

# Monthly Update

November 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update is being sent to you a few days early. It contains information on changes from legislation enacted at the 2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church held in Tampa, Florida. There is a listing of cases before the UM Judicial Council since issues that we thought had been resolved are being challenged in the UM court.

In view of the upcoming elections in United States, we thought it best to give you an added impetus to make sure that you vote – and to urge all of your friends and neighbors to get out and vote as well. We have expressed before how we believe this may be the most important election in the history of our country. It may be that history will prove the truth of what I have just written – but I hope we don't find out – and we won't if we elect godly people. I certainly hope that after the polls close on the sixth, we will have voted for a godly man to occupy the White House for the next four years. I do believe the future of our country is in the balance.

As I had written last month, we need to “pray as if it is all up to God – and to work as if it is all up to us” in fighting for the values that we hold so dear. Regardless of how the elections turn out, we need to remember that we belong to God and are His.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, we often think of this holiday in the traditional way as emanating from the Puritans. I had wanted to share with you (from one of my books) other Thanksgiving celebrations.

## Texas Style

...Thanksgiving was an established tradition before the popularization of the 1621 Pilgrim festival.

The tradition of thanking God for the year's harvest at autumn was already a well-developed practice in Europe during medieval times. In some countries a part of this practice included lighting up bonfires, and dancing and eating so as to be fit for the winter to come.

The first known thanksgiving feast or festival in North America was celebrated by Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and the people he called “Tejas” (members of the Hasinai group of Caddo-speaking Native Americans) on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1541 in Palo Duro Canyon, Texas, to celebrate his expedition's discovery of food supplies. In the sense of a feast in gratitude to God celebrated by Europeans in North America, this has a claim to be the true first North American Thanksgiving. The next was apparently celebrated a quarter-century later on September 8, 1565 in St. Augustine, Florida. When Pedro Menéndez de Avilés landed, he and his men shared a feast with the aboriginal peoples. Later, the aboriginal people called themselves “apple-tangerines” (which may or may not indicate those fruits were on the menu at that “Thanksgiving”). Another candidate for the first true Thanksgiving in territory now part of the United States is the feast that the party of Don Juan de Oñate celebrated April 30, 1598 near the site of San Elizario, Texas with the Manso Indians.

Thanksgiving is related to Harvest festivals that had long been a traditional holiday in much of Europe. The first known North American celebration of these traditional festivals by Europeans was held in Newfoundland by Martin Frobisher and the Frobisher Expedition to find the Northwest Passage in 1578. Canadians trace their Thanksgiving to that festival.

[So now you have “the rest of the story.”]

Again, I would ask that you pray – and do all that you can to elect godly men and women to the offices of political leadership.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

## **November 2012 Update**

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

Be kinder than necessary because everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.

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#### **Of Interest**

+ ***Scary Obituary***. In 1887 Alexander Tyler, a Scottish history professor at the University of Edinburgh, had this to say about the fall of the Athenian Republic some 2,000 years prior: "A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse over loose fiscal policy, (which is) always followed by a dictatorship."

"The average age of the world's greatest civilizations from the beginning of history, has been about 200 years. During those 200 years, these nations always progressed through the following sequence:

From bondage to spiritual faith;  
From spiritual faith to great courage;  
From courage to liberty;  
From liberty to abundance;  
From abundance to complacency;  
From complacency to apathy;  
From apathy to dependence;  
From dependence back into bondage."

The Obituary follows: "Born 1776, Died 2012"

Professor Joseph Olson of Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota, points out some interesting facts concerning the last Presidential election:

Number of States won by:	Obama: 19	McCain: 29
Square miles of land won by:	Obama: 580,000	McCain: 2,427,000
Population of counties won by:	Obama: 127 million	McCain: 143 million
Murder rate per 100,000 residents in counties won by:	Obama: 13.2	McCain: 2.1

Professor Olson adds: "In aggregate, the map of the territory McCain won was mostly the land owned by the taxpaying citizens of the country.

Obama territory mostly encompassed those citizens living in low income tenements and living off various forms of government welfare..."

Olson believes the United States is now somewhere between the "complacency and apathy" phase of Professor Tyler's definition of democracy, with some forty percent of the nation's population already having reached the "governmental dependency" phase. [Note: One political analyst has put those on "governmental dependency" at 87%.

If Congress grants amnesty and citizenship to twenty million criminal invaders called illegal's - and they vote - then we can say goodbye to the USA in fewer than five years.

– Received by e-mail from one of our associates.

#### ***Legal Clinics for Young Immigrants***

Young, undocumented immigrants across the U. S. began last week to apply for temporary relief to live and work openly under an Obama administration program. Justice for Our Neighbors, a UM ministry, will offer legal aid to immigrants in their applications. Find a legal clinic by state and city. [Then a button is offered on the e-mail so that a person can find one of the UM-sponsored "legal clinics" – paid for with apportionment dollars. This exemplifies the concern expressed above in the article from Professor Olson. – AOM]

– UMNS, as reported in *UMNewScope*, August 22, 2012

### **+ Creative Change at Agencies Receiving World Service Funds**

Cut back, hang tough, shift priorities. The UMC's general agencies that receive World Service Fund dollars will employ those strategies over the next four years to deal with reduced budgets, smaller boards and new directions in mission.

The largest program agency, the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), reduced its board of directors by nearly two-thirds, from 92 to 32, with an additional five at-large members. The number of bishops on the board has dropped from 10 to three. In May, the mission agency also cut back by offering many of its 201 full-time staff the option of participating in a "voluntary separation program." The deadline for a final decision over the buyout was Aug. 6.

According to GBGM general secretary, Thomas Kemper, international mission work and multicultural, racial -ethnic programs in the United States will take priority. Other U.S. work will be downscaled and some tasks eliminated.

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) will continue with a 63-member board of directors after concluding that reducing size does not necessarily improve governance or competency. But the social justice agency already had cut back meeting costs by an estimated 40% and pared its staff over the past decade to 22 full-time employees. Jim Winkler said he has spent his 12 years as the head of GBCS keeping annual expenditures under budget, trimming publication costs by shifting communications online, raising some \$300,000 for a new endowment fund and obtaining more than \$500,000 in outside grants over the past four years.

Two smaller agencies—the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW) and the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCROR)—remain intact but are taking a new look at priorities for their advocacy roles. Their top executives remain convinced that institutional racism and sexism still pervade the denomination. The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (GCCUIR), by its own design, is re-forming as an office of the denomination's Council of Bishops.

Most agencies will face a 10% cut in funding. The recently concluded General Conference approved a budget of \$603.1 million for the denomination's seven general church funds during the 2013–16 period. That total is 6.03% less than the amount apportioned for the previous four-year period. In addition, delegates redirected \$12 million in the World Service Fund toward theological education in central conferences and the recruitment and training of young clergy in the U. S. The World Service Fund, one of the seven apportioned funds, supports much of the general agency operations. Two cents out of every dollar in the collection plates goes to support general church ministries

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) expects to reduce its meeting costs by \$115,000 each year through downsizing from 64 to 22 board members and limiting full meetings to an annual on-site fall meeting and spring teleconference, said the Rev. Kim Cape, top executive.

For the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD), a reduction from 58 to 22 board members reflects solidarity "with the goals of the Call to Action," explained the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, top executive.

At UM Communications (UMCOM), the 27-member board, reduced in size about eight years ago, already had implemented a strategy to concentrate on the Four Areas of Focus. The Rev. Larry Hollon, top executive, said the budget for non-related work would be reduced and practical cost savings implemented. Partnerships with the church's central conferences are crucial.

– Linda Bloom, UMNS, *as reported in UMNewScope, August 22, 2012.*

### **The Good Stuff**

#### **+ VOTE THE BIBLE!**

The following is from John Hagee's sermon, Sunday, October 22, 2012:

#### VOTE THE BIBLE!

If you want God's blessings back on America, ask yourself these questions before you vote:

1. Who stands for the homosexual lifestyle in America? Don't vote for them because the Word of God says God is opposed to that. Vote the Bible.
2. Who stands against Israel?
3. Who stands against religious freedom?
4. Who stands against the Word of God in their platform?
5. Who is for abortion? Don't vote for them because the Word of God says God is opposed to that.

Vote the Bible!

Monique (our daughter) was watching Rod Parsley, who had as his guest, Perry Stone and Perry was explaining that when

a nation broke covenant with God, the following would happen: storms, raging fires, failure of crops, etc. (Dt. 29). James Robison, Mike Huckabee, Robert Morris, Kenneth Copeland, David Barton, etc. are echoing in other words, but same message as John Hagee: that it's time for American Christians to wake up, speak up and show up and vote the Bible. I, frankly, have a hard time believing that "democrat" and "Christian" can be used in the same sentence; since the current president and current senate voted in partial birth abortion as their very first act in 2008 after the election!

– Received by e-mail.

***(UM) Bishops. Jurisdictional Conference affirms vote to retire Bledsoe as Bishop***

In a surprise move, the chair of the South Central Jurisdiction episcopacy committee announced that Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe would be "placed in a retired position" as of Aug. 31. "Don House, the committee's chair, said the committee made its recommendation after consultation with the jurisdiction's other bishops. Bledsoe would remain retired, House continued, even in the event he appealed the episcopacy committee's ruling to the Judicial Council. If Bledsoe prevails in the appeal (which he has not yet announced whether he will pursue), he likely would be appointed to the Northwest Texas-New Mexico Episcopal Area. The area encompasses the conferences with the smallest membership in the jurisdiction. Bledsoe, 61, is in his first term as bishop. He was the first bishop elected during the 2008 South Central Jurisdiction. The public dispute between Bledsoe and his episcopacy committee-believed to be a first in The UMC's 44-year history-overshadowed the entire jurisdictional conference. The episcopacy committee decided on July 17- by a vote of 24 to four with two abstentions - to place Bledsoe in involuntary retirement. After an emotional discussion on July 19, the South Central Jurisdictional Conference delegates overwhelmingly affirmed their episcopacy committee's decision to compel early retirement. The final tally was 208 to 45.

Paragraph 408.3 of the Book of Discipline says that a jurisdictional episcopacy committee, by a two-thirds vote, can place a bishop "in retired relation" if the committee finds it "to be in the best interests of the bishop and/or the Church." The Judicial Council already has agreed to review a request from the South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops for a ruling on Paragraph 408.3.

– Heather Hahn, UMNS , as reported in the July 25, 2012 edition of UMNewScope

***(UM) General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.***

***New General Board of Higher Education and Ministry Board will Focus on Mission***

The Rev. Dr. Kim Cape told the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's (GBHEM) new, smaller Board of Directors that her intent is to focus on mission. "I believe the board structure, while not perfect, is the best way to organize a connectional church for mission. If the board structure were abolished, you would not be at these tables where important decisions affecting the future of the whole church shall be made. I think you are here for a reason," Cape told the new 23-member board. She outlined changes made to restructure and streamline GBHEM. She said the emphasis from General Conference was clear: The church expects GBHEM to cultivate a new generation of young UM clergy.

"We are called to reform the clergy system by making the recruitment of gifted young people to full-time ministry a priority and devote resources to helping them complete their theological education," Cape said. She noted that in 2005, GBHEM had already created a Special Seminarian Scholarship Fund of \$2.25 million from reserve funds.

The General Conference created a fund of \$7 million to support this Young Clergy Initiative and \$5 million to create the Central Conference Theological Education Fund. This re-allocation, which was carved from the budgets of general agencies that receive World Service funds, resulted in a 10% budget reduction for GBHEM.

The board elected Bishop James Dorff, resident bishop of Southwest Texas, as its new president. Ted Brown, president of Martin Methodist College, was elected vice president for the Division of Higher Education, and the Rev. Ianther Mills was elected vice president for the Division of Ordained Ministry. Rachel Wright is the board's recording secretary. Bishop James "Jim" Dorff told directors of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry that he feels "a great sense of urgency" about the work of the agency. "This is not the time in the life of the church or the world that we can relax or sit back, or hold still," Dorff said at the end of the meeting. The directors spent time discussing how they should function as a board and how they can best work with GBHEM's general secretary and the staff. "At the conclusion of the March board meeting we need to come together around a clear agenda for the rest of the quadrennium," Dorff said.

In other actions, the directors approved a \$42.9 million budget for 2013, elected four members of the University Senate and UM Higher Education Foundation Trustees, approved a new area of Certification for Specialized Ministry with People with Disabilities and approved five new Course of Study directors.

– Vicki Brown, GBHEM, as reported in UMNewScope, October 24, 2012.

**Homosexuality. Forgetting How to Blush**, commentary by Dr. Riley Case on the new book by The Rev. Karen Booth.

*Forgetting How to Blush United Methodism's Compromise with the Sexual Revolution* is the title of Karen Booth's new book (Bristol 2012). Booth is the director of Transforming Congregations. The book is a thoroughly researched, heavily footnoted account of efforts, strategies, schemes, and attempts on the part of non-Christian, or at least quasi-Christian persons, groups, caucuses, and in some cases church leaders, to secularize historic Christian truth in regard to human sexuality. This is not a book for those who want to be encouraged, uplifted in the faith, and desiring a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. In many ways this is a depressing book. This is an account that suggests spiritual warfare is taking place in the church of Jesus Christ. Booth starts with Alfred Kinsey and his studies on human sexuality. Kinsey influenced Hugh Hefner, who grew up in a conservative Methodist home, chafed under the restraints of traditional Biblical morality, and started Playboy magazine. He also gave a major grant to fund the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). SIECUS was interested in value neutral sex education, which basically ignored Biblical principles. SIECUS had ties with the Methodist General Board of Education Task Force on Sex Education, which operated under the assumption that the church's negative views toward sexuality needed adjusting.

Youth ministry in the Methodist Church was undergoing a philosophical shift in the 1960s. Youth, so we were told, did not want others, including their parents or the church, to tell them what to do. They wanted "freedom" and "equality." The old Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) was considered "Mickey Mouse" (by a radical few, not by the many). The 1972 General Conference under the sway of progressive pressures, did away with the MYF and legislated a new agency, the National Council on Youth Ministry (NCYM) which, among other things, passed resolutions on sexuality and gave grants to homosexual advocacy groups.

The church bureaucracy was already on board. In 1962 the Methodist Church had published a resource *Sex and the Whole Person* which basically substituted latest (secular) psychological insights for traditional teaching, especially teaching about faithfulness in marriage and celibacy in singleness. Some of us who taught that curriculum piece were aware that it was short on Biblical affirmations and long on questions that would challenge traditional church teaching. It spoke of Freud and sexual repression. It emphasized that in sexual matters there was seldom a right and wrong, but shades of grey. There were no moral absolutes.

At the time of the Methodist-EUB merger the editors of church school material indicated that sex education would be one of their top priorities. Meanwhile *Motive* magazine, the church's paper for young adults, in its March-April, 1969 issue, carried an article by Del Margin and Phyllis Lyon, who had founded a lesbian advocacy group (to its credit the church had the sense to stop publication of *Motive*).

In the mid-1970s Leon Smith of the Board of Discipleship commented on positive "trends" he saw in the church's response to the new sexuality: from rigid rules to situational ethics, toleration of private, consensual acts, positive uses of pornography, new understandings of homosexual practice understanding these as a "variant" rather than "deviant."

If the church believed that this attempt to be "relevant" would enhance youth ministry it was sadly mistaken. Over a ten-year period the circulation of youth materials fell from 1,200,000 pieces per quarter to 400,000 and the youth staff at Nashville went from 13 full-time persons to one part-time. Melvin Talbert, now a retired bishop who urges persons to defy the church standards in regard to sexuality, was the general secretary of the Board of Discipleship at that time.

To their credit a number of bishops and church leaders were not pleased with the direction in which progressives were leading the church in the area of human sexuality. Curriculum Resources toned down some of the more extreme studies. A few leaders spoke out on behalf of the church's traditional stance. If there is a hope in this account it is that local churches and ordinary church members have refused to follow the progressives in their effort to follow the secular world in regard to human sexuality. But even these leaders would be tested by the onslaught of homosexual practice advocacy that has characterized some parts of The United Methodist Church since 1970. Except for an amendment from the floor of the 1972 General Conference that inserted the phrase into the Social Principles that the church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers it incompatible with Christian teaching, The United Methodist Church would have been the first of the mainline denominations to neutralize all teaching about homosexual practice.

Since 1972 no general agency in the church has petitioned the General Conference to uphold traditional teachings on marriage, the family and human sexuality. Before the 1980 General Conference every agency and every caucus that petitioned General Conference in regard to homosexual practice, except for Good News, urged the church to change its stance on homosexual practice. For its efforts Good News was labeled intolerant and hateful.

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) claims to advocate for positions taken by the General Conference, but in the area of marriage it is silent. In the area of affirming the sexual ethic of faithfulness in marriage and celibacy in singleness it is silent. It does indicate that the church must seek to eradicate "heterosexism" and "homophobia" but in the area of the practice of homosexuality as incompatible with Christian teaching it is silent. At one time the church produced

resources and sought to enrich marriages but presently in the list of twenty key issues listed by GBCS facing the church and society marriage is not even mentioned.

The church presently prohibits church apportionment money to be used for homosexual practice advocacy. This does not mean that those in the church who want to change the definition of marriage and to bless homosexual practice are without funding and support. Karen Booth's book traces some of this money and support, most of which comes from outside The United Methodist Church. Here are some of the groups:

Welcoming Church Movement/Institute for Welcoming Resources; Soulforce; The Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing; Faith in America; The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Foundation; The Human Rights Campaign: Religion and Faith Program; Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.(GLADD); Believe Out Loud.

Major funding for these and for caucuses within mainline churches comes from groups like Arcus Foundation, which from 2007 to 2011 has made 150 grants totaling almost \$20 million to "religion and values" initiatives. Two UM groups, Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) and Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) received almost \$850,000.

Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund has given \$10 million in the same four-year period to "allies" who work among clergy and congregations for "marriage equality." The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation gives money to seminaries who support the gay agenda. In 2009 it gave grants totaling \$75,000 to Church within a Church Movement, Dumbarton UM Church in Washington D.C., and the Reconciling Ministries Network.

Booth asks an interesting question: does the UM Church understand the implications of outsider money flowing into the church with a specific agenda of subverting the church's teaching on human sexuality? Have any church leaders expressed any concern over this?

The usual reaction on the part of progressives to a book like *Forgetting How to Blush* is to go into a rant about homophobia and hatefulness. However, it would be hard to label the movement Karen Booth heads, Transforming Congregations, as a homophobic and hateful group. Many of those associated with Transforming Congregations have known sexual brokenness and have themselves experienced rejection on the part of the church. But they believe that the gospel message offers healing and they give testimony to healing that has taken place in their lives.

If the UM Church is serious about the message of healing it would do well to take seriously those ministries that emphasize healing, like Transforming Congregations. The church speaks about "holy conferencing" and dialogue. These dialogues are usually set up so persons can "understand" each other. How about if these groups would be focused on ministry and healing in the context of the church's standards?

### **(UM) Judicial Council**

+ The docket for the October meeting of the Judicial Council was set as follows:

- + Docket 1012-1: IN RE: Request from the General Conference for a Declaratory Decision as to the Constitutionality of Legislation Approved as Calendar Item 20 Regarding the Balance Between Clergy and Lay Membership of Annual Conference
- + Docket 1012-2: IN RE: Request from the General Conference for a Declaratory Decision as to the Constitutionality of Legislation Approved as Calendar Item 355 Regarding Guaranteed Appointments
- + Docket 1012-3: IN RE: Request for Reconsideration of Judicial Council Memoranda 1176, 1184, 1192, and 1205 Regarding Discontinuance of a Local Church
- + Docket 1012-4: IN RE: Request from the North Alabama Annual Conference for Review of a Bishop's Dismissal of a Complaint Against an Elder
- + Docket 1012-5: IN RE: Request from the North Alabama Annual Conference for a Declaratory Decision as to the Legality of Membership in and/or Monetary Support of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice by Agencies of The United Methodist Church
- + Docket 1012-6: IN RE: Request from the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference for a Ruling on the Legality of Certain Financial Actions and the Complaint Process Regarding the East Africa Annual Conference in Light of ¶¶ 258.4f, 413, and 613.13
- + Docket 1012-7: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the North Carolina Annual Conference Regarding Report of the Transition Team
- + Docket 1012-8: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the North Carolina Annual Conference Regarding the Meaning, Effect, and Application of ¶¶ 613.20 and 806.9
- + Docket 1012-9: IN RE: Review of Revised Standing Rules of North Texas Conference in Light of Judicial Council Decision 1198
- + Docket 1012-10: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the Wisconsin Conference Regarding the Relationship Between a Clergy Covenant Adopted by the Annual Conference and ¶¶ 16, 304, 311, 341, 2702, and Judicial Council Decision 1111
- + Docket 1012-11: IN RE: Request from the College of Bishops of the South Central Jurisdiction for a Declaratory Decision as to the Constitutionality, Meaning, Application, and Effect of ¶ 408.3a, with Reference to ¶¶ 16.5, 50, 358.3, and 362.2
- + Docket 1012-12: IN RE: Review of the Conference Plan of Structure of the South Carolina Annual Conference in Light of Judicial Council Decision 1204

- + Docket 1012-13: IN RE: Request from the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Clergy Session for a Declaratory Decision on the Effect and Application of the Annual Conference's 2010 Policy Statement and Protocol on Appointment Making in Light of ¶¶ 337,
- + Docket 1012-15: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Regarding Annual Conference Policy on Sexual Relations Between Clergy and Members in Light of ¶ 335
- + Docket 1012-16: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the New York Annual Conference Regarding the Resolution "The Spiritual Crisis Caused by the Requirement to Discriminate" in Light of ¶¶ 161f, 304.3, 341.6, and 2702.1(b, e)
- + Docket 1012-17: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the Tennessee Annual Conference Regarding the Resolution "Working Together to End Bullying"
- + Docket 1012-18: IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the California-Pacific Annual Conference Regarding the Resolution "Resolution in Response to General Conference 2012"

The docket posted on the Judicial Council portion of the umc.org <<http://umc.org>> website has the actual request for Judicial Council action received by the Judicial Council inserted. This is done to comply with the amendment of ¶2608.1 by the 2012 General Conference. – *The Judicial Council, as reported in the July 25, 2012 edition of UMNewScope*

**+ *Judicial Council Considers Additional Issues***

In addition to its published docket (see the article in Newscope July 25), the Judicial Council has agreed to take up questions regarding a proposed clergy covenant team in the Wisconsin Annual Conference. The Rev. Amy DeLong proposed the team as part of her sentence for officiating at a same-sex union.

The council has also scheduled a special session Nov. 9–11 to consider the appeal of Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, concerning his involuntary retirement as an active bishop. The South Central Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy voted to place Bledsoe in retirement, and the delegates at the South Central Jurisdictional Conference affirmed that vote.

– UMNS, as reported in *UMNewScope*, August 22, 2012

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It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority  
keen to set brush fires in people's minds. – Samuel Adams

**Global Outlook**

Of all the things I wear, my expression is the most important.

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**+ *Concerns rise for Syrian Christians***

UMs who have had longtime relationships with Christians in the Middle East through ecumenical organizations are concerned about their plight in Syria and other countries. The Rev. Motoe Yamada, senior pastor of the Japanese UMC in Sacramento, Calif., first become acquainted with Mor Eustathius Matta Roham, the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan (archbishop) of Jazirah and Euphrates, in 2006. Yamada is worried that Syria's civil war is threatening Matta and his church, just as Frances Alguire, former president of the World Methodist Council, has concerns for a longtime friend, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, the Syrian Orthodox archbishop of Aleppo.

The (World Council of Churches') Central Committee issued a Sept. 4 statement on Syria, calling for an end to all violence and for dialogue by all parties, including Christians, as "the only solution . . . to safeguard the unity and pluralistic nature of historic Syria." Both the UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Church World Service have supported several partners aiding Syrians, including the International Orthodox Christian Charities, which is providing humanitarian relief inside Syria through the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East and outside Syria in refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon.

Concern about the Middle East Christian populations was echoed in a statement issued by the General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) during its September meeting in Florence, Italy. Roseangela Jarjour, a Syrian Christian and a top executive of the Federation of Middle East Evangelical Churches, addressed the gathering and called on western churches to "raise their prophetic voice and not simply follow their governments' lead."

"Christians in Syria are especially deeply worried about the threat to basic human rights and security in the present civil war," the statement said. "As well as this they fear an impending loss of religious and cultural plurality in Syria and the loss of the principle of the participation of all groups in their society. As the CPCE we are deeply concerned because it is often difficult to recognize in the politics of our governments a concern for the life of our Christian sisters and brothers in Syria,

for their religious freedom, and for the preserving of religious and cultural diversity in Syria."

– *Linda Bloom, United Methodist News Service, as reported in UMNewScope, October 24, 2012.*

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A sharp tongue can cut my own throat.