

Monthly Update

July 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Monthly Update again addresses “comprehensive immigration reform” and includes a position paper on that area – in addition to starting our Annual Conference reports.

The 4th of July: What Happened to the Signers?*

They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. What kind of men were they? 24 were lawyers and jurists, 11 were merchants, 9 were farmers and large plantation owners; men of means, well educated, but they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured. Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

- Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died.
- Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.
- Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.
- Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.
- Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.
- At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.
- Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.
- John Hart was driven from his wife’s bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished.

Some of us take our liberties for granted – but we shouldn’t. Take a few minutes while enjoying your 4th of July holiday and thank all patriots. It is not too much to ask for the price they’ve paid.

Remember: freedom is never free!

During the Fourth of July holidays, remember that ours is a special country. In the past we have had a positive influence in world affairs. Pray that we will again return to the Lord who is our spiritual rock – and regain our spiritual roots.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

* Reprinted from the book *This ‘N’ That* by Allen O. Morris.

July 2010 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Sometimes it is only a change of viewpoint that is needed to convert a seemingly tiresome duty into an interesting opportunity. – Daily Walk, 3/19/97

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Of Interest Happy 225th Anniversary American Methodism to Reform the Nation by Dr. Riley Case

United Methodism is presently celebrating its 225th anniversary as an American Church. The occasion offers opportunity not only to rejoice for the way God has used United Methodist Church in the past, but also to consider what lessons can be learned for the days ahead.

When 60 preachers gathered in Baltimore at the Christmas Conference, 1784, to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church, they asked a question that John Wesley had asked at the first Methodist Conference in London in 1744: "What may we reasonably believe to be God's design, in raising up the preachers called Methodists?" The response was the same in 1784 in America, as in London: "To reform the nation, more particularly the Church: to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

One might be curious as to how the nation could be re-formed at that time before it had even yet been formed for the first time, but that would be to miss the point. Methodists had a big dream, a grandiose dream, of a nation claimed for God, characterized by scriptural holiness.

It would be helpful, and this is not always appreciated (even in such classic works as Wade Crawford Barclay's monumental 562 page work on Methodist missions, *To Reform the Nation 1769-1844*), to recognize that the operating eschatology in the early 1800s for evangelical Christians was post-millennialism, the view that the world was itself being redeemed and would eventually, perhaps soon, experience the promised millennium, God's kingdom on earth. The way to achieve this was through revival, that is, by bringing sinners to conversion. Of course, social reform in many instances went hand in hand with revival, though not without controversy. Some anti-war, pro equality-for-women, pro temperance, anti-slavery, pro-millennial evangelical Methodists broke away to form the Wesleyan Church in 1844 because the M.E. church was dragging its feet on this renewal. It is worth noting that the radical reform was coming from the bottom up. Methodist bishops were doing the foot-dragging.

Reforming zeal suffered a severe setback with the Civil War. The millennial vision ("Mine eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord...") not only had not been accomplished with the war; the wreckage of sin and war seemed to put the vision beyond reach. Many evangelicals flipped their millennial views and became pre-millennial (the world is getting worse and will only be redeemed by a literal 2nd coming of Christ). They now thought of the purpose of the church not so much in terms of reforming the nation, but as rescuing individuals from the ruin of this world.

But others, including many Methodist leaders, were intrigued by a new idea: the world was still getting better and better but advancing science convinced them that the means to this betterment was not so much through revivalism as through education and the spread of democracy. Capitalism was still in favor at this point and was also a part of the equation.

In 1907 a new social reformist group, Methodists Federated for Social Service, (now MFSA), drafted a Social Creed, and launched what would soon be known as the social gospel. The creed stressed equal rights for all, justice, abolition of child labor, and causes that hardly seem controversial today. What was controversial was the understanding behind the creed that evil was not linked so much with original sin and the human heart as with unjust structures of society.

The creed was adopted by the M.E. General Conference of 1908, the same General Conference that deleted references to original sin from the baptismal ritual. In 1912 the General Conference designated MFSA as the official unofficial social conscience of the church. The group counted bishops and seminary professors among its supporters. Thus an important shift: the task of reforming the nation no longer grew out of the movement of God among ordinary people, but with the opinions of an elitist chosen few. The one exception to this was the temperance movement, still a grass-roots cause among Methodists.

The social progressives supported World War I because winning the war would make the world safe for democracy. What was previously called the millennium was now simply the Kingdom of God-the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. But World War I was a disillusioning experience. Peace did not come; democracy was not spread; the kingdom seemed far away. So MFSA and the social progressives did some more adjusting. Evil was now identified with capitalism and the profit motive. War-all war-was wrong because it was tied to capitalism. The Soviet Union's effort to redo the economic system through communism was followed with great interest. America was no longer the city on the hill, but

part of the world problem. Society would have to be remade. The 1935 Methodist hymnal added a section called "The Kingdom of God" with 58 hymns including such progressive hymns as "These things shall be, a loftier race..." (#512). Eugenics was one of the means by which the loftier race would be developed. "Reforming the Nation" had evolved from changing the heart through conversion to changing society through social and political action.

Progressives opposed World War II. Both the Methodist Church and the United Brethren Church carried anti-war statements in their Disciplines. As an indication of how far removed these statements were from the pew, less than one-tenth of 1% of Methodists and United Brethren filed as conscientious objectors during W.W. II (about 900 total). By way of contrast, millions of Methodists fought and supported the war. Not until 1944, even after it was known that Hitler had killed 6 million Jews, and the war had been supported by almost all Americans, and was coming to an end, did the Methodist General Conference by a close vote pass a statement that war might be justified in some circumstances.

That did not dampen the zeal of MFSA, the official unofficial "conscience" of the church, for its support of all things socialist. In July, 1947, *Classmate*, the paper for youth, extolled Joseph Stalin as a modern hero. In 1952, after a Reader's Digest article entitled, "Is There a Pink Fringe in the Methodist Church?" the General Conference chastised MFSA and authorized a new general board, the Board of Social and Economic Relations. This board, the forerunner of today's General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), instead of balancing and moderating the extreme views of MFSA, continued the same ideology. Along with the General Board of Global Ministries, it was said that these social activists seldom saw a revolution they did not like. In 1977 Dow Kirkpatrick, a GBGM missionary, visited Cuba and reported that "Fidel and his people celebrate the revolution they caused; we (Wesleyans) celebrate the ones we prevent...The Cuban Revolution-in contrast to the Christian Church-is one 'that is with the poor' and 'he who condemns a revolution like this one betrays Christ.'"

United Methodists today agree with the concept of "reforming the nation." The question is, by what means will it be reformed? Most United Methodists believe that reform should not be invested with one political party or the other. The purpose of the church is not to be a front for political causes, but a place where believers gather to worship and encourage one another to live out the Christian gospel.

United Methodism's social activists, on the other hand, appear to believe that liberal politics and the support of liberal causes is at the heart of the gospel, and that is what United Methodism is all about. When the controversy arose as to whether the Bush Library should be housed at Southern Methodist, a Methodist-related school, the progressive social activists argued that anything associated with United Methodism should not be identified with anything associated with George Bush, and that to allow the Bush Library at Southern Methodist would be in violation of "Methodist ethos." The reasoning suggests that in their view the essence of United Methodism ("Methodist ethos") is radical social policy.

Is there hope for the United Methodist Church? United Methodism's forty-five straight years of decline must be laid in part at the feet of those who would distract from the task of making disciples for Jesus Christ by an extreme emphasis on liberal social and political causes (environmentalism, anti-Israel advocacy, pro gay advocacy).

Many United Methodists believe that is a betrayal of the gospel.

We must do better.

— A position paper by Dr. Riley Case, a retired UM pastor from the Northern Indiana Conference

(UM) Bishops

+ Bishops urge action on immigration

[Note: In this, keep in mind that what is not being said is the Biblical teaching to obey the laws. What the Arizona law actually does is to empower state officials to enforce a federal law that is already in place. It should also be noted that a tremendous price is being paid by border states because of illegal immigrants. Tucson, Arizona has become the kidnap capital of the world – mainly caused by illegal aliens. Note Minerva Carcaño's concluding remark to "love our neighbor"; but Scriptures also call us to be obedient with consequences to follow if we are not. Where is this message here? – AOM]

An...Arizona law giving police broad powers to detain suspected illegal immigrants is mobilizing United Methodists across the denomination to work for immigration reforms. The Council of Bishops at its spring meeting offered prayer and support to Phoenix Area Bishop Minerva Carcaño in her opposition to the new law. She said the measure "not only invites abuse, but gives wing to racial profiling."

The Arizona law that passed last month is scheduled to take effect by August, pending legal challenges. It requires police officers, "when practicable," to detain people they reasonably suspect are in the country without authorization and to verify their status with federal officials. It also makes it a state crime — a misdemeanor — to not carry immigration papers. In

addition, it allows people to sue local government or agencies if they believe the federal or state immigration laws are not being enforced. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer and U.S. Sen. John McCain, say it will help secure the state's borders and address particular concerns about human smuggling and the drug trade.

Carcaño, chairperson of the United Methodist Task Force on Immigration, said the new law turns all people of color "into criminal suspects." Hispanics, who make up about a third of the state's population, feel they are being pushed into "the shadows of American society," she said. [Note her reliance on emotionalism but lacking in balanced truth. – AOM]

In May 2009, the Council of Bishops called on President Barack Obama to back measures to help immigrants obtain citizenship, reunite immigrant families, increase the number of visas for short-term workers, and extend legal protections to documented and undocumented workers. What she would like to convey to each United Methodist: "Immigrants are our brothers and sisters, and we're called by Holy Scripture to love our neighbor."

– David Briggs, UMNS; May 6, 2010. Briggs is news editor of United Methodist News Service
<http://www.umc.org:80/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH&b=5765535&ct=8372615>

(UM) General Board of Church and Society. *UM Social Justice Agency Condemns Assault on "Freedom Flotilla"*

[Note the obvious bias against Israel. These boats have been a way of the terrorists in the Gaza strip to bring in weapons and the rockets with which they bombard Israeli communities in that nation. Israel has a right to defend itself. – AOM]

In an open statement, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) condemned the deadly interception May 31 in international waters by Israeli troops that led to the deaths of nine persons on a humanitarian aid mission to Gaza. The nine persons were part of an international "Freedom Flotilla" of six vessels carrying nearly 10,000 tons of food and medicine to Gaza, which has been under an Israeli blockade for three years. "We grieve the loss of life and injuries sustained in what became a tragic confrontation between the forces of peace and those of armed aggression," said Jim Winkler, GBCS chief executive. Israel should end the blockade of Gaza, which has created a humanitarian crisis affecting 1.4 million Palestinians, according to Winkler. He pointed out that The UMC has long advocated for a peaceful settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. "The violence must stop on both sides," he said. "The time for decisive action to impose a just, peaceful resolution has never been more evident than in this tragic assault on persons whose sole purpose was to achieve peace and bring aid to an oppressed populace."

– Wayne Rhodes, GBCS; as reported in *Newscope*, June 9, 2010.

Annual Conference Reports

Czech and Slovak Republics Annual Conference *Characteristics of Fruitful Congregations*

The Czech and Slovak Republics Annual Conference, which met from May 28–30. In both countries, local churches are looking for new ways to live and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is essential as the Czech Republic is one of the most secularized countries in Europe. Slovakia has a high percentage of baptized people, but most of them do not live as observant Christians. In Prague (Czech Republic) preparations are under way to establish an English-speaking Methodist congregation, following the positive experiences with the work of the English-speaking congregation in Vienna.

In the Czech Republic and in Slovakia the pastors' salaries of all churches have been paid by the State since Communist times. In Slovakia, The UMC is subsidized by the State according to the number of people claiming to be Methodists. Since in both 1991 and 2001 the number of Methodists according to the census was many times higher than the number according to the internal statistics, – *Bishop Dr. Patrick Streiff; as reported in Newscope, June 9, 2010.*

Detroit Annual "Wherever the Water Flows . . . Life Flourishes, Life Abounds" was the theme of the 2010 Detroit Annual Conference session, held May 20–23 on the campus of Adrian College in Adrian, Mich. The theme tied in with one of the Four Areas of Focus of The UMC: "creating new spaces for new people and revitalizing existing congregations." The most significant legislative action taken by the conference was to reduce the number of districts in the conference from seven to six by no later than July 1, 2011. Since the 1970s, the total membership of the conference has declined by 47 percent. Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton will be responsible for drawing the new district lines.

The conference in covenant relationships with the Haiti and Liberia Methodist churches) raised over \$25,000 for the purchase of a much-needed delivery truck for the Liberia Methodist Church and collected \$43,032 from local churches to be split between the Haiti and Liberia Methodist churches. Over \$1,500 was raised for Nothing But Nets through the sale of the CD "Nothing But Praise" by Bishop Keaton. Other actions included approving of a 2011 budget of \$9,737,237, a slight reduction from 2010; petitioning the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to divest itself of funds that it has

invested in corporations whose businesses and products are supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land; giving support to changing Michigan's Ethnic Intimidation Act to extend protections to people such as lesbian, gays, bisexual and transgendered persons who are victims of hate crimes and discrimination. Membership is 94,679, down 2,172. – Paul Thomas, *Detroit Conference Director; of Communications; as reported in Newscope, June 2, 2010.*

Illinois Great Rivers The Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference was held in Peoria, Ill., June 2–5, under the theme of “Passionate Worship: Lost in Wonder, Love and Praise.” In his episcopal address, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer proposed four initiatives that will guide the work of the conference for the next year, including a major fundraising campaign that will raise between \$2.1 and \$3.5 million for Imagine No Malaria. The cabinet also introduced two initiatives that will guide their superintending work – streamlining of clergy and church assessments and a call to UMs to pray and fast on the first Thursday of each month for the next year. Rev. Jerry Kulah of Liberia participated in the conference's Liberia Project Report. In the past three years, more than \$2.5 million in support has been sent to Liberia centering around four priorities: educational scholarships, pastoral salary support, reconstruction of churches and hospitals and bed nets to combat malaria. Special offerings were received for the following: the John Kofi Asmah School in Monrovia, Liberia, \$5,244; Africa University, providing scholarship assistance for two students, \$8,478; the Tom Brown Scholarship at Wiley College, one of the church's historic Black Colleges, \$6,359; and funds for a mission trip experience for newly ordained clergy, \$5,731. Membership is 140,619, down 1.5%.

– Paul E. Black, *IGRC director of Communication Ministries; as reported in Newscope, June 16, 2010.*

Kansas West Kansas West Annual Conference met May 26–28 in Salina, under the leadership of Bishop Scott J. Jones. The theme, “Go Light Your World,” focused on intentional faith-sharing. The conference celebrated camping, campus ministry and church development projects funded through the conference's capital campaign. Rev. Vance Ross, deputy general secretary of the General Board of Discipleship for External Connectional Relations and Strategic Initiatives, was the featured plenary speaker. The conference adopted a resolution to establish a “Chabadza” Covenant with the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference of the UMC. Chabadza is a Shona term meaning a partnership in which a passerby stops to help one already at work and both are mutually enriched and blessed. Two related resolutions establishing a committee to oversee the partnership and creating a conference advance special for the covenant also were adopted. Bishop Eben Nihwatiwa, Zimbabwe Area, was a special guest of the conference. The conference adopted a \$5.8 million budget for 2011. The body also adopted resolutions (1) declaring September Open House Month; (2) encouraging local churches to celebrate clergy appointments to local churches; (3) encouraging local churches to celebrate laity and lay speakers in the local church; and (4) amended the Board of Equitable Compensation report to require the committee to prepare an annual salary report showing discrepancies between the earnings of male and female clergy. Bishop Jones commissioned eight into the ministry of elder or deacon, ordained 10 elders, received two deacons into full membership, and recognized one associate member. Eight retired from ministry. Membership is 82,773, down 951 from 2008.

– Lisa Elliott Diehl, *Kansas Area communications Director; as reported in Newscope, June 9, 2010.*

Minnesota “We're people of faith! Yeah, we're odd! We're Christians! Yeah, we're odd! We're UMs! Yeah, we're odd!” Bishop Sally Dyck gave this odd charge to Minnesota Annual Conference session members during her episcopal address on the first day of the 2010 session, held June 2–4 in Saint Cloud, Minn. Encouraging members to “rethink worship” (Minnesota Conference's theme for the coming year), she explained this means both nurturing a sense of awe and a willingness to be “odd”—to distinguish oneself and one's church from other groups in our communities.

Session members endorsed eight petitions that ask General Conference 2012 to remove discriminatory language against homosexuality in The Book of Discipline. In other actions, session members also asked the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision on whether Division 1, Article IV, of the church constitution and Discipline paragraphs 139 and 214–55 (related to membership qualifications) take precedence over Judicial Council decision 1032, particularly given the change made to paragraph 225 by 2008 General Conference. Members also passed a resolution that denounces a 2010 U.S. Supreme Court decision that corporations' financial support of political candidates is a form of constitutionally protected free speech. Members approved a 2011 budget of \$6,542,436—about the same as the 2004 budget and lower than the 2010 budget by about \$147,000. Barbara Carroll, director of finance and administration, noted that from 2000 to 2008 Minnesota UM congregational expenditures increased by 24 percent, while from 2000 to the 2011, the annual conference recommended budget increased by 14 percent. Membership is 74,798, down 1,401.

– Victoria Rebeck, *director of communication, Minnesota Annual Conference; as reported in Newscope, June 16, 2010.*

The Austria Provisional Annual Conference met June 3–6 in Vienna under the intentionally ambivalent theme “Living Christ.” The Conference Speaker was Dr. Clive Marsh of England, and in his presentation, Dr. Marsh pointed to the necessity that the church seek to find a positive approach toward the current everyday culture of entertainment. Only when people feel that they are taken seriously and their emotional needs respected is there a foundation from which to discover the living Christ together. In his report, Superintendent Lothar Pöll pointed to the positive development of the Austrian Church in recent years: Until the eighties The UMC in Austria was a decreasing church, and the congregations were shaped by the charm of the sixties. Since then significant changes have occurred. The congregations have become more open and multifaceted and the church rooms more modern and friendly. And for a number of years there has been a small but steady growth in membership. Local giving has grown disproportionately in recent years, something that is urgently necessary for the church to survive. Superintendent Pöll underlined that he did not know of “any other church of our size that has accomplished this.” Average worship attendance is decreasing, however.

– *Pastor Stefan Schröckenfuchs, Vienna/Austria; as reported in Newscope, June 16, 2010.*

Oklahoma Using Internet live streaming for the first time, the Oklahoma Annual Conference welcomed more than 4,600 virtual guests on May 30–June 2 at Boston Ave. UMC in Tulsa. Typically, about 1,200 people attend in person. Whether online or in the historic Boston Avenue sanctuary, people were witness to sacred rituals of leadership; excitement about new church plants; news of health care projects in Oklahoma and Africa; and faith testimonies by new ethnic Christians, once-struggling students, and former prisoners. The theme was “Following the Plan—Faithful Witness, Transforming Presence.” Three churches were officially closed. Two new church plants launch in June in Edmond. The 2011 budget, \$16,534,735, reflects an apportionment increase of 3.4 percent. The majority of that increase – 67 percent – is due to rising health care costs. The Annual Conference Offering, approximately \$53,600, supported the denomination’s Imagine No Malaria project for Africa and Cookson Hills Center, an Advance project in Oklahoma that serves the rural poor, especially Native Americans. The late Wilma Mankiller, a former chief of the Cherokee Nation, was featured in a video. Bishop Hayes announced that Oklahoma Conference UMs donated \$613,509.43 through the church, as of May 1, for disaster response in Haiti. More than 2,200 UMCOR kits for Haiti were collected during the days of the conference. In November, Volunteers in Mission teams will begin serving on site in the earthquake recovery work. Scouting ministries repeatedly claimed the spotlight. The Silver Torch Award was presented to Judy Benson and Joseph Harris. Two Boy Scout troops received the Bishop’s Award for Excellence. The Harry Denman Award for Evangelism was presented to two clergy: Sharen Hale and Stan Warfield. UM Men named Warren Neff as a Fellow in the Society of John Wesley. Membership is 238,056, down 3,277.

– *Holly McCray, editor Dept. of Communications, the Oklahoma Conference; as reported in Newscope, June 16, 2010.*

Red Bird Missionary Conference Bishop Lindsey Davis presided over the conference with the theme, “To God Be the Glory.” Apr. 23–24, in Thousandsticks, Ky. Bible study was based on Jeremiah and Acts, using images of clay vessels and God as the Potter. Ruth A. Wiertzema, director of connectional ministries, spoke of our human struggles with change and our need to remember that we are God’s vessels and are subject to remolding by the Potter. Heartwarming stories from our churches, outreach centers, mission institutions and other conference programs reminded the assembly that amid change, God is at work. Danny Howe, mission night speaker, spoke about the children of Sudan and their struggles, including the lack of clean drinking water. The assembly gave \$18,145 to provide wells for a community in Yei, Sudan. Harry Denman Awards for Evangelism were presented to C. Robert Landis (clergy) and Shirley Crouse (laity). The conference welcomed the Rev. Farley Stuart as the new superintendent. Membership is 1,495, up 7.

– *Ruth A. Wiertzema, dir. of Conn. Mins., Red Bird Missionary Conference; as reported in Newscope, May 19, 2010*

Troy The gavel came down, and with a few words, the Rev. Greg Smith, conference secretary, ended the 178th Troy Annual Conference Session. The Secretary stated that members in Vermont will convene June 17 with the New England Annual Conference, and members from New York will meet June 19 for the uniting of a new annual conference in Upper New York. The Troy Conference itself will close permanently on June 30.

Troy Conference is the first of the four conferences with churches in the Upper New York area to hold its final session. North Central New York will meet to pass legislation necessary to close the conference and transfer membership on June 18 in Liverpool, N.Y.; Western New York June 5 at Asbury UMC in Rochester, N.Y.; and Wyoming June 4 and 5 at Scranton University and Elm Park UMC in Scranton, Pa. Also closing will be the Central Pennsylvania Conference, June 4 and 5 at

Messiah College in Grantham, Pa. The churches of Central Pennsylvania will unite with the Pennsylvania churches of Wyoming Conference to form the Susquehanna Annual Conference, effective July 1.

Troy Conference Session opened with [remarks by] Bishop Susan W. Hassinger, episcopal leader of the Albany Area, in the morning sermon. The primary work of the conference was to review and vote on assignment of clergy and lay membership, a Plan of Union and Assets Allocations. The three components were (1) a Plan of Union, outlining that the assets, property and pension funds of Troy Conference would be divided, with 30 percent going to the New England Conference and 70 percent going to the Upper New York area conference; (2) the transfer of clergy and lay membership based on where clergy will be appointed as of July 1 and lay members' home churches; (3) a set of resolutions passed to meet the legal and organizational requirements of the 2008 Book of Discipline and New York State laws governing religious corporations. Technically, Troy Conference approved the dissolving of Troy Conference and the changes in New York and Vermont conference membership at a special session held in Oct. 2007, and the Northeast Jurisdiction approved the plan in 2008. The new resolutions represent the completion of work authorized by that earlier action. Resolutions designating the UM Global AIDS fund as the recipient of the conference offering and to contribute \$15,000 in reserves to the Central Conference Pension Fund were approved. During clergy session on May 21 at Saratoga Springs UMC, over \$3,000 was collected and will be given to the Mozambique Area for clergy education.

Five churches—Tomhannock, North Hoosick, Chilson and Brainard in New York, and MacKenzie Memorial UMC in Northfield, Vt.—were declared abandoned. A resolution dissolving the Embury District was also approved.

– *UMNS; as reported in Newscope, June 9, 2010.*

Wyoming The 159th and final session of the Wyoming Annual Conference opened Friday, June 4, at the University of Scranton and Elm Park UMC in Scranton, Pa. Bishop Susan W. Hassinger called the gathering to order under the theme, “So Great a Cloud of Witnesses.” Most business conducted by the conference dealt with matters involved in preparing for the conference to be split along the New York–Pennsylvania border and to become part of two new conferences effective July 1, the Susquehanna Conference in Pennsylvania and the Upper New York Conference.

A report was made on special offerings taken during the session. The Master’s Call Offering raised \$2,311 to help provide funds for ministerial education. The Great 50 Days Offering brought in \$22,120 for work in Haiti and Zimbabwe. This is in addition to more than \$194,000 previously donated to Haiti Earthquake Relief. The Episcopacy Committee offered thanks to Bishop Susan Hassinger and to Jane E. Schweikert, administrative assistant to Bishops Hassinger, Susan Morrison and William Boyd Grove, for their service to the conference and the Albany Area. Each was given a memory album, a prayer quilt and a monetary gift to mission projects chosen by them.

– *Don Perry, Wyoming Annual Conference; as reported in Newscope, June 16, 2010.*

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God has linked two things together which cannot be separated: obedience and power. – Daily Walk, 3/22

Global Outlook

Great occasions do not make heroes or cowards; they merely reveal them to others. – Daily Walk, 3/20/97

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Afghanistan. Afghanistan Temporarily Suspends CWS Work

The Afghan government suspended operations by Church World Service (CWS) and Norwegian Church Aid on May 31. CWS is denying allegations of engaging in religious proselytism in Afghanistan, an Islamic country where such activity is against the law. The agency said it expects the government’s temporary suspension of its long-time humanitarian work there to last only a few days. An Afghan television news story raised the allegations. “Our work is entirely humanitarian – meaning we are impartial, neutral and independent,” said Maurice A. Bloem, CWS deputy director. “We fully adhere to and support the Red Cross/Red Crescent Code of Conduct, which mandates that nongovernmental organizations do nothing to further a religious agenda.” The UMC is a major supporter of Church World Service.

[Note: It really is a shame that they are not guilty of truly telling people about Jesus Christ. – AOM]

– *UMNS; as reported in Newscope, June 9, 2010.*

Congo. UM Seminary in Congo Needs Support and Prayer

For over 90 years, the land at Mulungwishi Mission Station in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the training ground for UM pastors and other local church leaders, their spouses and children. Currently it contains six schools for all age levels, including Katanga Methodist University, the oldest UM Seminary on the African continent (nearly 60 years) and

other UM support functions. The mission station may lose its land due to a local property law that requires renewal of land titles every twenty-five years, a process that has been overlooked by both local UM people and the government for over 50 years. To correct this, Mulungwishi's land title needs to be renewed, or others may claim it. The seminary at Mulungwishi provides theological education for pastors, and the Women's School serves the pastor's wives. – *Jim Holton; <http://umccongo.blogspot.com/>; E. Pennsylvania Conf.; as reported in Newscope, June 9, 2010.*

National Council of Churches. *Church Leaders Seek Freedom for Cuba Travel.* Two ecumenical leaders have written to President Obama to ask for an end to restrictions on religious travel to Cuba. The letter was signed by the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, head of the National Council of Churches, and the Rev. John McCullough, the UM who leads Church World Service. – *UMNS; as reported in Newscope, May 19, 2010.*

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Patience is accepting a difficult situation without giving God a deadline for removing it. – Daily Walk, 3/21/97