

Monthly Update

April 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

First of all, I bring you greetings as we look forward to one of the two most significant events in the history of our world – the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! He was crucified. He died. He was buried. He rose again. He conquered death so that we too may live with Him. What could be better news than that?

This edition of the “Monthly Update” contains information in three main areas, kind of like one of those “good news, bad news” stories. The first area in the Update we will leave for last since that it the “bad news” part of our report.

One change that you will see in this Update is that it contains the breakdown of delegate positions in the last four pages – like a “special annex” to this mailing. These are summaries of results from the reallocation of slots for delegates to be elected by the various annual conferences around the country and across the world to represent the United Methodist Church at the General Conference in 2012. We should have more orthodox, foundational representatives to decide legislation.

The second is entitled “Methodist Bishop Calls for Recovery of Supernatural” and is focused on what those in much of the “Third World” today recognize – the reality and the importance of the unseen world that we can harness for good if we only have faith.

The third is the controversy posed by a group of retired bishops who are using their positions to once again try to get our United Methodist Church to accept various aspects of homosexual practice as being normal. Those of us in the cause of renewal want the church to grow. We don’t want to see it continue to shrink, wither, and ultimately die! The only way we will get things turned around and see us grow and again be a vibrant alive denomination is if we recapture the once-vibrant faith that we had. And that is predicated on following the Word of God – the Bible – and being filled with the Holy Spirit as we faithfully follow the One who gave Himself to die for our sins on the cross. He gave so much for us. We owe Him so much in return. To be faithful in our lives is the least we can do to show our gratitude. And being faithful means believing and living what we know to be true. That truth is found in the words that we read in the Bible that speak to the One who was crucified for our sins, died a sacrificial death, was put into a borrowed tomb and three days later rose from the dead – Jesus Christ.

We thank you for your continuing faithful support and ask that you would pray for us. Assuredly, we are living in exciting times. We especially ask that you pray that every person know the One whom we call Lord.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

April 2011 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

If you see somebody without a smile, give him one of yours.

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(UM) Bishops Advocacy for normalization of homosexual practice

Note: The recent call by some of the retired United Methodist Bishops for normalization of aspects of homosexuality within our denomination is problematic. It does not reflect on the stance of our church; more than anything else, it reflects on the character of some of the people who used to be leaders in our church. It further raises the question as to whether or not we even need the position of bishop. With this type of leadership, is it any wonder that our United Methodist Church has been in a sustained forty-year decline? Following is a commentary by some in the renewal movement.

Statement from the Renewal and Reform Coalition—February 16, 2011

In early February 2011, a group of retired United Methodist bishops issued “A Statement of Counsel to the Church—2011” in which they called upon The United Methodist Church to remove statements in ¶ 304.3 of The Book of Discipline that declare “The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching” and instruct that “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

The decision on our church’s doctrine and polity on these matters is reserved solely to the delegates to General Conference, and this group of retired bishops has neither voice nor vote in such deliberations. We are dismayed that bishops who have agreed to live within the covenant defined by our Book of Discipline and who are charged in the Book of Discipline “to uphold the discipline and order of the Church” are undercutting that very discipline and order, encouraging dissension and disunity, and advocating on behalf of positions which have been repeatedly rejected by our General Conference after focused prayer, study, and holy conferencing.

The retired bishops who have joined in the statement are a minority of the active and retired bishops who are part of the Council of Bishops. We call upon the Council of Bishops as a whole to defend the church’s belief and discipline, and to hold one another accountable for such defense.

After ten General Conferences (1972-2008), numerous dialogues, at least two General Church study commissions, official study resources, dozens of convocations, a plethora of books, demonstrations and disruptions of the General Conference business, and extended impassioned debate, our denomination has consistently affirmed a holistic position that is pastoral and biblical, compassionate and redemptive.

The denomination’s statement on the practice of homosexuality is a balanced position that affirms the “sacred worth” of all persons, even while acknowledging that as Christians we cannot affirm every expression of human sexuality. Clearly, there are certain sexual practices that contradict biblical standards, and as faithful disciples we must be willing to declare them to be incompatible with Christian teachings. The United Methodist position does this with mercy and grace.

The retired bishops’ statement is woefully inadequate in its failure to address the clear pronouncements of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments and almost 2,000 years of Christian history. The teaching of The United Methodist Church on human sexuality is consistent with the teaching of the Church universal.

In essence, the retired bishops’ statement is a plea for the church to accommodate to the world and compromise with the relativism of our age. Scripture and Christian history steadfastly warn against such accommodation and compromise.

To a watching world, the position of The United Methodist Church is a necessary and reasonable statement of ethical clarity in an age of murky morality. It is a statement of theological honesty in an age of religious ambiguity. It is a prophetic statement to a world that offers no boundaries to sexual expression.

As recognized in our Book of Discipline, faithful followers of Jesus Christ are called to celibacy in singleness and fidelity in marriage. The Scriptures and almost 2000 years of Christian theology have permitted sexual activity only within the boundary of marriage. The Church universal in its orthodox expressions has defined marriage as the covenantal relationship of supreme love between a man and a woman. The United Methodist position is and must remain consistent with this understanding. The retired bishops’ statement provides no rationale for deviating from this position, except for arguments based in convenience—convenience for those who find difficulty administering the church’s position rightly and for those who choose to persist in engaging in sinful practices. Maintaining our position keeps faith with the supremacy of Scripture and accords with tradition, experience and reason.

The position of The United Methodist Church is a prophetic message of life to a broken and hurting world. The biblically prophetic message has always been more interested in truth and transformation than in consensus and conformity to the propositions advanced by the world. What the world often finds excusable and acceptable, the church does not and cannot. Even though our debates have historically focused exclusively on homosexuality, The United Methodist Church must learn how to provide effective and compassionate ministry to all persons who struggle to live lives of sexual purity. All persons, whatever their sexual temptations or inclinations, are welcome in The United Methodist Church, but sexual relationships outside the biblically and historically defined boundary of Christian marriage between a man and a woman must be named for what they are—sin. The Gospel also includes God’s gracious promise that those who confess and repent will be given the power for new life and transformation.

We live in a hypersexualized culture—as evidenced by the more than 40-year-obsession of those who would change our sexual ethics. United Methodism must deal seriously—and here we are speaking to conservatives as well as liberals and moderates—with the crippling spiritual devastation that sexual brokenness brings into our local congregations. Many who sit next to us in our pews have been victimized by sexual abuse or by an unfaithful spouse. Others in our congregations struggle with promiscuity, are addicted to pornography, suffer with sexually transmitted diseases, are confused about their sexual identity, or wrestle with same-sex attractions. All such persons need to know that The United Methodist Church is prepared to minister to their needs while uncompromisingly standing for biblical truth and the transformative power of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The path urged by the retired bishops, if adopted, will leave The United Methodist Church barely distinguishable from the culture, particularly in the Christian West. All this would be done for the sake of expediency and convenience, a desire for “relevance,” and a misapplied sense of social justice. In reality, the retired bishops’ position is in a distinct minority across the Church universal and has only resulted in dissension, schism, and the weakening of the Church where it has been adopted. We urge our brothers and sisters in Christ in The United Methodist Church to reject the counsel of these retired episcopal leaders.

– Endorsed by The Renewal and Reform Coalition

Of Interest. Methodist Bishop Calls for Recovery of Supernatural

One big surprise of the 20th century has been the dramatic growth of churches in the non-Western world. A bigger surprise, at least for a few people, is that the fastest-growing churches are strongly supernaturally oriented. In this thought world, prophecy is an everyday reality, while faith healing, exorcism, and dream visions are all basic components of religious sensibility (Historian Philip Jenkins). A Methodist bishop speaks of growing up in the supernaturally oriented world, then getting secularized through a Western-world education. The Bible and empirical evidence brought him back to supernaturalism, where he now finds himself out of sync with Western theology. He is not out of sync, however, with African initiated churches, Pentecostal churches in Latin America, house churches in China and India, and fast-growing churches in Asia, South America, and Africa. He comments that present-day Western systematic and pastoral theology is unable to address the demonic on personal and cosmic levels. Paul's "principalities and power" are reduced to sociological structures. These theologies sit well with modernity, but they are powerless in the face of spiritual bondage.

These are the thoughts of a Methodist bishop but, unfortunately, not a United Methodist bishop (can anyone image an American UM bishop talking this way?). Bishop Hwa Yung is a Methodist bishop in Malaysia and he writes in the September 11 issue of Christianity Today. The United Methodist Church is presently talking about refocusing, redirecting, and restructuring so that it can be relevant for the 21st century. All the restructuring will be for naught unless there is some recognition and recovering of a supernatural basis for the application of the gospel. Without this recovery there is no clear doctrine of the Incarnation, or of the Atonement, or of the Resurrection. And, it might be added, without the recovery of the supernatural the United Methodist doctrinal standards have no meaning. Local churches that are alive and thriving today do not have to de-mythologize the New Testament.

The mainline churches have been drifting from the Biblical understandings of the supernatural for over a century and are paying the price for it today. Borden Parker Bowne, the father of personalism in the early 1900s, addressed his sharpest barbs not at an increasingly secularized world but at ignorant and superstitious Methodists. In 1932 eight major denominations authorized a study (funded primarily by John D. Rockefeller) on missions entitled "Re-Thinking Missions." The study concluded that science was better suited to dispel "superstition" than missions and, therefore, there was no need for missions, at least the kind of missions operating primarily at that time in which some of the missionaries were as "superstitious as the people they were trying to enlighten" (to their credit Methodist and EUB agencies did not adopt this thinking until the 1960s).

In education E. B. Chappell, editor of church materials in the M.E. Church South, summarized the changing emphases in Christian education in his book Recent Developments in Christian Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The recent developments were basically that theological presuppositions were out, new scientific presuppositions were in. This book was followed in 1937 with Ethel L. Smither's The Use of the Bible with Children, which stated, with great emphasis, that it was an "official" position of the church. Old Testament stories were inappropriate for children as, indeed, were all Bible story books since they implied a "literalist" understanding of the Bible that would need to be unlearned later. Jesus was not to be portrayed on the cross until at least junior high. Easter was not about a bodily resurrection but about a resurrection of new life seen in the beauties of nature.

In the 1950s and 1960s the seminaries offered doses of Bultmann and de-mythologizing. The Death of God Movement came along as did Harvey Cox's Secular City which pronounced the death of metaphysics. Evangelicals at that time were denounced as fundamentalists and literalists, defending a world-view that was irrelevant and passing from the scene.

What was becoming increasingly irrelevant was a once vibrant spiritual (Methodist) movement being stripped of its (supernatural) power. Modernism morphing into liberalism morphing into progressivism was (and is) lauded in the academic and secular world. But it has no standing in places of human need where sin and principalities and powers are real forces that can be overcome only with the power of a supernatural God acting in supernatural ways. The institutional church today is to be commended for its concern for health, for justice, for efforts to reduce poverty. But it is not, along with that, offering a message that changes hearts. That message is being preached by those persons with a very different world view. United Methodist News Service several weeks ago carried the story of the women's revivals in Zimbabwe where at one revival 25,000 women gathered. This is just one example of the mighty working of God in our present-day. The story spoke of the casting out of demons. But of course the reporter was from Africa, not the United States. Americans are not sure how to handle reports of the casting out of demons.

Bishop Hwa Yung and other overseas bishops understand these things. That is why there is a call for the recovery of the

supernatural. This, Bishop Yung says, will result in sounder Biblical theology and a more powerful missional church. Then the world will understand what Jesus meant when he said, "But if it by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Mt. 12:28 ESV). — By Dr. Riley Case, retired United Methodist pastor who now lives in Kokomo, Indiana

Of Special Interest

Included at the end of the "Update" is the breakdown of delegates that have been allocated for the General Conference that will meet in 2012 to debate on the business of the church. Note how many additional delegates will be coming from the countries and regions in Africa. We see this as a positive trend in the denomination as a whole and having the potential to return it to a more orthodox church. Here's the breakdown of General Conference delegates, by annual conferences. Notice that the whole Western Jurisdiction has only 32 delegates. The Africans will have a total of 282 at this upcoming Gen. Conf.—the vast majority of those will be conservative. We thank the Lord for this representation.

Jurisdictional or Central Conference	Annual Conference	Total 2012	Delegates
North Central	Dakotas	2	
North Central	Detroit	8	
North Central	East Ohio	14	
North Central	Illinois Great Rivers	12	
North Central	Indiana	18	
North Central	Iowa	14	
North Central	Minnesota	6	
North Central	Northern Illinois	8	
North Central	West Michigan	6	
North Central	West Ohio	18	
North Central	Wisconsin	6	
Northeastern	Baltimore-Washington	14	
Northeastern	Eastern Pennsylvania	10	
Northeastern	Greater New Jersey	10	
Northeastern	New England	10	
Northeastern	New York	10	
Northeastern	Peninsula-Delaware	6	
Northeastern	Susquehanna	14	
Northeastern	West Virginia	10	
Northeastern	Western Pennsylvania	14	
Northeastern	Upper New York	16	
South Central	Arkansas	12	
South Central	Central Texas	12	
South Central	Kansas East	4	
South Central	Kansas West	4	
South Central	Louisiana	10	
South Central	Missouri	14	
South Central	Nebraska	4	
South Central	New Mexico	2	
South Central	North Texas	12	
South Central	Northwest Texas	4	

South Central	Oklahoma	18
South Central	Oklahoma Ind Mssnry	2
South Central	Rio Grande	2
South Central	Southwest Texas	8
South Central	Texas	20
Southeastern	Alabama-West Florida	12
Southeastern	Florida	22
Southeastern	Holston	14
Southeastern	Kentucky	12
Southeastern	Memphis	4
Southeastern	Mississippi	14
Southeastern	North Alabama	12
Southeastern	North Carolina	18
Southeastern	North Georgia	26
Southeastern	Red Bird Missionary	2
Southeastern	South Carolina	18
Southeastern	South Georgia	10
Southeastern	Tennessee	8
Southeastern	Virginia	26
Southeastern	Western No Carolina	22
Western	Alaska	2
Western	California-Nevada	6
Western	California-Pacific	8
Western	Desert Southwest	2
Western	Oregon-Idaho	2
Western	Pacific Northwest	4
Western	Rocky Mountain	6
Western	Yellowstone	2

Africa Central	East Africa	10
Africa Central	Eastern Angola	2
Africa Central	Mozambique North	2
Africa Central	Mozambique South	2
Africa Central	South Africa	2
Africa Central	Western Angola	12
Africa Central	East Zimbabwe	2
Africa Central	West Zimbabwe	2
Africa Central	Malawi Provisional	2
Congo	Central Congo	8
Congo	East Congo	2
Congo	Lukoshi	18
Congo	Kasai	2
Congo	Kivu Provisional	2
Congo	North Katanga	52

Congo	North-West Katanga	12
Congo	Oriental and Equator	2
Congo	South Congo	16
Congo	South-West Katanga	8
Congo	Tanganyika/Tanzania	14
Congo	West Congo	2
Congo	Zambia Provisional	8
West Africa	Liberia	12
West Africa	Nigeria	30
West Africa	Sierra Leone	18
West Africa	Cote D'Ivoire	40
Central and Southern Europe	Austria Provisional	2
Central and Southern Europe	Bulgaria Provisional	2
Central and Southern Europe	Czech and Slovak Republics	2
Central and Southern Europe	Hungary Provisional	2
Central and Southern Europe	Yugoslavia-Macedonia Prov.	2
Central and Southern Europe	Poland	2
Central and Southern Europe	Switzerland-France-North Africa	2
Germany	Germany East	2
Germany	Germany North	2
Germany	Germany South	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Denmark	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Estonia	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Finland-Finnish Provisional	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Finland-Swedish Provisional	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Norway	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Central Russia	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Eastern Russia and Central Asia	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Northwest Russia Provisional	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Southern Russia	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Ukraine and Moldava	2
Northern Europe and Eurasia	Sweden	2

Philippines	Bicol Provisional	2
Philippines	Bulacan Philippines	2
Philippines	Central Luzon Philippines	2
Philippines	East Mindanao Philippines	2
Philippines	Middle Philippines	2
Philippines	Mindanao Philippines	2
Philippines	North Central Philippines	2
	Northeast Luzon	
Philippines	Philippines	2
Philippines	Northeast Philippines	2
Philippines	Northern Philippines	2
	Northwest Mindanao	
Philippines	Philippines	2
Philippines	Northwest Philippines	2
Philippines	Palawan Philippines	2
Philippines	Pampango Philippines	2
Philippines	Pangasinan Philippines	2
Philippines	Philippines	2
Philippines	Philippines Cavite	2
Philippines	Quezon City	2
Philippines	Rizal Philippines	2
	Southern Tagalog	
Philippines	Provisional	2
Philippines	Southwest Philippines	2
Philippines	Tarlac Philippines	2
Philippines	Visayas Philippines	2
Philippines	West Middle Philippines	2
Concordat	Caribbean & the Americas	2
Concordat	Great Britain	4
Concordat	Mexico	2
Concordat	Puerto Rico	2

SUMMARY

North Central	112
Northeastern	114
South Central	128
Southeastern	220
Western	32
Africa Central	36
Congo	146
West Africa	100
Central and Southern	
Europe	14
Germany	6
Northern Europe and	22

Eurasia	
Philippines	48
Concordat	10
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TOTAL	988
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	990