

Monthly Update

August 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In this Monthly Update we are continuing to present information on what is happening at the various annual conferences in our United Methodist Church as well as other pressing news of interest in the public arena.

This past weekend I was talking with a friend of mine who had recently returned from his native state of New York. He told me, “Al, I saw some buildings belonging to the Methodist Church that are really beautiful. They are large, nice-looking buildings – but they are empty. Don’t they have any young pastors here in North Carolina they could send up there to fill those buildings up with people?” I then told him about the system in our denomination and how the message preached in the Northeast Jurisdictional conferences reflects liberal theology. He then understood why those magnificent buildings stood empty. This is the legacy of theological liberalism.

May I once again urge each of you to encourage your pastor to have members of your church pray for our nation on the first Saturday in August – the 6th? This Call for a Day of Prayer” is not limited to Texas. I feel compelled to repeat the words of Texas Governor Rick Perry contained in last month’s edition of the Monthly Update:

On Aug the 6th of this year, 2011, we are going to have a day of prayer and fasting. And it’s going to be the real deal. It’s not going to be some program where we line up a dozen political figures to come in and talk. It’s going to be people standing on that stage, projecting and proclaiming Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior at Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas. Let me tell you, that’s a big stadium and there will be a lot of people. But it’s going to send a powerful message across this country! ...

In 1774, at the Continental Congress when they got together and penned that first document, they talked about “life” and “liberty.” Interestingly, the third thing they talked about was “property.” A couple of years later, when they actually wrote the Declaration, they changed that “property” to “the pursuit of happiness.” ...I tell people, that “personal property” and the ownership of that personal property is crucial to our way of life. Our founding fathers understood that it was a very important part of the pursuit of happiness. Being able to own things that are your own is one of the things that makes America unique. But I happen to think that it’s in jeopardy.

It’s in jeopardy because of taxes; it’s in jeopardy because of regulation; it’s in jeopardy because of a legal system that’s run amuck. And I think it’s time for us to just hand it over to God and say, “God, You’re going to have to fix this.” (I think it was Herman Cain who stood up the other day and said, “How’s that ‘Hope and Change’ thing working out for you?”) I think it’s time for us to use our wisdom and our influence and really put it in God’s hands. That’s what I’m going to do, and I hope you’ll join me. I hope you’ll join us in Houston on the 6th ay of August and really start a revival across this country.

Please pray for our country. I believe that we are at one of the most crucial times in the history of our beloved nation.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

August 2011 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

“Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy,
its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.” – Winston Churchill

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The United Methodist Judicial Council.

+ Court voids new policy on clergy marriage

A policy adopted but not yet implemented by United Methodists in New York and Connecticut that essentially would have allowed clergy to marry someone of the same sex has been declared “null, void and of no effect” by the denomination’s top court. The United Methodist Judicial Council has ruled that the New York Annual (regional) Conference resolution and policy allowing clergy “to marry at their own discretion” is “neither valid nor constitutional.” The Council upheld the church’s current prohibition against same-sex marriage and pastors who are “self-avowed practicing homosexuals,” found in Paragraph 2702 of the UM Book of Discipline. The Judicial Council also acted on other items, including requests for reviewing past decisions. While an annual conference can adopt rules and regulations for its own governance, the council wrote in Decision 1185, the conference “may not legally negate, ignore or violate provisions of the Discipline with which they disagree even when ...based upon conscientious objections to those provisions.”

The rationale for the New York policy, adopted in 2010, is that same-sex marriage is legal in Connecticut; that such unions performed legally elsewhere “are legally recognized by state agencies in New York”; and that the church’s Articles of Religion – doctrinal standards found in Paragraph 103 of the Book of Discipline – state that it is “lawful” for clergy “to marry at their own discretion.” Contending that the Articles of Religion take precedence over other church laws outside the church’s constitution, the New York Conference declared that “we believe that any... provision (in the Discipline) denying marriage to some clergy is unconstitutional and contrary to the Articles of Religion...” In particular, Paragraph 103 would take precedence over Paragraph 2702, the conference said. Before enacting the policy, however, the New York Conference resolution asked the Judicial Council to make a “declaratory decision” about its validity. During the oral hearing in October, J. Ann Craig and Nehemiah Lockett — New York lay members who identified themselves as gay — argued that Article XXI of Paragraph 103, declares marriage is “a moral structure available to all.” At the April oral hearing in Detroit, Kevin Nelson, a New York lay member who identified himself as “a straight person who supports full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons,” argued that when John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote the Articles of Religion, he did not define marriage as heterosexual. Both Craig and Nelson noted that Wesley was well aware that issues of class, race and status could be used by society as an attempt to block marriage. “Although John Wesley may not have considered marriage for same-gender couples in Article XXI, the discretion of clergy to marry whom they choose can be understood on the face of it as a challenge to arbitrary social categories and prejudices,” Craig said at the October hearing. Nelson declared that allowing other parts of the Discipline to supersede Article XXI is “anti-Wesleyan” and ignores the ministry of Jesus to the marginalized, “a marginalization that in today’s world and in the case of gay and lesbian persons is all too often perpetuated by the very Christian churches that have been charged by God with opposing it.” Noting that “there is no acceptable place between humiliation and respect,” Nelson asked council members to “take a controversial but clearly proscribed stand” to uphold the church’s constitution and affirm the New York Conference policy.

Opposing the policy

The Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, a Wisconsin pastor, spoke in opposition of the policy at both the October and April hearings. In April, he called the New York petition one “in a string” of actions over the years by various annual conferences to urge Judicial Council to circumvent General Conference, the church’s top legislative body, and change the denomination’s stance on homosexuality. The Book of Discipline already has defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman, and an annual conference “does not have the right to legislate on the duties of clergy,” Lambrecht added. Nor can it unilaterally change the definition of marriage in Article XXI to include same-gender marriage without General Conference action, he said. Supporters of the New York Conference policy mainly use experience and cultural tolerance as the basis for their support, he contended. “Such arguments may be somewhat persuasive in a legislative arena, but they show how weak the legal standing of this policy is,” he told council members. Because marriage between one man and one woman was the norm in Wesley’s time, there was no need for him to define marriage in the Articles of Religion, Lambrecht argued. While heterosexual marriage was the norm then, Nelson replied, Wesley was well aware of other restrictions on marriage related

to class and race. “Wesley did not set a definition in Article XXI...[but] a principle.”...

Attempt at immunity

In its ruling, the Judicial Council found that Paragraph 2702.1 does not “revoke, change or alter” the Articles of Religion or establish new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to established doctrinal standards. The New York Conference policy, however, is in conflict with the Discipline and “could arguably be advanced as some safe haven from the complaint process for those clergy who choose to enter into a same-sex marriage at their discretion...,” the court said. A conference has no authority to offer such immunity by adopting a policy “that is clearly contrary to the Discipline.” Judicial Council does not consider state recognition of same-sex marriage to be a factor in this case. “The church has a long tradition of maintaining its standards apart from those recognized or permitted by any civil authority,” the decision said. “The church’s definition of marriage as contained in the Discipline is clear and unequivocal and is limited to the union of one man and one woman.” In a concurring opinion, four council members – the Rev. Katherine Austin Mahle, the Rev. F. Belton Joyner Jr., Angela Brown and the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe -- wrote that the council’s decision does not comment “on the appropriateness of the disciplinary language related to marriage being between one man and one woman. We only say that there is no constitutional block to such language.”

The Articles of Religion came about when Wesley “revised, redefined, and adapted” the 39 Articles of the Church of England to fit the context of the newly formed Methodist church in the United States. “It is possible to change and interpret the Articles of Religion in light of the Christian mission for our times,” through votes requiring specific majority approvals by General Conference and the denomination’s annual conferences, the opinion noted.

[Editorial Note: The decision by the UM Judicial Council was sound and based on doctrinal judicial integrity. Although I personally know one of the members who is a theological liberal, he has unwavering integrity and can be trusted to give a foundation to the deliberations when the Judicial Council is conducting its work. – AOM]

– By Linda Bloom, the United Methodist News Service (UMNS), May 3, 2011. Bloom is a United Methodist News Service multimedia reporter based in New York. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/umcscribe>.

Annual Conference Reports

Central Texas. From the first moments of the opening worship service at First UMC Waco to the final “Amen” of the sending forth three days later (June 5–8), the 145th meeting of the Central Texas Annual Conference (CTC) was immersed in a spirit of transformation, leadership, renewal and growth. Bishop J. Michael Lowry, presiding over his third annual conference, welcomed the Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor, UM Church of the Resurrection, as the conference’s featured speaker. Bishop Lowry cemented the conference’s charge to be leaders of change during a rousing presentation at the service of ordination, reminding those gathered that even though the Methodist movement has been faithful in serving up the love of Christ to the world, the struggle still continues and we must diligently continue to offer the cup of salvation to a world dying of thirst. The body officially adopted and launched The Exodus Project—a transformational roadmap designed to streamline and refocus the conference on five core values of evangelism, Wesleyan tradition, spiritual growth, mission and inclusiveness while keeping the needs of the local churches at the center of the decision chain. The Exodus Project brings changes including the restructuring of the conference’s districts to five geographic-based districts and one conference-wide district focused on the needs of new charges/churches; the formation of three new conference centers (Evangelism & Church Growth, Leadership, Mission Support); a renewed focus on mentoring, coaching and modeling transformational leadership from the district superintendents; and the reported \$745,000 savings to the CTC’s bottom line.

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Tom Harkrider (Ft. Worth), Steve McIver (Ferris), Ethan Gregory (Mineral Wells), Kim Simpson (Arlington), Ed Komandosky (Taylor) and Carolyn Stephens (Benbrook). Clergy delegates: Mike McKee (Hurst), Tim Bruster (Ft. Worth), Mary Spradlin (Arlington), Brenda Wier (Gordon), John McKellar (Southlake) and Debra Crumpton (Georgetown). Lay delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Paula Whitbeck (Georgetown), Cynthia Rives (Stephenville), Mary Percifield (Alvarado), Darcy Deupree (Ft. Worth), Joan Gaspard (Hurst) and Corliss McBride (Waco). Clergy delegates: Tom Robbins Jr. (Temple), Clifton Howard (Arlington), Chris Hayes (Keller), Jeannie Trevino Teddlie (Ft. Worth), Paul Gravley (Hutto) and Jerry Chism (Bedford). Lay alternates: Darlene Alfred (Salado), Edith Jones (Ft. Worth), Joseph Boatman (Mansfield) and Gayland Daugherty (Comanche). Clergy alternates: Randy Wild (Arlington), Karen Greenwaldt (Ft. Worth), Lara Whitley (Joshua) and Mike Ramsdell (Mansfield). The CTC has sustained more than three decades of growth, and 2010 was no exception. Membership is 166,180, an increase of 1,261.

East Ohio. Bishop John L. Hopkins welcomed East Ohio back to Hoover Auditorium as he opened the 42nd session of Annual Conference on June 13. “If these walls could talk, we would hear the Holy hum of Hoover,” Hopkins told the 1,501 in attendance along the shore of Lake Erie. “We stand on the shoulders of others who have worshiped here.” The scripture from 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 reminded us that the church, despite its many parts, is one body. Like a human body, it functions best when each of its parts performs its task properly. The lesson was a perfect way to introduce this year’s theme, “If We Are the Body. . . .” Featured speaker, the Rev. Jorge Acevedo, shared reasons why and how Grace UMC in Coral Gable, Fla. is heralded as a vital congregation. Resolutions passed include a call to advocate for the enforcement of the human trafficking laws in Ohio, a call to support the Ohio food banks, a call to honor Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a call to advocate for continued participation in political process and support of collective bargaining and a call to ensure youth a place on committees and councils. The state of the conference report showed a 1.14% decrease in membership to 163,603, and a .9% decrease in average weekly worship attendance to 64,602. There were 2,049 baptisms performed in 2010 and 20,359 professions of faith.

– Rick Wolcott, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

Greater New Jersey. The Greater New Jersey Annual met in Valley Forge, Pa. (June 1–4) to share in rousing worship, inspired preaching and enriching fellowship that are the hallmarks of the conference gathering. Conference preacher, Mike Slaughter, called on UMs to “stop playing church.” “Our business,” he said, “is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. If we are going to make disciples, we need to strengthen the core of our community.”

The delegate elections were some of the most unusual in the conference’s history. Clergy delegates elected to General Conference are all first-time delegates: Drew Dyson (Bloomsbury, vice-chair), Varlyna Wright (Columbus), Tanya Linn Bennett (Chatham), Heasun Kim (Old Bridge), and Jessica Campbell (Thiells, N.Y.). Lay delegates: Lynn Caterson (Absecon, chair), John Bishop (Saddle River), Jay Brown (Williamstown), Mark Miller (Plainfield) and Bethany Amey (Blackwood). Amey is a first-time delegate. Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Sung Hoon Ahn (Harrington Park), Chris Heckert (Maplewood), John DiGiamberardino (Brick), Lysette Perez (Camden), and Charles Bender (Woodstown). Clergy reserve delegates: Robert Costello (Roseland), Vivian Rodeffer (Moorestown), and Jisun Kwak (Metuchen). Lay delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Samuel Sim (River Edge), June McCullough (Vineland), Judy Colorado (Warren), Rosa Williams (Teaneck), and Constance Ace (Whitehouse). Lay reserve delegates: Cynthia Kent (Belleville), Creed Pogue (Estell Manor), and Weagba Nelson (Union Beach).

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar preached at the ordination service with the participation of Bishop Felton Edwin May, Bishop In Kwan Kim and the ecumenical representative, President Iain Torrance from Princeton Theological Seminary. A shared ministries budget of \$12,362,418 was passed as were resolutions approving the creation of a Disabilities Awareness Sunday with offering, a petition to General Conference to create a Committee on Disability Awareness, a Disaster Response Plan, and the creation of a committee to study the use of conference owned office facilities. The delegates made a colorful paper airplane “flying offering” of \$80,820 for Wings of the Morning ministries in North Katanga. Bishop Devadhar spent the next 45 minutes joyfully recognizing people as they spoke on behalf of their churches and raising an additional \$108,421, for a total of \$195,109 for the ministry of North Katanga. Membership is 93,415, down 786.

– Glenn Ferguson, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

Iowa. Gathering under the banner of “Radical Hospitality of Justice,” the 168th session of the Iowa Annual Conference met June 4–7 for the second year in Des Moines’ Hy-Vee Hall. The assembly of 1,800 clergy and lay representatives celebrated, remembered, looked to the future, listened and learned, engaged in holy conferencing, shared in mission projects and elected delegates to the 2012 General and Jurisdictional conferences. “We have a story so compelling that it must be told,” Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble declared in his episcopal address. The Rev. Dr. Mike Slaughter, lead pastor of Ginghamburg (UM) Church, spoke to the conference about a mandate for mission. Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Phil Carver, Norma Morrison, Joel Carver, Kae Tritle, Craig Scott, Darcy Rubenking and Jessica Ireland. Clergy delegates: Brian Milford, David Weesner, Barrie Tritle, Diane Wasson Eberhart, Christina Sung, Lillian Gallo Seagren, and Denny Coon. Jurisdictional Conference lay delegates: Sarah Kitterman Stevens, Barbara Oakland, Lisa Larson, Greg Shine, Tyler Schwaller, West Steel and June Goldman. Clergy delegates: Karen Nichols Dungan, Katie Dawson, J. Robert Burkhart, Mike Morgan, Alexis Williams, George White and Sean McRoberts. Lay alternates: Mary Morris, Marcia Young, Dorothy

Higdon, Christine J. Anders, Noreen F. Kahler-Miller and Olivia Pleggenkuhle. Clergy alternates: Craig Peters, Tom Carver, James Parks, Mary Fraser, Jerry Oakland and Enna Antunez.

Thirteen proposed petitions to the 2012 General Conference were discussed; four were approved. Those passed include: an expression of support for ex-felons to recover their voting rights; encouragement for congregations to evaluate their carbon footprint; amending paragraph 161F of the Book of Discipline to remove language stating that “The UMC does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching;” and remove the prohibition of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” from being certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The UMC. The conference budget for 2012 will be \$15,624,566, a 1.97 percent decrease from the \$15,938,274 approved for 2011. Conference membership is 179,765, down 3,492.

– Arthur McClanahan, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

Kansas East. Kansas East Annual Conference met June 8–11 at UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, under the leadership of Bishop Scott J. Jones. The theme was “The Church United: Creating Community . . . Cultivating Connections.” Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Luke Wetzel (Olathe) and Oliver Green (Topeka). Clergy delegates: Adam Hamilton (Leawood, head) and Rena Yocum (Edgerton). Lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Courtney Fowler (Manhattan) and Bryce Bowers (Baldwin City). Clergy delegates: Gary Beach (Manhattan) and Eduardo Bousson (Topeka). Members of the Kansas East Conference participated in a . . . ballot to test support for creating one new annual conference of the Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West conferences. Members in Kansas East were overwhelmingly in favor of moving forward with creating one new annual conference, with 90 percent of members expressing support. A formal vote is expected at conference sessions in 2012. The conference adopted a spending plan of \$5.062 million for 2012 and endorsed two resolutions for General Conference asking for changes in the language in the Book of Discipline related to homosexuality. Membership is 70,796, down 378. – Lisa Elliott Diehl, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

Kansas West. Kansas West Annual Conference met May 25–27 in Hutchinson under the leadership of Bishop Scott J. Jones. The theme was “Risk-Taking Mission: Worth It!” and focused on risk-taking mission at local, regional and international levels. The conference celebrated camping, campus ministry and church development projects funded through the conference’s capital campaign.

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Dixie Brewster (Milton, head) and Penney Schwab (Copeland). Clergy delegates: Mark Conard (Hutchinson) and Amy Lippoldt (Wichita). Lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Jill Foss (Hutchinson) and Tyler Ward (Hesston). Clergy delegates: Cheryl Jefferson Bell (Newton) and Nathan Stanton (Wichita). Members of the Kansas West Conference participated in a ballot to test support for creating one new annual conference of the Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West conferences. Members in Kansas West were in favor of moving forward with creating one new conference, with 70 percent of members expressing support. A formal vote is expected at conference sessions in 2012. The conference adopted a \$5.8 million budget for 2012. The body also adopted resolutions: 1) encouraging local churches to celebrate clergy appointments to local churches; 2) encouraging local churches to celebrate laity and lay speakers in the local church; and 3) establishing Rural Life Sunday on the Sunday before Thanksgiving annually to raise awareness of the relationship between agriculture and the food we eat, to inform urban and suburban dwellers of the plight of farmers and rural communities, to affirm those who grow the food we eat and to give thanks to God for the unique joys of rural living. Membership is 80,571, down 844.

– Lisa Elliott Diehl, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

Mississippi. Close to 2,500 members and visitors gathered at the Jackson Convention Complex June 10–12 to hear witness and celebrate evangelism and mission throughout the Mississippi Conference, surrounded by signs of ways their churches were going forth to transform the world. Rev. Jorge Acevedo, pastor of Grace Church in the Florida Conference, Dr. Dana Robert, Professor of the History of Mission at Boston University of Theology and the Rev. John Edgar, pastor of The Church for All People from the West Ohio Conference shared their witness as the Church for All People Band led in praise and worship. Members approved mission shares (budget) of \$15,500,000 for 2012, a slight increase. Because of the 2012 General Conference, more than 30 petitions and resolutions were presented on matters ranging from doctrine to affiliation and interaction with other institutions. A resolution asking members to continue praying for the Mississippi Annual Conference was approved, as was one asking for “a catholic spirit in resolutions.” A resolution passed that advised severing ties with Claremont School of Theology. [Note: Claremont had reached an accord with the Islamic community for form

what is an Islamic training center. – AOM]

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Turner Arant (Sunflower), Timothy Crisler (Raymond), Martha Scarborough (Brandon), David Beckley (Holly Springs), David Stotts (Madison), Anne Harrington (Houston) and Elizabeth Cumbest (Moss Point). Clergy delegates: Bill McAlilly (Gulfport, head), Mattie Gibson (Greenwood), Joe May (Jackson), Connie Shelton (Jackson), Lisa Garvin (Jackson), Mike Childs (Louisville) and Ricky James (Jackson). Lay delegates elected to Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference: Bill Smallwood (New Albany), Mary Ford (Quitman), William D. Scott III (Holly Springs), Connie Walters (Philadelphia), Lydia Smith (Tupelo), Dora Washington (Jackson) and Jack Ramsey Httiesburg). Lay alternates: Stephen McAlilly (Tupelo), Elmo Gabbert (Meadville) and Patricia Battle (Meridian). Clergy delegates: Andy Ray (Senatobia), Bob Rambo (Meridian), Embra Jackson (Starkville), Bill Beavers (Southaven), Warren Black (Oxford), Vicki White (Jackson) and Stephen Sparks. Clergy alternates: Ginger Holland (Tupelo), Allison Dickerson (Brandon) and Tommy Artmann (Hattiesburg). Membership is 181,795, down 609.

– Cumbest Michiels, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

New York. When the clergy and laity of the New York Annual Conference gathered on Long Island at Hofstra University June 8–11, they explored what it means to be “Heart-warmed UMs in Mission” through worship, Bible study and holy conferencing. Petitions and resolutions to General Conference on which the conference voted concurrence included several related to “marriage equality” and amendments to the Discipline that remove bans on practicing homosexuals serving as clergy and performing same-sex unions, and the development of a code of ethics and conflict of interest policy for general church organizations, councils, boards and agencies. Conference voted to support the retired UMC bishops’ statement seeking to amend the Discipline statement on the “incompatibility” of homosexuality to Christian teaching; a resolution that the NYAC place print ads welcoming the LGBT population and apologizing for the UMC’s “prejudiced policies” against the community; the alignment of UM investments with resolutions on Israel/Palestine; a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines and solidarity with working people and their unions. Bishop Violet L. Fisher, retired episcopal leader of the Northern and Western New York conferences, preached during the ordination and commissioning service.

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: William Shillady (New York, co-head), Adrienne Brewington (Freeport), Tim Riss (Hicksville), Constance Pak (Lake Ronkonkoma) and Noel Chin (New York). Lay delegates: Fred Brewington (Freeport, co-head), Jorge Lockward (New York), Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt (Hamden, Conn.), Marva Usher-Kerr (Brooklyn) and Rashid Warner (the Bronx). Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Ed Horne (Westport, Conn.), Kun Sam Cho (Fairfield, Conn.), Ken Kieffer (Hamden, Conn.), Evelyn McDonald (Newburgh) and Luisa Martinez-Buck (New York). Lay delegates: Roena Littlejohn (Bridgeport, Conn.), Kevin Nelson (New York), Natassia Velez (Middletown), Chan Gilliam (Stamford, Conn.) and Bob Hunsinger (Monroe). Clergy alternates: David Henry (Freeport), Judith Stevens (Staten Island) and Stephen Bauman (New York). Lay alternates: Maria Maine (Hauppauge), Richard Nicodemus (Wappingers Falls) and Darlene DiDomenick (White Plains). Membership stands at 114,663, down 1,150 from 2009. – Joanne S. Utley, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

North Carolina. The North Carolina Annual Conference met June 15–18 in Raleigh using the theme “A Future with Hope: Leading to Christ.” It was a time for resetting baselines for the purpose of refocusing on the mission of the church, moving away from a preoccupation with money and placing more emphasis on bringing people into a relationship with Jesus Christ through vital congregations. All financial matters were presented together with a vote taken later in the conference. The financial impact for local churches remained the same as last year with a slight decrease in the overall budget—\$20.3 million, \$578 less than last year. Conference members approved the elimination of 12 districts and the creation of eight new districts. A task force on superintendency presented the recommendation. The change, estimated as having a \$380,000 savings for the conference, will be effective with the 2012 conference after Bishop Al Gwinn and the cabinet form the new district lines.

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Emily Innes (Wilmington, chair), Christine Dodson (Clinton), Courtney Jennings (Clayton), Gary Locklear (Pembroke), Bill Norton (Raleigh), Duncan McMillan (Rocky Mount), Ann Davis (Greenville), Mack Parker (Raleigh) and LaNella Smith (Durham). Clergy delegates: Beth Hood (Greenville, vice-chair), Gray Southern (Durham), Tim Russell (Clayton), Leonard Fairley (Laurinburg), Tim Reaves (White Oak), Patricia Archer (Wilmington, secretary), Carl Frazier (Cary), Bill Gattis (Burlington) and Bob Bergland (Rocky Mount). Lay Jurisdictional Conference delegates: Steve Taylor (Lumberton), Laura Little (Greenville), Beth Norris (Raleigh), CJ Pearce (Henderson), Tom Walden (Youngsville), Sam Isley (Raleigh), Eston C. Brinkley (Wilmington), Berry Merrill (Princeton) and Fred Hight (Wilson). Clergy delegates: Ben Williams (Raleigh), Edgardo Colon-Emeric (Durham), Carol Goehring (Raleigh),

Sam Wynn (Fayetteville), Regina Henderson (Raleigh), Kevin Baker (Durham), David Banks (Pinehurst), Won Namkoong (West End) and Greg Jenks (Holly Springs). Lay alternates: Frank Brooks (Greenville), Katie Brinkley (Wilmington), Allen O. Morris (Fayetteville), Martha Bullock Caves (Roxboro) and Gretchen Shea (Raleigh). Clergy alternates: Jon Strother (Raleigh), Edgar De Jesus (Fayetteville), Marty Cauley (Rocky Mount), Gayle Felton (Rougemount) and Paul Stallworth (Morehead City).

Conference members packaged 90,000 meals to be used in any of 76 countries served by Stop Hunger Now. Bishop Hope Morgan Ward of the Mississippi Conference and Dr. Timothy Tennent, president of Asbury Theological Seminary, were the conference preachers. Laurie Beth Jones, author, speaker, coach, and trainer, taught two sessions on “Twelve Essential Dreams Every Leader Must Have” as part of the laity celebration. Conference supported resolutions in support of negotiation in the Middle East, effective and constructive peacemaking between Palestinians and Israelis through positive investment in Palestine and socio-economic and racial diversity in public schools. To help establish accurate membership and average worship attendance baselines for local churches, the bishop and cabinet named 2011 as the “Year of Jubilee.” This set a new baseline for local churches after wiping out statistical inaccuracies and a promise that each would maintain accurate records from this time on. Membership is 232,154, down 5,341 from the previous year with Year of Jubilee adjustments. Worship attendance stands at 81,926, down 1,526. Church school attendance stands 36,414, down 886.

– Bill Norton, as reported in *NewScope*, July 13, 2011

North Texas. The North Texas Annual Conference met June 5–7 at the Plano Convention Centre, Plano Texas. Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe presided. The opening worship was held at FUMC Dallas, and Bishop John Innis of Liberia preached an inspiring word. This service was made all the more uplifting by numerous local church donations to Imagine No Malaria. On the evening of June 6, the ordination services were held at Christ UMC, Plano. The Rev. Morris Matthis, of Christ UMC, Sugarland (Texas Annual Conference), preached. The 2012 delegates are listed in order of election. Clergy delegates to General Conference: Don Underwood, Jan Davis, Gary Mueller, Clayton Oliphint, Ron Henderson and Jill Jackson-Sears. Clergy delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Owen Ross, Tyrone Gordon, Lisa Greenwood, John Allen, Andrew Stoker and Dana Coker. Clergy alternates: Timothy Morrison, Deborah Chapman and Ouida Lee. Lay delegates to General Conference: Ricky Harrison, Tim Crouch, Richard Hearne, Mary Brooke Casad, Henry Lessner and Kay Yeager. Lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Frank Jackson, Natasha Ray, Linda Parks, Scott Smith, Lisa Tichenor and Billy Ratcliff. Lay alternates: Gretchen Toler-Debus, Ruth Robinson and Alys Richards.

The North Texas Annual Conference will send a number of petitions to the 2012 General Conference. These include: amend ¶324 to include courses on pastoral/church leadership and preaching, which clarifies the courses candidates must complete prior to being approved for provisional membership; extend voting privileges to retired local pastors, and include them in the membership of clergy; clearly differentiate the examination for commissioning and provisional membership from the examination for ordination as a deacon and elder in full membership. Membership is 150,859, down by 5.2%.

– Sheron Patterson, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. “A New Day: A New Calling” was the theme of the 169th session of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, held June 9–12 at Antlers, Oklahoma. Bishop Robert E. Hayes, Jr. presiding bishop for the Oklahoma area, was the preacher for all worship. The opening ceremonies once again included the presentation of flags: the American and Christian flags as well as flags from all 39 of the federally recognized nations of Oklahoma. Marcus Briggs-Cloud, a member of the Miccosukee Creek Nation and member of Norman First American UMC, was the worship leader. The conference approved a budget of \$1,096,998 for 2012. David Wilson was elected as General Conference clergy delegate and Sue Burgess as lay delegate. Jurisdictional Conference clergy delegate: Julienne Judd; lay delegate: Pearl Thomas; clergy alternate: Margaret Battiest; lay alternate: Josephine Deere. Membership is 6,189 down 7.

– Josephine Deere, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

Oregon–Idaho. “Boldly Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Renewed in the Spirit” was the theme of the 43rd Oregon–Idaho Annual Conference meeting in Salem, Ore. One year ago the conference was talking about how to embrace change; this year the conference is looking at how that change is shaping and empowering the conference and its churches with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Conference leaders shared information about a new process of continuing education and church consultation for clergy and lay teams. Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata announced that districts will be realigned from five to four in January. Michael Slaughter from Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, Ohio shared his passion for changing the

church by changing the world. Three petitions will be sent to the General Conference based on conference action. All three deal with eliminating discriminatory restrictions in the Book of Discipline that impair the ability of clergy to minister with a witness of love, justice and inclusion to all persons. [Note: Read “to include homosexual...”] In addition to official action of the conference, nearly 70 clergy signed a pledge “that we will meet, counsel and celebrate with any prepared couple who comes to us for Christian marriage.” Bishop John Innis of Liberia and his wife Irene were guests of the conference. The Liberia and Oregon–Idaho annual conferences have had a long partnership relationship.

The lay delegate elected to General Conference is Jan Nelson (Salem, Ore.). The clergy delegate is Laura Jaquith Bartlett (Eagle Creek, Ore., head). Additional Jurisdictional Conference lay delegates: David Armstrong (Florence, Ore.), Bonnie McOmber (Eagle, Idaho) and Vincent Myers (Salem, Ore.). Clergy delegates: Clay Andrew (Hillsboro, Ore.), Donna Pritchard (Portland, Ore.) and April Hall Cutting (Sweet Home, Ore.). Laity reserve delegates: Mark Bateman (Salem, Ore.) and Norman Dyer (Beaverton, Ore.). Clergy reserve delegates: Scott Harkness (Roseburg, Ore.) and John (Joung Youl) Go (Fruitland, Idaho). Membership is 28,726, down 1,589. – Greg Nelson, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

Upper New York. The Upper New York Annual Conference held its second session June 7–11, in Rochester; the theme: “Moving with the Spirit: Promise, Power, Witness.” The conference voted to send several petitions to General Conference on the issue of ending what is deemed discrimination against homosexual clergy and laity in the church. Other petitions and resolutions for General Conference were tabled and others were referred to the Conference Leadership Team. Among those tabled was a resolution asking the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to divest its portfolio of any entities that sustain Israel’s occupation of Palestine. Among the items approved was the 2012 budget of \$10.72 million.

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Scott Johnson (Buffalo, head), Stephanie Deckard (Syracuse), Christine Doran (Syracuse), Shirley Readdean (Schenectady), Julius Archibald Jr., (Plattsburgh), Greg Forrester (Cortland), Michael Huber (Moravia) and Paul Sweet (Lake Placid). Clergy delegates: Bill Gottschalk-Fielding (Marcellus), Ted Anderson (Rochester), Darryl Barrow (Baldwinsville), Rebekkah Sweet (Lake Placid), Larry Baird (Jamestown), Michelle Bogue-Trost (Newtonville), Sherri Rood (Rochester) and Holly Nye (Albany). Lay delegates elected to Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference: Brooke Conklin (Saratoga Springs), Hudda Aswad (Binghamton), Carmen F. S. Vianese (Nunda) Kurt Karandy, Eric Yetter (Owego), Rebecca Lo Kohler (Oneida), Blenda Smith (Binghamton) and Anita Youtzy (Geneseo). Lay alternates: Dan Fuller (Chenango Forks), Bryant Clark (Windsor), Ilah Walser (Ballston Spa) and Ronald Bretsch (Norwood). Elected as clergy delegates to Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference: William Allen (Olean), Sung Ho Lee (New Hartford), Cathy Hall Stengel (Painted Post), Elizabeth Quick (East Syracuse), William Mudge (Boonville), Sara Baron (Apalachin), Natalie Hanson (Buffalo) and Craig French (Syracuse). Clergy alternates: Rebecca Laird (Syracuse), Cheol Hee-Yang (Voorheesville), Megan Stowe (Clifton Park) and Robert (B.J.) Norrix (Syracuse). Audited membership is 182,000.

– Maidstone Mulenga, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

Virginia. Meeting in Roanoke, members of the 229th Virginia Annual Conference elected one of the largest delegations to the 2012 General Conference, considered almost 20 resolutions and welcomed a familiar face filling in for their bishop. Richmond Area Bishop Charlene Kammerer became very ill the week before conference due to an adverse reaction to a typhoid vaccination she had in preparation for an upcoming trip to Mozambique. She asked Bishop Timothy Whitaker of Florida—elected to the episcopacy from Virginia in 2001—to preside, and it proved to be a very comfortable fit. The theme was mission, “Being Christ to Others: Snapshots of the Kingdom.” Thirteen children from the conference- supported Shade and Fresh Water project in Brazil were special guests at a celebration of mission. Members collected 53,469 kits for the UM Committee on Relief, including 26,617 health kits and 944 cleaning buckets. The Society of St. Andrew’s “Potato Drop” involved more than 220 participants who unloaded and packed 39,000 pounds of sweet potatoes that went out to 12 feeding agencies in Virginia and West Virginia. Members passed resolutions on the election of additional lay members, on a call to fast and pray, the priority of proclaiming Christ, support of “20/20: Visioning an AIDS-Free World,” on peace-making efforts between Palestinians and Israelis, and honoring the 50th anniversary of the founding of Virginia Wesleyan College. They narrowly defeated a resolution of affirmation of the retired bishops’ “Statement of Counsel to the Church.” [Note: The one supporting various aspects of homosexual advocacy. – AOM]

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Shirley Cauffman (Arlington), Darlene Amon (Suffolk), Ron Hardman (Williamsburg), Jim Branscome (Glen Allen), Nathaniel L. Bishop (Christiansburg), Marshall Bailey (Midlothian), Martha Stokes (Glen Allen), David Brown (Falls Church), Susie Wolf (Kenbridge), Carol Gaston (Salem), Dot Ivey (Richmond),

Larry Burian (Reedville) and Gene Mims (Petersburg). Clergy delegates: Tom Berlin (Herndon), Beth Downs (Glen Allen), Clarence Brown (Annandale), Denise Honeycutt (Annandale), Rhonda VanDyke Colby (Winchester), Peter Moon (Midlothian), Tammy Estep (Parksley), Marc Brown (Glen Allen), Ted Smith (Stafford), Amanda Garber (Harrisonburg), Kirk Nave (Richmond), Young Jin Cho (Alexandria) and Brenda Biler (Charlottesville). Lay delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Miriam Kim (Great Falls), Rachel Hundley (Harrisonburg), Olivia Hinton (Portsmouth), Ana Maria Lopez (Fairfax), Andrew Ware (Norfolk), Neill Caldwell (Richmond), Andrew Di-Antonio (Oak Hill), Jacob Paysour (Troutville), Willard Douglas (Richmond), Janet Bracey (Virginia Beach), Larry Tubbs (Fredericksburg), Robert Orcutt (Fredericksburg), and Sandra Baker (Winchester). Clergy delegates: Ileana Rosario (Suffolk), Keith Boyette (Spotsylvania), Youtha Hardman-Cromwell (Washington, D.C.), Larry Jent (Fishersville), Lorenzo Hill (Lorton), Phyllis Earley (Alexandria), Paulo Da Silva (Madison Heights), Tommy Herndon (Harrisonburg), Steve Hundley (Roanoke), Kristin Holbrook (Salem), Beth Givens (Ashland), Jeff Mickle (Burke) and Mary Beth Blinn (Richmond). Membership is 335, 275, down 3,806. – Neill Caldwell, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

West Michigan. Opening the 43rd session of the West Michigan Annual Conference, Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton called [participants] to “feed both the body and spiritual needs of a hungry world!” The theme of the conference, held June 1–4 in Grand Rapids, was “Take My Hand: Engaging in Ministry with the Poor” and during the four days members were inspired to make love offerings of \$41,614.53 for mission and ministry. “Miracle Saturday” was a highlight of the conference with many churches sending 12 or more disciples to attend the final day of conference. Nearly 2,000 people packed the arena to hear Rudy Rasmus, co-pastor of St. John’s Church in downtown Houston, remind us, “Love is as love does,” as we seek to reach the 294 million in the U.S. who don’t go to church. Petitions to General Conference with which conference concurred were related to Peace with Justice offering, episcopal tenure and removing condemnatory language. Membership is 62,949, down 1479.

– Mark Doyal, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

West Virginia. The 43rd session of the West Virginia Conference took place June 8–11 at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, W.Va. The theme, “I Will Be Your Witness: Purpose” was the third in a four-year series emphasizing evangelism. Over 1,100 churches were represented by more than 1,000 lay and clergy members of conference. Members voted to designate “Disciples Who Make Disciples—Evangelism” as the 2012–16 quadrennial emphasis. Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (Los Angeles Area), preached the memorial service.

Clergy delegates to General Conference (in order of election): Ellis Conley (Fairmont, head), Mary Ellen Finegan (Fairmont), Ken Ramsey (Buckhannon), Mark Flynn (Lewisburg) and Ed Grant (Charleston). Lay delegates: Judi Kenaston (Lewisburg), Jim Berner (Scott Depot), Judy Nutter (St. Marys), Pat Mick (Hinton) and Fred Kellerman (Frankford). Additional clergy delegates to Northeast Jurisdictional Conference: Janet Harman and J. Montgomery Brown (Charleston), Amy Shanholtzer (Winfield), Ravi Isaiah (St. Albans) and Aslam Barkat (Fairmont). Lay delegates: Royce Lyden (Fairmont), R. Zachary Allen (Wheeling), Connor Kenaston (Lewisburg), Gayle Lesure (Clarksburg) and Jeffrey Taylor (Huntington). Clergy alternates: Mark Connor (Huntington) and Kenneth Krimmel (Parkersburg). Lay alternates: Betty Bailey (St. Marys) and Scarlett Kellerman (Frankford). Membership is 99,958, down 1,370.

– Laura Harbert Allen, as reported in *NewScope*, June 29, 2011

Western North Carolina. The members of the 2011 Western North Carolina Annual Conference met at Lake Junaluska, June 8–12. Conference approved a recommendation to reduce the number of districts and superintendents from 15 to eight, beginning at the end of the 2012 conference session. Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster will name a transition team to assist in defining the boundaries of each district, roles of the superintendents and other matters related to legal and property issues. Conference approved a 2012 conference budget of \$14,353,102. The Rev. Dr. Ken Carter, Charlotte, N.C., was endorsed as the episcopal nominee from the Western North Carolina Conference by the members elected to the General and Jurisdictional Conference delegation. Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Jennifer P. Davis (Gastonia, vice-chair), Robert Upchurch (High Point), Jennifer L. Burton (Thomasville), Betty Jo Hardy (Salisbury), Kim Wright (Southmont), Coley Hooker (Pleasant Garden), Amy Johnson (Tobaccoville), Jim Windham (Gastonia), Neffie (Connie) Locklear (Greensboro), Robert (Rob) Lee (Statesville) and Lynne Gilbert (Greensboro). Clergy delegates: Ken Carter (Charlotte, chair), Kim T. Ingram (Belmont, secretary), Sally Langford (Concord), Andy Langford (Concord), Angela A. Pleasants (Charlotte), Amy L. Coles (Albemarle), David H. Christy (Canton), Jeremy I. Troxler (Durham), James C. Howell

(Charlotte), Arnetta E. Beverly (Greensboro) and In-Yong Lee (Asheville). Lay delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Joseph Lopez (Thomasville), Denny Wright (Southmont), John Howard (McLeansville), Tonya Lanier (Lexington), Mildred Carter (Yadkinville), Sarah McKinney (North Wilkesboro), Harry Underwood (Winston-Salem), Sandra (Sandy) Hieronymus (Charlotte), Ann Aldridge (Morganton), William (Willie) Green (Asheville) and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Lazelle Free (Greensboro). Clergy delegates: Nancy B. Rankin (Charlotte), Mark J. Key (Asheboro), Julianne (Jan) Brittain (Greensboro), R. Alan Rice Jr. (Yadkinville), Shelly F. Webb (Asheville), Stephanie M. Hand (Charlotte), Ashley Crowder Stanley (High Point), Anthony E. (Andy) Lambert (East Bend) and Charles C. Kyker (Hickory). Lay reserve delegates: James Hastings (Boone), Caroline Wood (Forest City), Daphne Strickland (Jamestown), Irma Ellwanger (Charlotte), Philip Wingeier-Rayo (Monroe) and Megann Marbry (Hudson). Clergy reserve delegates: Terry L. Moore (Weddington), Sam L. Moore (Madison), Sarah E. Davis (Gastonia), Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley (Charlotte), C. Saxon Scarborough (Gastonia) and Sally M. Queen (Rutherford College). Membership is 291,651, down 1,173.

– Skyler E. Nimmons, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

Western Pennsylvania. Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton told 1,600 members of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference at Grove City College June 9–12 that churches can no longer afford to conduct business as usual. Preacher Bishop Sally Dyck who said, “If you want to change the world, change a life. To change a life, you have to build relationships. And you must have a servant’s heart.” [Note: This points out the problem in our denomination. To change a life, you need to introduce a person to Jesus Christ. – AOM]

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Patricia Morris (Beaver Falls), Tina Whitehead (Oakmont), Diane Miller (Kennerdell), Larry Beatty (Hopwood), Luella Krieger (Sykesville), Donna Burkhart (Erie) and Rebekah Swineford (Gibsonia). Clergy delegates: Eric Park (Washington, head), Robert Zilhaver (DuBois), Alyce Weaver Dunn (Johnstown), William B. Meekins Jr. (Irwin), Sharon Schwab (Punxsutawney), Seth McPherson (Holsopple) and John Ciampa (Harrison City). Lay delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Sharon Gregory (Pittsburgh), Tracy R. Merrick (Pittsburgh), Joseph Emigh (Cochranon), Faith Geer (Allison Park), Peggy Ward (Bellevue), Vicki Stahlman (Brookville) and Louise Patterson (Elizabeth). Clergy delegates: John Seth (Galloway), Dale Shunk (Somerset), Stephanie Gottschalk (Pittsburgh), Roy Gearhart (Mahaffey), Joan Reasinger (Pittsburgh), Gregory Cox (Cranberry Twp.) and Mark A. Stewart (McMurray).

The conference approved a tax on natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania and a moratorium on permits for drilling new wells into the Marcellus Shale formation until environmental and infrastructure concerns are addressed. The 2012 apportionment budget of \$8.98 million was approved. The budget is almost \$6 million less than the 2011 apportionment budget, but leaders said it was based on more realistic income estimates. The total budget for funding ministry in 2012, including endowment and other income, is \$32.35 million. Conference membership is 179,656, down 2,727 from 2009.

– Jackie Campbell, as reported in *NewScope*, July 6, 2011

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“Luck is what you have left over after you give 100%.”