148,803 down 1,071. – Meredyth Earnest, AWF Conference director of communication; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Arkansas The Arkansas Annual Conference, under the leadership of Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield, met June 6-9 in Hot Springs. The theme was "Imagine: Transforming the World Together." Bishop Nukulu Ntamba Ntambo, from the North Katanga Conference, Democratic Republic of Congo, was the featured speaker. The close relationship between the two conferences was evident as Arkansas UMs presented Ntambo with \$35,000 for the digging of water wells. Ntambo shared his hope that 100 wells would be dug in 100 villages in North Katanga within two years. To date, the Arkansas Conference has provided support for 26 wells at a cost of \$8,000 per well. The funds presented to Ntambo will allow four additional wells to be constructed.

Bishop Crutchfield's episcopal address focused on the need for the church in Arkansas to take a wilderness walk of faith to discern God's plan for the conference in changing times. This message was also shared by Rev. Gil Rendle, consultant to the conference and advisor to the Imagine Ministry task force. The task force was created by the bishop last year to examine the state of the church, gather data and input from every local congregation and to bring recommendations for 21st century ministry to the 2011 Annual Conference gathering. Membership at the end of 2009 stood at 136,223, down 1,757.

– Martha Taylor, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Baltimore-Washington The Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered for its 226th session June 2-4 in Baltimore, Md., under the theme "Passionate Disciples Celebrate in Worship" Membership is 185,082, down 3,657. Conference members tabled four pieces of legislation on homosexuality and engaged in a conversation on the topic. The panel, moderated by conference member Rev. Vance Ross, included an equal number of laity and clergy for and against the Discipline's stance on homosexuality.

– Shaun Lane, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

California-Nevada The emphasis was on fruitfulness when members of the California-Nevada Annual Conference gathered for their 162nd session, June 16-19. "We must be accountable for the fruit that we give," said Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr. in his State of the Conference address. "Mr. Wesley had a thing about fruit. Jesus had a thing about fruit. I guess it's in my DNA to have a thing about fruit." After citing reductions in the numbers of churches reporting professions of faith, baptisms and confirmation classes in 2009, the bishop read Luke 13:6-9, the parable of the fig tree, and added, "It's not a numbers game-it's a Scripture game." Dr. Marcia McFee led the assembly in inspirational worship focused on the concepts of radiating joy, initiating relationship and "co-creating the reign." The conference approved resolutions in support of "humane" state budgets for California and Nevada; in support of a bill that would exclude offenders under the age of 18 from being sentenced to "life without possibility of parole"; and a resolution calling for local churches to become bases for "confronting unjust heterosexist structures." The conference also approved recommendations requiring active clergy to maintain an active e-mail address, local churches to maintain an Internet presence in some form, and local churches to create and maintain a "communications coordinator" position. Membership gains occurred in 118 churches, compared to 115 in 2008. However, 2009 also saw the greatest loss in overall membership in a single year since 1981. Membership is 80,375, down 1,854.

– Cate Monaghan, interim communications director; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

California-Pacific More than 1,700 laity and clergy from across Southern California, Hawaii, Guam, and Saipan gathered at the University of Redlands in Redlands, Calif., for the 2010 California-Pacific Annual Conference. This year's theme continued the conference's vision "To Be the Cup Overflowing," focusing on new ministries, one of the denominational Four Areas of Focus. During opening worship, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson proclaimed, "We come in the spirit of Jesus Christ to order the life of our church." She told those gathered, "I am still hopeful, and my hope is fueled by your faithfulness." The conference welcomed the Rev. Eun Pa Hong, senior pastor of Bupyeong Methodist Church of Korea. Bupyeong has a membership of approximately 4,000 adults and 2,200 children. Hong led the annual conference in traditional Korean Tongsung Kido morning prayer each day at 5:45 a.m. At his church in Korea, average morning prayer attendance is 4,200. A motion was approved to devote significant time on the agenda

for UM gay and lesbian families to share their stories. Seven different presentations titled "Telling Our Stories" were received during plenary sessions. The speakers represented a range of ages and included married couples and long-time partners, clergy and laity, gay, straight, and transgender, family members, men and women. During the service of commissioning, ordination, and sending forth, Bishop Swenson welcomed Bishop Murray Finck, of the Pacifica Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Members adopted a 2011 apportionment budget of \$12,471,668, representing a 3.31 percent decrease from 2010. In other business, conference passed a resolution in support of Bishop Minerva Carcano and the leadership of the Desert Southwest Conference in their opposition to Arizona's recent immigration legislation and passed a resolution making the development of Hispanic Ministries a priority of the annual conference. Membership is 81,194, down 2,173. – Dr. Larry R. Hygh Jr.; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

Central Pennsylvania. The 222nd session of the Central Pennsylvania Conference gathered at Messiah College on June 4-5. The theme of the conference was "Going into Galilee. The session was the final gathering of the conference, whose nine districts will partner with the Wilkes-Barre and Scranton districts of the Wyoming Annual Conference to become the Susquehanna Annual Conference, with organizing sessions are June 12 and September 11 at the Williamsport Center for the Arts. The conference will gather for its first full session at Messiah College on June 8-11, 2011. Membership is 132,884, down 3,742.

– Gerald Wolgemuth, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

Central Texas. Excitement and expectations were heightened at the 144th Central Texas Annual Conference in Fort Worth, from the opening worship June 6 to the sending forth June 9. Members approved a \$10.5 million budget for 2011, a .41 percent decrease, but struggled before passing direct billing churches for their clergy comprehensive protection plan costs. Bishop J. Michael Lowry welcomed Dr. Jessica Moffatt Seay, senior pastor at First UMC in Ardmore, Okla., as preacher for all three worship services... A preliminary report on the new conference alignment was introduced and a Nov. 13 date approved for a called session to vote on the new alignment of resources and structure. In other actions, members approved a study of the conference relationship with the Central Texas Methodist Foundation; a recommendation that the 2012 jurisdictional delegation develop a procedure for interviewing all clergy who desire consideration as episcopal candidates; a resolution calling on Congress to enact comprehensive, human and equitable immigration reform; and recognized the new Ghanaian church start, the close of one church and merging of another with an existing church start. The body failed to approve a resolution calling for the election of at least one young adult to all future Annual Conference delegations to General Conference, but will work with the Student Leadership Team to accomplish this goal by other means, and rejected a resolution calling for support of teaching "creation science" in our schools. Membership is 164,919, up 1,084.

– Carolyn Stephens, associate director for mission ministry and director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Desert Southwest. UMs from around Arizona, California and Nevada gathered in Glendale, Ariz. for the 26th session of the Desert Southwest Annual Conference on June 24-27. For the first time in its history, the conference dedicated a full day to a time of learning. The featured speaker was Clif Christopher, author of "Its Not Your Parents Offering Plate (Abingdon Press, 2008). Christopher shared that today's church is in competition with secular nonprofits for the giving dollars of church members, and most churches are not prepared to compete. In support of the movement into full communion between The UMC and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the ELCA Grand Canyon Synod was invited to take part in the time of learning and the service of ordination, during which Bishop Stephen S. Talmage, of the Grand Canyon Synod of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, preached. Membership is 38,961, down 2.8. – Stephen J. Hustedt, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010.*

East Ohio Annual Conference. Members came together in a time of confession, prayer, hope and healing. The 41st session was held at Lakeside, Ohio, June 14-17, with Bishop John Hopkins presiding. Featured speaker included Bishop Hope Morgan Ward of the Mississippi Annual Conference. Adopted resolutions calling churches to bring... healing in response to exclusivity and discrimination; greater awareness concerning diversity; require that churches provide contact information for a youth leader in order to be informed about conference events. A resolution asking the General Board of Church and Society end its lobbying for government funded abortion and withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice was defeated. After maintaining a flat budget for the last six years, the conference approved a \$12,168,020 budget for 2011, a decrease of 3 percent. Membership is 163,815, down 2.9 percent.

– Lois Speelman, Kay Panovec; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010*

Eastern Pennsylvania. With a theme of "Leading Beyond the Walls," the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference (EPA) met May 20-22 at the Lancaster County Convention Center. Nearly 1,000 clergy and lay delegates represented the conference's 463 churches. At opening worship, Bishop Peggy Johnson welcomed Bishop B. Penrose Hoover, of the Lower Susquehanna Area of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Keynote speaker, the Rev. Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor of The UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., focused on Effective Church Leadership. – Suzy Keenan, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Florida. June 10-12 during the 2010 Florida Annual Conference. nearly 1,800 lay and clergy members gathered at the Lakeland Center under the theme "Transforming the World by Eradicating Extreme Poverty." Florida Gov. Charlie Crist spoke to the laity session June 10. A lifelong UM, Crist said lessons learned from church and family have guided his actions throughout his career. "We have a duty and an obligation to help other people," Crist said. In 2009, revenue increased to \$57.9 million, with expenses decreasing to \$49.4 million. The number of churches paying 100 percent of their apportionments dropped from 407 in 2008 to 366 in 2009, but the percent paid fell only about 1 percent, to 79.1 percent. Members approved a budget of \$17.5 million-4.74 percent less than the 2010 budget. Membership is 294,935, down 7,562. – Tita Parham, editor of e-Review Florida UMNS; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

Greater New Jersey. Over 1300 people gathered at the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia, Pa., under the leadership of Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, for the 11th session of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference (GNJ) on from June 3 -5. Membership in the GNJ stands at 94,201, down .06. – Jack Shaw and Jessica Stenstrom; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Holston. The Holston Annual Conference (June 13-16, Lake Junaluska, N.C.) followed up on bold decisions and giving of recent years by approving a tithe-based apportionment and collecting \$154,625 in an offering for south Sudan. They also raised \$61,933 for children's ministry in Holston and in Africa and sent food, health and school supplies to Liberia and Zimbabwe valued at \$232,221. Led by Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., leaders of 902 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia met for the third year under the theme "Offer Them Christ." After two years of receiving a historically low 85 percent in apportionment payments, Holston voted with a strong majority to discard the existing apportionment formula, instead giving 10 percent of all undesignated local church income to support the conference budget. The tithe-based apportionment will become effective in 2011, at the same time "direct invoicing" will be implemented. In 2009, Holston voted to remove pensions and health insurance from the apportionment formula, instead allowing local churches to pay directly for those staffing costs. Holston rejoiced in the return of the Rev. Boo Hankins and the Rev. Phyllis Hankins after their first year serving as mission leaders in south Sudan. The clergy couple will return to Africa for a second year in late June. Steve and Diantha Hodges announced their August departure for south Sudan. Through its covenant partnership with the East Africa Conference, Holston will also construct wells, classrooms and a guest house in Yei, Sudan. Several Sudan projects were not funded by the \$627,000 collected in past offerings, but by individuals, churches, golf tournaments, auctions, and other fundraisers, Holston leaders noted. A 2011 budget of \$10.8 million was approved, with a resolve to pay 100 percent of general church and jurisdictional apportionments and implementation of a special offering to support ministerial education. Membership is 166,625, down 180. – Annette Spence; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

Indiana. "Practice Faith" was the theme of the second Indiana Annual Conference session, held on the campus of Ball State University in Muncie. More than 2,400 conference members and guests spent equal amounts of time on learning, volunteer mission service, worship and the business of the conference. Clergy and laity heard Missouri Bishop Robert Schnase set the pace of the conference speaking about his books *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* and *Five Practices of Fruitful Living*. Conference members put Schnase's teachings into action on Saturday afternoon during the second annual Day of Outreach to Muncie. More than 630 members and guests dressed in bright-orange "Practice Faith" lettered t-shirts, joined 150 volunteer hosts serving Muncie residents in 30 locations across town with projects that included prayer walking, food gathering and sorting, picking up trash off city streets, visiting seniors in ten nursing homes, sprucing up neighborhood parks, repairing homes and community mission sites, assisting in the Habitat for Humanity RE-store and assembling health kits for use in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Members approved a \$15.6 million budget, including more than \$5 million in General Church apportionments. Membership is 194,495, down 10,032. – Daniel R. Gangler, director of communication; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Iowa. "Radical Hospitality: Offering God's Love" was the theme of the 167th yearly gathering of the Iowa Annual Conference, June 5-8. Retired Bishop Rueben Job, Bishop Arthur Kulah of the Nigeria Area and the Rev. Doug Ruffle, director of the Office of Congregational Development of the Greater New Jersey Conference were guest preachers and speakers. Resident Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble dedicated Hy-Vee Hall of the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines to service in prayer. Bishop Richard Pates of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Des Moines spoke in Spanish and English as the ecumenical representative to the gathering.

More than 300 members were led by Bishop Trimble and Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie to a plaza in downtown Des Moines, where Bishop Trimble addressed the gathering: "A witness for peace and justice and the love of Christ transcends political opinion. The love of Christ is not Democratic or Republican. The love of Christ is not tea party or hot chocolate party or any other kind of party. The love of Christ transcends anyone's political opinion." Members supported a resolution calling for "continuing intercessory prayer for comprehensive immigration reform . . . that is fair and just." The approved 2011 budget is nearly 2% lower than the 2010 budget. Only one health care option, a high-deductible plan, will be offered in 2011, significantly lowering the initially proposed 23% increase from Wellmark. Membership is 184,376, a 1.6 percent decrease.

– Dr. Arthur McClanahan, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Kansas East. Kansas East Annual Conference met June 9-12 at UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., under the leadership of Bishop Scott J. Jones. The theme was "The Church United: Eradicating Poverty," continuing the conference's emphasis on each of the Four Areas of Focus identified by the 2008 General Conference. The conference approved a resolution to enter into a partnership relationship with the Haiti District of the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas. The partnership identifies three key projects for the conference to partner with the church in Haiti to complete, including the rebuilding of an important school in Port-au-Prince and a new parsonage on La Gonave. Gesner Paul, president of the Methodist Church in Haiti, was a special guest of the conference. The conference adopted a spending plan of \$5.058 million for 2011 and a resolution calling for all congregations to provide financial and emotional support and networking connections for pregnant women in need and for their voiceless children. Membership is 71,174, down 132 from 2008. – Lisa Elliott Diehl, communications director; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Kentucky. The Kentucky Annual Conference was held June 9-12 in Covington, Ky. The theme of this year's conference was "Called by Christ, Sent to Serve." Bishop Richard Looney, retired, preached "Lessons from the Valley" during the opening worship. The time of worship concluded with Holy Communion, lead by Bishop Lindsey Davis, the episcopal leader of both the Kentucky and Red Bird conferences, Bishop Looney and the Rev. Julie Hager Love. Dr. Joy Moore, associate dean for Lifelong Learning at Duke Divinity School, led a Bible study each day. Her first message was a great lead-in to the Afternoon of Service. The Afternoon of Service was a time for the members of the Kentucky Conference to give back to the community that was hosting us. Approximately 600 people gathered at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center to be "Sent to Serve." Conference members worked in 30 different locations on

a variety of projects. These included Ida Spence Mission, seven nursing homes and six prayer walks through the streets of Covington. At the Convention Center, 54 people gave blood at a Red Cross Blood Drive. More than 500 agape letters were written to missionaries and soldiers around the world. Almost 1,000 Campbell soup can labels were cut, sorted, and organized for use by the Red Bird Missionary Conference. Almost 50 tote bags were completed to give to local food pantries for food distribution. Over 1,700 health kits were completed for the UM Committee on Relief. Members of the youth and young adult delegation wheeled over 1,100 cans of food in grocery carts to two local food pantries. At Grace UMC, 150 meals were served, 1,700 bottles of water were given away, and 85 different families received food from the outdoor pantry. Conference members and other attendees came forward with an offering for the Red Bird Missionary Conference. The offering exceeded all expectations with a total of over \$200,000 given. Conference members discussed and approved the 2011 budget, which was set at \$9 million. Membership is 152,052 people, down 446.

– Cathy Bruce, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

Louisiana. The Louisiana Annual Conference, led by Bishop William W. Hutchinson June 6-9 in Shreveport, celebrated the theme "Whole World, Whole People" with a focus on the church's Global Health Initiative. Special events included a clinic offering free HIV/AIDS tests to the public; tours of free clinics and a shelter for AIDS patients; and a health fair for delegates. Conference members assembled hundreds of health and layette kits for distribution through UMCOR to earthquake-ravaged Haiti. Outreach projects also included a variety of painting and light carpentry projects, which upgraded the homes of local citizens with health-related issues. Conference members also assembled 6,000 "bags of hope" for distribution to coastal residents and response workers affected by the devastating oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Local pastors who are serving on the "front lines" will facilitate the distribution of these bags, which contain a Bible, a copy of the Upper Room and a message of encouragement from the Louisiana Conference with contact information for these local churches. The Bibles were provided by the General Commission of UM Men and the devotionals were provided by Upper Room Ministries. Special collections were taken for HIV/AIDS research and the "Imagine No Malaria" initiative. The conference adopted a resolution to establish a task force to study the camping and retreat ministries of the conference. An \$8.1 million budget was adopted for 2011. Membership is 120,653, down 1,590 from 2008.

– Betty Backstrom, communications director, Louisiana Annual Conference; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Missouri. "Growing Deeper" was the theme of this year's Missouri Annual Conference Session June 4-7 with Bishop Robert Schnase presiding. The Rev. Michael Slaughter of Ginghamburg UMC in Ohio led a time of learning and a workshop on moving your church outside of itself and into the world. On Friday evening, the Missouri Conference gathered around the table for a family dinner and meditation. The event was led by Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher, who reminded everyone that Jesus invited the poor, unclean, social outcasts to his table. Bishop Robert Hayes of the Oklahoma Area was the preacher for the service of ordination. The fastest growing church in the Oklahoma Area requires people to go through several weeks of classes before they can become members. Bishop Hayes told those who were about to become members in full connection that they would have the privilege of self-denial, and that self-denial is not just the opposite of self-fulfillment. Membership is 167,289 down 1,215.

– Fred Koenig, editor, Missouri Conference Publications; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Memphis. "Tending God's Garden" was the theme for the 2010 Memphis Annual Conference, held June 6-8 in Collierville, Tenn. Guest speaker Dr. Leonard Sweet addressed attendees in three sessions. He talked about what a Gutenberg Church must do to reach a "TGIF world." (T=Twitter; G=Google; I=iPhone; F=Facebook). The author, preacher, scholar and ordained UM clergyman reminded attendees they must grow faith in the world they have, not the world they wish to have. Bishop Wills, in his "State of the

Church" message, lamented declining membership and attendance, but was "one of the smallest declines we've had." Membership is 84,515, down 687. – Lane Gardner Camp, communications director, Memphis Conference; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

New Mexico. The 2010 New Mexico Annual Conference at Glorieta, N.M. included a teaching workshop featuring Dr. Gil Rendle, a consultant in change management. Rendle talked about the changing culture and the church's response. Bishop D. Max Whitfield asked members to imagine . . . imagine the possibilities if leaders asked the hard questions . . . imagine no one dying of malaria . . . imagine continued extravagant generosity . . . imagine that at least one half of all the congregations in the conference establish a new faith community. Members approved a 5.9 percent budget increase for 2011. Conference membership is 36,664, down 1,056.

– Karla Abernethy-Thetford, Northwest Texas-New Mexico Area director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

North Carolina. The theme of the North Carolina Annual Conference (June 10-12 in Greenville, N.C.) was "A Future with Hope . . . Living for Jesus."; conference met for one day less than previous years), combined services or worship and business items were presented together; began with the combined service of Holy Communion and All Saints Celebration. Ordination, fixing of appointments, and sending forth held as one service. All matters related to the budget were presented and discussed during the first day of conference and presented for final vote on the second day. In the previous years, some items were presented on different days, often making it difficult for members to visualize how all line items impact the overall budget. Rather than presenting awards throughout the conference, all awards, along with the State of the Church address, were presented the first evening. The approved conference budget was \$20,345,625, an increase of \$69,426. Membership is 237,495, up 5. – Bill Norton; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

North Central New York. The Rev. Dale E. Austin, North Central New York Annual Conference secretary for 19 years, offered the closing motion as the conference ended its final session on June 18, in preparation for their future ministry as part of the Upper New York Annual Conference: "Today we stand just a little more than a month from the 200th anniversary of Methodism in this region. It was on July 20, 1810 that the Genesee Conference was originally created, with bishops Asbury and McKendree presiding." Membership is 70,310, down 1,924.

– Glenn Hannigan; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

North Georgia. The 2010 North Georgia Annual Conference, June 16-18 in Athens, Ga., convened under the theme "Ordinary to Extraordinary: Wake Up and See Where God Is Moving" to nearly 3,000 people who attended. A 17-person task force presented initial findings involving options for the future of the Simpsonwood Retreat and Conference Center. The task force has preliminarily concluded that the long-range operation of the retreat center is not financially viable even if the debt is paid off and \$2-3 million could be provided for capital improvements. An approved motion empowers the task force to seek a legal ruling on whether the conference may legally divide or sell the property. Members adopted four resolutions related to COSROW, a program coordinator for Creation Care, establishment of an Annual Day for Men and the rental/housing allowance for retired or disabled clergypersons. Out of 924 churches, 669 paid 100 percent of their apportionments, down from 722 in 2008 and 757 in 2007. Conference approved a budget of \$25,295,067, a decrease of \$614,933 from 2010. Membership is 356,279, up 2,185. There were 6,622 professions of faith, down 48.

– Glenn Hannigan; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010*

Northern Illinois. UMs of the Northern Illinois Conference (June 13-16, St. Charles) met with Bishop Hee-Soo Jung presiding. Members of the conference voted to approve apportionments in 2011 of \$7.09 million, unchanged from the 2010 budget, with a total budget of \$8.60 million. In legislative action, the conference voted to petition the UMC Judicial Council to reconsider its recent decisions on inclusive membership; divest conference investments from companies that profit from the occupation of the Palestinian territories; support the people of Haiti through ministries of mercy, love and justice; and advocate for comprehensive immigration reform. Two offerings were collected: \$2,829 for relief in Haiti and \$3,394 for the Ministerial Education Fund. Members also donated 1,947 pounds of relief supplies to be delivered to UMCOR's Sager Brown depot. Membership is 100,372, down 1,440.

– Matt Kuzma Jr., director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

North Texas. The North Texas Conference met June 6-8 in Wichita Falls. The conference was developed around the principle of "Risk-Taking Mission." Members overwhelmingly approved a new strategic plan that has been more than a year in development. Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe declared his elation with the vote and the spirit in which it was accomplished, personally thanking members for their "willingness to move ahead in a new direction." The new plan reduces districts from six to four and creates four centers aligned with the Four Areas of Focus of The UMC. The overall goal is to redirect ministry and resources to the mission field of the 20-county area served by the conference. The budget approved for 2011 was \$11,883,286, a reduction of 3.3% from 2010. At the close of 2009, total conference membership was 156,284, down 1.5% from 2008.

– Joan G. LaBarr, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Northwest Texas. Members gathered in Lubbock to celebrate 100 years of ministry in Northwest Texas. Annual Conference opened with a processional of churches. Representatives carried signs with the names of churches in existence 100 years ago that remain active today. The 2011 budget of \$6.9 million was approved. A resolution was approved that allows up to 75 percent of the annual

interest accumulated from excess equitable compensation funds on deposit to be used for the development of new ministers in mission situations both inside and outside the annual conference. Statistical information regarding membership was not available at the time of this report. – Karla Abernethy-Thetford, Northwest Texas-New Mexico Area communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. “Reclaiming the Future: Inform, Inspire, Engage” was the theme of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference's 168th session held at the Northeast Region Center near Preston. Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr., presiding bishop for the Oklahoma area, was the preacher for all worship. Opening ceremonies included the presentation of flags: the American and Christian flags and flags of all 39 federally recognized tribes of Oklahoma. Mr. Marcus Briggs-Cloud, a Miccosukee Creek and member of Norman First American UMC, was the worship leader, incorporating native and contemporary hymns. Membership is 6,196, no change from last year. – Josephine Deere, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010.*

Oregon-Idaho. It was never hard for the attendees of the 42nd Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference session to remember that they were gathered under the theme "Boldly Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Embracing Change." The conference was full of changes, the most noticeable one being a new location at the Salem Conference Center, Salem, Ore. The emphasis on healthy, vital congregations was demonstrated when the conference schedule was adjusted to delete routine items and make time for a full day of training with Rev. Adam Hamilton. Hamilton brought his Leadership Institute training from the UM Church of the Resurrection to the conference to encourage new ways of thinking about strengthening the church, building both lay and clergy leaders and building healthy, vital congregations. The Council on Finance and Administration proposed a budget for 2011 to the conference that was 10 percent less than 2010. Membership is 30,315, down 771. – Greg Nelson, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Peninsula-Delaware. "Reach Out to Serve" was the theme of the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference, held June 10-12 at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, Md. Bishop Peggy A. Johnson of the Philadelphia Area presided at the 226th session since the first Methodist conference convened on the Delmarva Peninsula. Members affirmed The UMC's position favoring health care and insurance for all people. The conference asked congregations to study God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action <http://www.cokesbury.com/forms/ProductDetail.aspx?pid=836851> >, the Pastoral Letter on poverty and disease, environmental issues, and violence and weapons. Conference and general church apportionments for 2011 will be held at the 2010 level of \$5,752,290, partly because of a steep rise in clergy health premiums for next year. Conference membership at the end of 2009 stood at 88,902, down 899 from the previous year. – Elliott Wright for Peninsula-Delaware Conference; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

Poland The 89th session of the Annual Conference in Poland (June 18-20 in Katowice) met. In recent years, The UMC in Poland has been reporting a steady or slightly increasing membership. New people quite often join a local church after a radio or TV broadcast of a worship service. During the conference, the worship service celebrating the 85th anniversary of Katowice UMC was recorded for a radio broadcast, and the ordination service will be telecast later. The Annual Conference of The UMC in Poland has had a special legal charter for more than 60 years. There are similarities between this charter and the Book of Discipline and the Central Conferences, but there are also differences. It was resolved to enter into discussions with a delegation of the Central Conferences in order to find a solution by mutual agreement. – Office of Bishop Dr. Patrick Streiff; *as reported in Newscope, July 14, 2010*

Rio Grande Annual Conference met at University UMC, San Antonio, on June 10-12. Under the theme “Creating and Harvesting Something New,” approximately 240 delegates received various reports on the state of the conference's vitality, initiatives and opportunities to create a culture of growth. Delegates unanimously affirmed a resolution and call to action on immigration reform, based on the principles from the UMC bishops' statement and the development and implementation of a Rio Grande Conference Task Force on Immigration related to the Rapid Response Team of the General Board of Church and Society. Delegates approved a total budget of \$1,554,198, of which \$783,552 is local church apportionment, a decreased apportioned amount of \$32,306 from the previous year. Delegates affirmed the establishment of an episcopal-appointed economic task group to assess the financial outlook and sustainability of the conference. Conference membership is 13,988, down 38.

– Abel Vega Jr., director of connectional ministries; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010*

Rocky Mountain. “Rethink red” and “Rockies purple” T-shirts appeared on attendees at the Rocky Mountain Conference (RMC) as they gathered in Denver for the 2010 Annual Conference session. The T-shirts were in preparation for “UM Day” at the Rockies baseball game. A budget of \$5,350,000 was presented along with a detailed accounting of where tithes, pledges and donations go. Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of The UM Church of the Resurrection near Kansas City, inspired and challenged the conference in presentations on vital and vibrant churches. Adopted petitions call for a February Valentine's emphasis on Global HIV/AIDS, ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, inclusiveness in local church leadership and affirming differences in expression of the mystery of human sexuality. Membership is 66,125, down 591.

– Ben Roe, the Rev. Loren A. Boyce; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010*

South Germany Annual Conference. The eighth South Germany Annual Conference met June 9-13 in Esslingen and Sindelfingen, Germany with Bishop Rosemarie Wenner presiding. The conference theme was "Living Passionately-Growing through Faith!" As this title indicates, church growth was an important topic at the conference. Many discussions centered on the structure of our conference and our leadership and to what degree it hinders or helps us carry out our mission. Membership (confessing members) of the conference stands at 16,957, down 288 members. The number of baptized members in the conference stands at 13,602, up 39 from last year.

– Dr. Jonathan Whitlock, conference communicator; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

South Georgia. Fellowship, worship, Bible study and celebration marked the 2010 South Georgia Annual Conference session, held June 6-9 at the University of Georgia Tifton Campus Conference Center in Tifton, Ga. Bishop James R. King Jr., episcopal leader of the South Georgia area, presided. Meeting under the theme "Sowing the Word," this year's conference allowed the nearly 1,200 attendees several opportunities to open the scriptures and share in the richness of God's Word. Woven throughout the conference were testimonies that encouraged and exhorted members to sow the Word of God into their lives and into the lives of others. In his sermon, "So What?" Bishop King proclaimed that clergy and laity are to sow the Word of God to a world that is aching to hear the words of life. "Positive persistence pays," he said. "Growing God's kingdom-sowing seeds-does not just happen; it's not automatic. Every seed you sow will not bear fruit. But the ones that fall on a spiritually mature heart will. Be faithful; be encouraged. Sow the word of God." In other actions, members gave over \$43,000 to the UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for this year's special offering; were greeted by Mr. Charlie Coleman, an ambassador for the Black College Fund, who expressed appreciation for the support The UMC and the South Georgia Conference gives him and 16,000 students through the Black College Fund; and approved a \$12.4 million budget for mission and ministry for the next year. Membership is 133,357, down 1,567.

– Kara Witherow and Kelly Roberson; *as reported in Newscope, June 23, 2010*

Upper New York Area. On June 19, 2010, the Rev. Dr. Marcus Matthews, Resident Bishop of the Upper New York Area, called to order the first session of the Upper New York Uniting Conference at the OnCenter in Syracuse. Several motions later, the nearly 2,000 UMs in attendance voted to approve the creation of the new conference and to name it Upper New York Annual Conference of The UMC, serving 940 churches, 12 districts, 48,000 square miles and 184,900 members. After discussions among six annual conferences in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, the first major step was taken on Oct. 6, 2007. Clergy and lay members of the North Central New York, Western New York, Troy and Wyoming conferences voted in simultaneous special sessions and later in separate annual conference sessions to approve the unification and realignment to create one annual conference across upstate New York. In a ceremony filled with celebration of the old and the new, two deacons and 12 elders were commissioned, two provisional elders were recognized and two deacons and 17 elders were ordained. Membership for the Upper New York Annual Conference stands at 184,900.

– Maidstone Mulenga, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 21, 2010*

Virginia. Before a small boat about the size used on the Sea of Galilee in Jesus' time, the 228th session of Virginia Annual Conference focused on "Leading by Following Jesus" in the port city of Norfolk, June 13-16. Bishop Charlene P. Kammerer presided over a meeting filled with uplifting messages and examples of UM generosity.

The most stirring moments came in response to the fiery preaching of the Rev. Dr. Vance Ross, deputy general secretary for the General Board of Discipleship, and the quiet testimony of the Rev. Jim Gulley, who survived the collapse of the Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince during the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti. Talking about Jesus calling the fishermen along the shore of the Galilee, Ross said "the word follow in the Greek doesn't mean 'just come hang out.' It means drop what you're doing, to cut loose from it." After describing the horrific earthquake and its aftermath, Gulley thanked the conference for its contributions to Haiti relief, which now surpass \$1.6 million, its assembly of more than 43,000 kits during the gathering, and those who have physically gone to Haiti to help. But Gulley also urged UMs in the U.S. to learn all they can about Haitian history and culture, saying "our futures can also be tied together with hope for the resurrection of Haiti to be better than it was before the earthquake." Members voted to reduce the number of districts from 18 to 16. That reduction will occur following 2011 annual conference. Conference membership is 338,334, an increase of 774 members.

– Neill Caldwell, editor of the Virginia UM Advocate; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

Western New York. With a closing motion presented by Western New York Annual Conference Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Gregory Crispell, and a benediction by the Rev. Dr. Marcus Matthews resident bishop, the Western New York Annual Conference closed on the afternoon of June 5, 2010 for the last time, planting the seed for new ministry within the Upper New York Annual Conference. Membership is 53,780, down 1,252.

– Marilyn J. Kasperek, director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

Western North Carolina. Western North Carolina Conference delegates gathered at Lake Junaluska, June 11-13, for their second conference with Bishop Larry Goodpaster presiding. Though the conference was one day shorter than previous years, delegates worked diligently to complete all the necessary business. They rejected a recommendation by the Annual Conference Meeting Task Force to move next year's meeting to the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, preferring to remain at Lake Junaluska.

The conference will work with Lake Junaluska officials to address meeting space limitations, along with inadequate parking and other concerns. Delegates approved a conference budget of \$7,926,038 for 2011, a 1.74 percent increase over 2010. Membership is 292,824, down 356. – Mark L. Barden, WNCC director of communications; *as reported in Newscope, June 30, 2010*

Western Pennsylvania. Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton told 1,800 members (June 10-13, Grove City College) that he sees signs of hope in the Western Pennsylvania Conference, despite significant challenges facing the denomination. Among legislation approved was a call for action to end racially discriminatory sentencing; remove barriers to safe, accessible and affordable housing; repeal Pennsylvania's gaming laws and encourage abstention from gambling. Resolutions also supported continuing dialogue on issues related to homosexuality. A proposal to urge the General Conference to re-evaluate its position on evolution, theology and science was defeated. Other legislation called for creation of a task force to realign districts and conference staff and to examine a new relationship with three UM homes that, despite their financial independence, are conference corporations. Membership is 185,569, down 1.

– Jackie Campbell, communications director; *as reported in Newscope, July 7, 2010*

Wisconsin took place in La Crosse, Wis., June 13-16, featuring the theme “Give Wholeheartedly,” which was woven throughout the four days of activities. Conference voted on several action items: a call to action on Immigration Reform, a new Covenant of Affiliation with Hillcrest Family Services, the 2011 budget and the closing of the Bay City UMC, which was formed in 1889. The plenary sessions included a presentation from The Community in Conversation-a period of open dialogue in which members of the conference discussed homosexuality and living into God's future. The conference welcomed delegates from the Dong Bu Conference in South Korea to honor the sister partnership between the two conferences and celebrated ethnic ministries within the conference, such as Monona UMC in Monona and Korean UMC in Kenosha. Statistics on membership and worship attendance were not available at the time this report was submitted.

– Michele Virnig, and Katelin Hillbo; *as reported in*

Newscope, July 21, 2010

Yellowstone. The 42nd session of the Yellowstone Annual Conference (YAC) was held June 10-13 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Billings, Mont. Denver Area Bishop Elaine Stanovsky presided. Bishop Jessica Crist of the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America preached at the opening memorial and Communion service and was guest participant during conference sessions. Conference members adopted a budget for the year 2011 that represents an 8.75 percent. Total membership is 14,279, down 550. – Bob Phelps, co-editor of Yellowstone's online news sheet, The YAC Connection; *as reported in*

Newscope, June 30, 2010

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One thing I can't recycle is wasted time.