

## January 2011 Update

### **Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church**

Calling an illegal alien an “undocumented immigrant” is like calling a drug dealer an “unlicensed pharmacist”.

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**The Good Stuff**: The celebration of the Christmas season with our thoughts returning to the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ is always “The Good Stuff” and can be considered and included regardless of what else is going on in the world.

#### **Of Interest**

+ ***The United Methodist Church Faces a Financial and Relevancy Crisis*** By Liza Kittle

Following is an excerpt from a report by RENEW on the two reports were commissioned by the Call to Action Steering Team. It is instructive in what it presents and is a credible assessment by the RENEW ministry, which is unwaveringly faithful to our orthodox Christian faith and our Wesleyan doctrine. We read:

According to an independent Operational Assessment Project report released in June 2010, The United Methodist Church “is confronting a ‘creeping crisis’ of relevancy with an accompanying acute crisis of an underperforming economic model.” A Vital Congregations Project report was also released.

The two reports were commissioned by the Call to Action Steering Team, set up in 2009 by the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table at a cost of \$500,000. The team was charged with “bringing forth a plan that would lead to reordering the life of the Church for greater effectiveness and vitality in 1) the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and 2) addressing the Four Areas of Focus as distinctive ways we live into that mission together.” A final report with recommendations will be released in November 2010.

Disappointedly, the studies don’t address divisive social and political issues that threaten schism within the denomination and greatly contribute to membership loss. The increasing secularization of United Methodist seminaries and the convoluted legislative process of General Conference were also not mentioned. Another important parameter not included was the absence of considering the theological underpinning (evangelical/progressive) of the church/pastor when analyzing church demographic/membership trends and church vitality markers.

Another omission of the operational assessment report is the absence of mention of the Women’s Division, the governing body of United Methodist Women. Although technically a part of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), the Division primarily operates independently from the GBGM and other General Church Agencies, while exerting strong control within the UMC and at General Conference. The Division is not required to provide statistical or financial information to the General Council on Finance and Administration, to open themselves up for scrutiny by the independent assessors, or to be held accountable to the Church except through General Conference. The Women’s Division is a powerful organization within the UMC, which monopolizes women’s ministry choices within the denomination and continues to promote a radically feminist political and social agenda around the world in the name of United Methodism.

#### **Conclusion**

The operational assessment report contains a tremendous amount of information and is worthy of reading, study, and discussion. It is important for church membership and leadership to have a clear understanding of the findings and suggestions presented by this independent entity. When the Call to Action Team releases its final report to the Church, it will hopefully outline a useful strategic and financial plan for the future. Reorganization of church structures and processes will not be enough however, to save our denomination. Unless the core foundational and theological beliefs of the denomination are addressed, all the restructuring in the world will be in vain. Reforming and renewal of the United Methodist Church can only happen if we return to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith, stand on the foundations of our Wesleyan heritage, build on the teachings of the Word of God, and engage in active mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”.

– Received by e-mail from RENEW.

+ ***New Pew Forum Survey Explores Religious Knowledge in the U.S.***

Atheists and agnostics, Jews and Mormons are among the highest-scoring groups on a new survey of religious knowledge by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, outperforming evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants and Catholics on questions about the core teachings, history and leading figures of major world religions. On average, Americans correctly answer 16 of the 32 religious knowledge questions on the survey. Atheists and agnostics average 20.9 correct answers. Jews and Mormons do about as well, averaging 20.5 and 20.3 correct answers, respectively. Protestants as a whole average 16 correct answers; Catholics as a whole, 14.7. On questions about Christianity (including the Bible), Mormons and white evangelical Protestants show the highest levels of knowledge. Jews, atheists and agnostics stand out for their knowledge of world religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. Jews, atheists and agnostics also do particularly well on questions about the role of religion in public life, including what the U.S. Constitution says about religion. While previous surveys by the Pew Research Center have shown that America is

among the most religious of the world's developed nations, this survey shows that large numbers of Americans are not well informed about the tenets, practices, history and leading figures of major faith traditions—including their own. Many people also think that the constitutional restrictions on religion in public schools are stricter than they really are.

These are among the key findings of the “U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey,” a nationwide poll conducted from May 19 through June 6, 2010, among 3,412 adults. For those curious about their own religious knowledge, the online presentation of the “U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey” includes an interactive quiz that allows Web visitors to answer a selection of questions taken from the survey and compare their results to the nation as a whole and with various religious and demographic groups.

– *The Pew Forum via Religion Press Release Service; as reported in UMNewscope, October 6, 2010*

### + *A church without walls*

[Editorial note: This is included in its entirety because it is instructive, containing an example of what it is to “do church” in our denominational journey, and also in what it omits – the essence of the Gospel message. – AOM]

There is a familiar saying, “If you build it, they will come.” Though the adage refers to a ball field in the movie *Field of Dreams*, one could argue the same words apply when it comes to building churches. Put up the walls, install the stained glass, open the doors...and they will come. However, two Chicago pastors are taking a different approach to starting a new congregation. Instead of beginning with bricks and mortar, they are starting with hearts and souls. For several months, United Methodist elders Trey Hall, 34, and Christian Coon, 41, have been at work throughout Chicago, building relationships that will be the foundation of the Urban Village Church. Coon added, “When you go to a church where everybody looks the same, it can give you a sense of community, but we want that community to include a wide variety of lifestyles and backgrounds. “We believe diversity gives people a much deeper look at how God works in the world.”

Rooted in the South Loop and West Loop Chicago neighborhoods, but reaching out to the entire Chicagoland region, Urban Village Church officially started July 1, 2009. The last few months have brought Hall and Coon closer to launching weekly worship services and in late March, Urban Village becomes a reality. In the meantime the visionary duo – both who have served established congregations in the Chicago area –continue to take their vision for this new Christian community to the streets.

Over the past year, they have used Facebook and other social media to convene an eclectic mix of city dwellers for relational meetings in coffee shops, bakeries and bistros. Several times a week, they sit with friends and friends of friends, as well as perfect strangers, to ask questions. The number one inquiry is “If you were looking for a church, what would you be looking for?” Here are some of the answers they received:

A church that is open to everybody.

A church that isn't hypocritical.

A church that isn't sheltered from reality.

A church not afraid to think outside the box theologically.

A church where you can ask questions and where answers are not pat.

“It's been so fascinating to meet people where they are in their faith journey and to hear their stories,” Coon said. “After this experience, I will never be the same kind of pastor. It's tempting to stay in your building and minister to the people who come there, but rather than waiting for people to come to us, we're trying to go to them and meet them in their own context.”

“What makes a church is the people,” Hall went on to say. “At the heart of this new community is real human life in all its beauty and messiness and struggle and love. We don't do God or ourselves any good by pretending otherwise and checking our unvarnished lives and curious brains at the church door. We believe the point of church is not to make people more 'religious,' but rather to show people how to be more fully human.”

So far, Urban Village United Methodist Church is a church without walls. It has no address, no blueprints and no pews ordered. In fact, sanctuary doors of this rethought church may open to an art gallery, a jazz club or a coffee shop. Pews might be park benches or bar stools. Instead of stained glass, there is likely to be a view of the Chicago skyline, a local park or a busy city street.

Moreover, Sunday worship will not be the only time these groups of seekers and believers gather. During the week, there may be a book discussion at a coffee shop in Andersonville, a parenting class in the South Loop, a “theology on tap” conversation at a West Loop pub, a group of friends sharing a picnic at a concert in Millennium Park, or a team of colleagues serving a meal to poor sisters and brothers downtown.

“We are trying to find where people are living their lives,” noted Hall. “Are they with the sports team at a Saturday beach game, or at the park playing with their kids, or on their lunch hour in the middle of the work week, or in a bar after work? We're not trying to build a church where they will come, but instead a church that will go to them.”

[Note: This should stand to reason. We need to go where the people are and take to them the life-saving message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Anything short of this is ministering to physical and sociological needs without addressing their foundational spiritual needs and is little more than “social service” type work that any secular organization can do. In all of this, where is the priority of sin, salvation, and holiness? – AOM]

– By Susan Passi-Klaus, United Methodist News Service (UMNS); Feb. 4, 2010. Susan Passi-Klaus is a Public Relations Specialist/Writer at United Methodist Communications.

### **+ Clergy Job Protections Part of Covenant**

[Editor's Note: This article is a commentary that represents the opinion of the writer. This also could put virtual dictatorial power in the hands of the bishop. This is an issue that needs to be seriously considered. – AOM]

According to a recent UMNS article ("Commission takes aim at clergy job guarantees" May 19 [see the May 26 issue of Newscope]), the Commission to Study the Ministry: 2008-2012, in an interim report, is looking to eliminate the "guaranteed appointment." The claim is made that the "guaranteed appointment" leads to mediocrity and ineffectiveness.

If this so-called guarantee is eliminated, the argument goes, bishops will be able to remove ineffective pastors.

\_\_\_But the proposed revisions raise questions: Who will determine whether a clergy can and should be appointed? Will this be solely in the hands of the bishop and cabinet without procedures involving the board of ordained ministry and the clergy session of the conference? Will conference relations continue to be a matter of the board and clergy session and the requirement to appoint someone an issue of conference relations? The bishop sends, the clergy go without reserve, and the laity receives. Break any link and the itinerancy is in jeopardy.

\_\_\_This discussion of "guaranteed appointment" should be recast as "possible revisions to exiting procedures." There may need to be changes in the language in the Book of Discipline, but the elimination of due process and the ultimate authority of the clergy session should not be eroded. Already available mechanisms exist to remove ineffective clergy, and these include Administrative Location in Paragraph 363.3b and Involuntary Retirement in Paragraph 358.3. While there may need to be reform, the substance of these procedures should not be eroded.

\_\_\_The 1912 Discipline spelled out how conference membership could be terminated, and these included judicial procedures (para. 243-260). The 1956 Discipline was clear that, "Every traveling preacher, unless retired, supernumerary, on sabbatical leave, or under arrest of character, must receive an appointment." (para. 432.9) The 2008 Discipline states, "All elders in full connection who are in good standing in annual conference shall be continued under appointment by the bishop unless " (para. 337).

\_\_\_Charles Brockwell, professor of history emeritus, University of Louisville and adjunct professor in Methodist studies, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, in an unpublished paper in 2008, wrote, "This is accountable security of appointment for persons in good standing, not guaranteed appointment of those in protected categories. . . . The uniquely Methodist connectional covenant commitment of pastoral clergy and annual conference to each other is a treasure of our tradition.

. For all who remain in good standing in their conference, and for the people in their congregations, this covenant serves to protect and promote the dignity and integrity of our pastoral ministry." And "good standing" includes a demonstration of effectiveness.

\_\_\_The covenant between bishop, clergy and laity is at stake. Slogans that are not grounded in our history and our polity will not provide the vision for a renewed church, vital in outreach and invigorated in service.

– The Rev. Robert Williams, General Commission on Archives and History, for UMNS { Vol. 38, Issue 25 }

### **(UM) General Board of Global Ministries. Global Ministries names executive for mission volunteers**

Una Jones is the new executive for annual conference relations and mission volunteers programs at the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, effective Dec. 10. Jones, who has served in various positions at the agency over the past 11 years, succeeds the Rev. Clint Rabb, who died as a result of injuries caused by the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. She will have an executive-level assistant, still to be hired, to work specifically with volunteer networks, including United Methodist Volunteers in Mission.

– UMNS Weekly Digest - December 3, 2010

### **Illegal Immigration.**

#### **+ Immigrant advocates ask to 'Drop the I-Word'**

[Editorial note: This is an example of wanting to color the words and discussion, lapsing into race and "people of color" so that they reflect favorably on what is a harsh reality. Yet the same group who would not want us to call this as it is will be unapologetically harsh in its denunciation of someone with whom they would not agree. This is presented to you to show you how your apportionment dollars support what is a definite political agenda. No, it is best – and we must – call it what it is. The subject with which we are dealing here is illegal immigration – and it must be identified as such. – AOM]

WASHINGTON – Dehumanizing language should not be part of the conversation on U.S. immigration reform, says Erin M. Hawkins. That is why her agency, the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, is urging church members to join "Drop the I-Word," a national campaign calling for the elimination of the word "illegal" in such discussions. The commission is using its website in a yearlong attempt to gather 10,000 United Methodist pledges to the campaign. The campaign's goal is not about targeting specific immigration reform [Note: Yes it is.] but reframing the conversation about undocumented immigrants. "The intent

of the campaign is really around language,” said Hawkins, the commission’s top executive. Somehow, it has become acceptable to use the term “illegal” when talking about people of color, she explained, but that label usually has a negative effect. “It is to paint a picture of them as scary or dangerous,” she said. [Note: Some of them are. They have a high rate of crime and violence – and they bring it into our country illegally.] “It’s a useful tactic to make us blind or numb to their plight.” [Note: Something their actions brought on themselves.]

“Illegal aliens” is a description for non-citizens who do not currently have legal status; the term is not meant to define a person. “When you use the term illegal aliens, the first thing that comes to your mind is not a person,” Pimentel said.

Dale Weatherspoon, a commission member from Sunnyvale, Calif., said he hopes the campaign stimulates conversation...“Illegal” is a word that can categorize and divide, even if that is not the user’s intention. “In society, we have a lot of labels,” he added. “Those labels are used politically to divide and separate us. But that’s not what I see the church as being about.”

“Drop the I-Word” was launched by the Applied Research Center, a racial-justice think tank urging media outlets, and Colorlines, its online community. The campaign defines “illegal(s)” as “a damaging word that divides and dehumanizes communities and is used to discriminate against immigrants and people of color. The I-Word is shorthand for illegal alien, illegal immigrant and other harmful racially charged terms.”

United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño of Phoenix, the commission’s vice president and chair of the denominational Interagency Immigration Task Force, likes the idea of 10,000 church members committing themselves to eliminating hate-filled rhetoric. “I pray that we United Methodists would stand with our immigrant brothers and sisters, signing on to this campaign,” she said.

– A UMNS Report by Linda Bloom; {560}; December 10, 2010

#### **+ *Church members urged to call Congress about DREAM Act***

[Note: Again, note that this is a blatant call to political activism. – AOM]

PHOENIX (UMNS) — United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño is calling upon United Methodists to join an interfaith effort to support bipartisan Congressional legislation on behalf of undocumented immigrant students. Church members are encouraged to call the Capitol Hill switchboard at 202-225-3121, talk to their senators and representatives, and ask them to vote for and publicly support the DREAM Act.

– UMNS Weekly Digest; December 3, 2010

#### **+ *DREAM Act’s fate dismays church leaders***

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — United Methodist leaders are expressing disappointment at the failure of a bill that would have allowed undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as children, and who have lived in the country for five years, to gain conditional legal status after graduating from high school.

– UMNS Weekly Digest {570}; December 2010.

### **(UM) Men**

#### **+ *Looking for a Few Good Men***

[Editorial note: This was received from Gil Hanke. Although they do, say, and support some things with which I do not agree, they do a lot of good and are one of the bright spots in the general church of the UMC. I have been a long-time supporter of the GCUMM. Assuredly, Gil deserves our full support. – AOM]

Well, it has been a busy few months here at the GCUMM office. We hosted the first full commission meeting since I became the general secretary, and I have a busy fall travel schedule to men's events and to meetings for the general church.

We have entered into a new partnership with DISCIPLE Bible Outreach Ministries to expand UMM work in prison ministries. We have hosted three national webinars for men at the district and local level and the response from the participants has been very positive. We have several large mailings being prepared, and many of our resources are being updated.

I want to thank the individuals and groups who supported us financially and, in particular, those folks who gave funds for the roof of our building. As you know, the heavy rains in May forced us to address long-standing problems. Small occasional leaks became regular occurrences, and new leaks appeared with each new rain. The work is complete and your gifts covered about 25 percent of the cost. Thank you for that support.

As you know, Larry Malone will be retiring at the end of the year (2010). The GCUMM Board approved filling that position with four deployed volunteer staff with multiple skills sets that include speaking and leading. These volunteers will enable us to impact men's ministries in more conferences, districts and local churches. So — as the title of this piece suggests — we are looking for a few good men. They will volunteer their time, but the commission will cover their expenses. If you are interested, please send me an email to begin the application process.

If you have kept up with my writings, you know I find great inspiration from beginning each day with the Upper Room Disciplines and the associated Bible readings. As I read and pray, additional strength comes from knowing that men across this country are doing the same thing — we all are literally on the same page. The Upper Room and the commission are working to get

these books in the hands of more men in the UMC. There is an order form with a special discounted price on our website ( www.gcum.org ). Please consider this as a great way to begin 2011, and invite others to join us on the journey.

Please stay in touch, and if I don't respond to your email, send me a reminder. I know that what you are doing in men's ministry is vital to this church and it would be my honor to assist you in any way I can.

– Gilbert C. Hanke, general secretary, General Commission on UM Men.

**+ Affirm Men and Their Ministries**

...We had a special night for television — a night we remembered and discussed for several days. No, it wasn't the Super Bowl, not even Monday night football. It was the Academy Awards, Where we saw Hollywood at its best. It was a night showing "beautiful people" honoring each other as the best in their profession. Glamorous actors and actresses stepped from sleek limousines onto a plush red carpet. Million-dollar jewels and exquisite fashion adorned them. Eager fans clamored at the entrance, hoping to catch a glimpse of their favorite stars. Photographers and TV cinematographers jockeyed for positions, trying to get the best angles for their newspapers and networks; of course, the paparazzi were everywhere. Around the world TV viewers sat transfixed as the most beautiful, talented and famous people in Hollywood gathered to see who would receive golden statues we call Oscars. This night later became the subject of conversation in the break and lunch rooms throughout the country.

Now let's shift gears and think about the men in our churches — the pastor, maybe the youth director or men who serve in so many ways. How do we recognize those who sacrifice much to serve the Lord and who make an eternal difference in the lives of others? When they step onto the scene, where are the sleek automobiles, red carpet, bright lights, enthusiastic fans and the TV cinematographers? We can be sure the paparazzi cannot be found.

In every church, we see men doing ministry to which God has called them. Many of them have literally given a lifetime of service and so often they are taken for granted. Maybe the church should have its own Academy Awards; while that may be a little much, we need to remember these men.

A special Sunday to celebrate men's ministry would help. Another way could be to offer special recognition by presenting a John Wesley Society award, a life membership in UMM or, for men in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, a James Award.

We must affirm individual contributions, praise them publicly and celebrate their accomplishments.

– By John Dowell, president, National Association of Conference Presidents of UM Men; jdowellumm@aol.com

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The church has the only cure for social ills. It alone deals with the disease – sin – rather than with the symptoms.

– Received in a newsletter from Walt and Millie Wilson, Galax, Virginia.

**Global Outlook**

Life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes.

– Received in a newsletter from Walt and Millie Wilson, Galax, Virginia.

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**Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). United Methodists pray for peace in Côte d'Ivoire**

ABIDJAN, Côte d'Ivoire (UMNS) — Amid post-election violence, the United Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire is calling for prayer and trying to reinforce its ministries to the people. The outcome of the West African nation's Nov. 28 presidential election is in dispute, leading to renewed tension in a country that has been trying to regain stability following a civil war earlier in this decade. Both the current president, Laurent Gbagbo, and his opponent, Allassane Ouattara, are claiming victory.  
– UMNS Weekly Digest {586}; December 22, 2010

**Korea. Pray for peace for Korea, bishops say**

[Note: It is curious that the bishops ask for “prayers for peace and reconciliation” between the two Koreas. One can only wonder at their call for this in light of the historic incompatibility between an avowedly atheistic Marxist leadership and the free system of government in the north. One also can't help but wonder at the statement by Bishop Hee-Soo Jung attributing the extreme economic deprivation in the north to “suffering in a desperate economic climate, cut off by embargo” and does not acknowledge that the policies of a militaristic government that values armaments above the vital physical needs of the people might have something to do with the poverty.

One also can't help but wonder at the contrast between this call and the animosity expressed by the bishops at the leadership exercised by former President George Bush when he was in office. It would seem that more support could have been shown for our own president who was an openly practicing Christian than for the leadership of a country that has exercised aggression against its southern neighbor.

It would seem that the bishops could exercise a great deal more balance in the area of political posturing. – AOM]

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — The United Methodist Church's two Korean-American bishops are urging prayers for peace and reconciliation in the wake of the North Korean military's recent deadly attack on a South Korean island. Chicago Area Bishop Hee-

Soo Jung and New York Area Bishop Jeremiah Park each asked church members to use this Advent season to embrace the message of the Prince of Peace, citing Isaiah's image of a time when "Nation will not take up sword against nation."

The bishops, both natives of Korea, are among Christian leaders around the globe — including the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Korea— that have decried the deaths and destruction on Yeonpyeong Island and called for hostilities to ease in the Korean Peninsula.

On Nov. 23, the North Korean military initiated an artillery barrage of the small island, resulting in the deaths of two South Korean marines and two civilians. Eighteen more people were injured and a number of homes were destroyed on the island, which is seven miles from the North Korean border. The incident occurred eight months after the sinking of the South Korean warship, Choenan.

"The most recent conflict in the Korean Peninsula is extremely serious with sufficient volatility that could lead to another war," Park said in his statement. "As you may know, the Korean War waged between 1950 and 1953 resulted in millions of deaths and injuries. ...Another war must never be repeated."

#### Torn emotions

Since 1988, The United Methodist Church has called for the "peace and the reunification of Korea" in its Book of Resolutions. However, the current strife presents a difficult situation for many of the roughly 50,000 Korean-American United Methodists in the United States. Many have provided aid to North Koreans, who have long suffered from famine under the government's economic mismanagement. For the past 15 years, more than 100 Korean-American United Methodist congregations have given some \$2 million to the Five Loaves and Two Fish Mission in North Korea, said the Rev. Kevin Ryoo, secretary of the denomination's Korean-American caucus.

But most Korean-American United Methodists trace their roots back to South Korea, and many still have family and friends in the country, he said. They worry for the safety of their loved ones and do not want to enable North Korean aggression. "Any time tension between the North and South occurs, we ask the question: Should we continue to help North Korea?" said Ryoo, who is the pastor of Rapid City Korean Church, a United Methodist congregation in South Dakota. Ryoo believes such aid needs to continue. Food assistance, he said, helps keep open lines of communication between the North Korean people "including the country's nascent Christian churches" and Christians in the United States and could help lead to reunification.

Like Jung and Park, Ryoo plans to spend the Advent season praying for peace. "What other options do we have?" he asked. "We have to continue on our journey, continue to pray, continue to support and continue on the road to reconciliation."

#### Reason for sympathy

Thomas Kemper, the top executive at the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, agrees. The United Methodist Church has long cooperated with the autonomous Methodist Church in South Korea on mission projects, including a joint mission in Cambodia. "This is our Christian conviction that we should give aid, independent of religious or political belief, where there is need," Kemper said. "At the same time, we need to work toward a peace treaty that will replace the (1953) armistice."

In his statement, Jung wrote that United Methodists have reason to have sympathy for people on both sides of the peninsula's demilitarized zone. "My prayers are for the people of the North, suffering in a desperate economic climate, cut off by embargo, living in want and fear," he said. "My prayers are for the people of the South, flourishing economically but living as if on a thin sheet of ice that may crack under their feet at any moment."

– UMNS Report By Heather Hahn {562}; December 7, 2010

#### Namibia. DDT

First, DDT is safe for humans and the environment. Since the 1940s thousands of scientific studies have investigated potential harm to human health from DDT. Almost all these studies are weak, inconclusive or contradictory; in other words there is no evidence of harm. On the other hand there is well-documented evidence of its great public health benefits. As for the environment, DDT produces no environmental contamination when sprayed in small quantities inside. Second, DDT is essential for managing insecticide resistance. There are few alternative insecticides suitable for malaria control and approved by the World Health Organization. Third, failing to protect DDT, secure supplies and defend the right to use it will mean that the global community puts the sensibilities of anti-insecticide activists and the agendas of the Stockholm Convention Secretariat ahead of the lives of poor people in malarial countries, says Nchabi Kamwi. Source: Richard Nchabi Kamwi, "Free the Fight Against Malaria," Wall Street Journal, November 8, 2010.

#### Nigeria. Nigerian Muslims, Christians seek peace

[Note: Let us hope they can achieve peace in that country. – AOM]

JALINGO, Nigeria (UMNS) — One hundred Nigerian Muslims and Christians came in peace to Taraba, where they sought ways not only to coexist but also to work together to improve the lives of their beleaguered fellow citizens of all faiths. Tensions between the religions have flared into violence in recent years. While history cannot be overcome in three days, the restorative justice seminar was a start.

– UMNS Weekly Digest {580}; December 22, 2010

**Sierra Leone. Malaria threat pervades life in Sierra Leone**

BO, Sierra Leone (UMNS) – Thanks to international organizations including The United Methodist Church, more than 3 million insecticide-treated bed nets are spreading across a country sick and dying of malaria. Malaria is a leading cause of death in this African country. The denomination’s Imagine No Malaria campaign is helping people like Musukula Lukulay, 30, whose husband and children have had malaria several times. The whole household stops when the family is ill, she says. “I feel helpless when my husband or children are ill. It’s as if I have malaria, too.”

– UMNS Weekly Digest {557}; December 22, 2010

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Middle age is when you choose your cereal for the fiber, not for the toy. – “The Church Mouse”