

Monthly Update

July 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update contains some of the serious challenges facing us as a nation and how they will impact our denomination in addition to a continuation of the summaries of the annual conference meetings from the Methodist Church.

As we go into the Fourth of July holidays let us pause to consider all of the factors that go into making the United States a great country and of our need to do whatever we can to ensure that our freedoms are preserved. Chief among what we need to do is to pray. Secondly, we need to be active in influencing our legislators in making sound decisions based on the rule of law as provided in the Constitution of the United States.

Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, penned this in a letter:

“...Christians must never compromise their allegiance to the Savior, no matter what others may think. The Lord is looking for men and women who will fully commit their hearts, souls, and lives to His kingdom.

We find in I Samuel that Saul was anointed to lead the Hebrew people. At first he won favor with the people and was victorious in battle. But in chapter 13, we read that Saul feared the opinions of men more than the commands of almighty God. In a raid in the desert outside Jerusalem against Israel’s enemy the Amalekites, God had told Saul to fully destroy this enemy along with all their possessions. Instead, Saul spared King Agag and kept some of the choice sheep and oxen. He disobeyed God’s command.

When the Prophet Samuel arrived and saw the evidence of Saul’s clear disobedience, he pronounced God’s judgment, ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams...Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king’ (I Samuel 15:22-23, ESV).”

Think about it – partial obedience is really no obedience at all. Complete obedience is what the Lord desires. We must never back down from fully following Christ because we fear public opinion or the ridicule of others....

A young man...wrote us recently to say that he had been praying for a long time for his brother’s salvation. While looking through the *My Hope America* resources we sent him, he felt a strong sense that the Holy Spirit was saying, “The time is now.” He realized that God was prompting him to talk again to his brother about Jesus. “Having this conversation was hard for me at first,” he says, “but, boy, am glad I was obedient, because today a man who once studied hard to try and prove that God was not real, now follows Jesus Christ!” God works through our ways in mighty ways when we are obedient to His leading.

All of us here at Concerned Methodists wish you a happy, safe, joyous Fourth of July celebrating the freedoms which are to us are so dear.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

July 2013 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

“I do not mistrust the future. Dangers have been in frequent ambush along our path, but we have uncovered and vanquished them all. Passion has swept some of our communities, but only to give us a new demonstration that the great body of our people is stable, patriotic, and law-abiding. No political party can long pursue advantage at the expense of public honor or by rude and indecent methods without protest and fatal disaffection in its own body. The peaceful agencies of commerce are more fully revealing the necessary unity of all our communities, and the increasing intercourse of our people is promoting mutual respect. We shall find unalloyed pleasure in the revelation which our next census will make of the swift development of the great resources of some of the States. Each State will bring its generous contribution to the great aggregate of the nation’s increase. And when the harvests from the fields, the cattle from the hills, and the ores of the earth shall have been weighed, counted, and valued, we will turn from them all to crown with the highest honor the State that has most promoted education, virtue, justice, and patriotism among its people.”

– Benjamin Harrison, (1833-1901), 23rd President of the United States; from his Inaugural Address, March 4, 1889

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The Good Stuff. D-Day Prayer.

On June 6th, 1944, 156,000 American, British and Canadian troops invaded German-occupied France at Normandy. It would turn the tide of the war, and marked the beginning of the end of Nazi tyranny in Europe. Back in the United States, on the day of the harrowing invasion, President Franklin Roosevelt brought the nation together for prayer via the radio. Invoking the name of Almighty God.

– Presidential Prayer Team Update, June 6, 2013.

Of Interest.

+ *Is Civil Disobedience Ever Legitimate for the Christian?*

When there is a clear conflict between the laws of human authority and the laws of God, the Christian must obey God! As Peter said in Acts 5:29, “We must obey God rather than men.”

How do we reconcile that an evil government is in power when God establishes all who reign? One thing is clear from other passages in the Bible, all governments do not live up to their God-given responsibility of punishing evil and honoring good. Many do just the opposite (Hitler, the Taliban, Saddam Hussein).

It is clear that when a government starts punishing good and rewarding the bad it comes into conflict with the very God who allowed their existence in the first place! At that point Scripture has many examples of how submission to that type of government is no longer the right thing to do. “It is right to resist what God has appointed in order to obey what God has commanded.”

– The American Center for Law and Justice.

+ *Boy Scouts Lift Ban on Gay Members.*

Boy Scouts of America leaders voted by a substantial margin on May 23 to lift the organization’s longstanding ban on openly gay youth in the Scouting movement. After months of debate and surveys of leaders, Scouting officials recommended allowing openly gay Scouts but retaining the prohibition on gay adult leaders. In a secret ballot, more than 1,400 volunteer local leaders in the group’s National Council accepted the proposal by a vote of 61%. The approved resolution says: “No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.”

The change could affect ministries at 6,700 UM churches in the U. S. The discussion also has helped re-energize a longtime debate about human sexuality within The UMC. Larry Coppock, UM Men’s national director of Scouting ministries, was among those at the Boy Scouts’ gathering in the Dallas-Fort Worth suburb of Grapevine. The Commission on UM Men oversees scouting ministries and civic youth-serving agencies across the denomination. “The UMC, and specifically the General Commission on UM Men, did not have a vote in this matter, nor did other faith groups that serve as chartering organizations of the Boy Scouts of America. The change in membership standards was initiated by BSA,” UM Men said in a statement. “It is our hope and prayer that future membership-standard considerations will begin with BSA’s Religious Relationship Task Force, a committee composed of representatives from various faith groups that represent 70 percent of BSA’s units and 62 percent of its membership.”

Leaders of UM Men sent a letter dated Feb. 19 to Boy Scouts of America urging the group to delay any proposed change to its ban on gay members and leaders. The letter did not specify how long such a delay should last. More than 70

percent of Scout units are chartered to religiously affiliated groups, reports Boy Scouts of America. Those charters comprise 62% of the group's 2.7 million youth members. The UMC is second only to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the number of congregations that host Boy Scouts of America groups. The UMC hosts more Cub Scout packs than any other religious group.

As of 2012, 6,700 UM congregations served 363,876 young people through 10,868 Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops and Venturing crews. Venturing crews are open to both young men and women, ages 14 to 20. In addition to Boy Scout-affiliated groups, UM Men promotes other youth organizations including Girl Scouts of the USA, Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi Partnership, Camp Fire USA and 4-H. Those groups have varied policies regarding sexual orientation. For example, Girl Scouts of the USA has a policy that states its local councils and troops do not discriminate or recruit on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, national origin or physical or developmental disability.

[Editorial Note: This is a report from official United Methodist communications sources. It gives a different perspective and background statistical data not previously reported in past Updates. The words "openly gay" mean homosexual. Boys who are 11 and 12 have many things to sort out in forming their identity at a time when their hormones are "raging"; this is not a good time for them to be further confused about matters of sexuality. In truth, it would be much more preferable if they knew that their being was established by God who created "mankind, male and female"! – AOM]

– Heather Hahn, UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 21; May 29, 2013.

+ *Boy Scouts waste no time – march in gay pride parade*

The beginning of the end of BSA has begun

This past weekend [June 1, 2], uniformed boy scouts and leaders touted their open homosexuality by taking to the streets in Salt Lake City, Utah, and marching in the state's largest Gay Pride Parade. (Associated Press photo at right)

Although it violated current policy, a BSA spokesman said the national headquarters would not take any action against the scouts. Instead, it will leave any discipline to the Great Salt Lake Council.

Just ten days after the BSA voted to accept open and avowed "gay" scouts, the Scout Oath and Law are already falling apart. The first to fall was the pledge to be "morally straight." By defiantly marching in the parade, the BSA has now lost "trustworthy" and "obedient."

Immediately after the historic vote, activists were already screaming that the new policy doesn't go far enough. They have vowed to continue their bully tactics until homosexual adults are openly accepted.

You can expect the BSA will cave again...and soon. With more "pride" parades occurring across the nation in June, we expect to see more scouts marching for additional changes.

TAKE ACTION

I encourage you to continue to take a stand with us. The BSA has made its decision; now make yours by taking these immediate actions:

1. If you are in scouting, or have a son or grandson in scouting, show your convictions by resigning from the organization. Your dropped membership will send a strong message that your values are steadfast, faithful and unchangeable.
2. If your church charters a scouting unit, contact the pastor and scouting committee members. Urge the church to drop the charter based on the truth of God's word and Christian values.
3. Find an alternative to the BSA. We have compiled a list of faith-based organizations that promote scouting-type activities from a Christian perspective.

– Tim Wildmon, President. American Family Association; AFA Action Alert; June 3, 2013

+ *UMR Communications, UM Reporter to Close*

[Editorial Note: This information, reported here in the future tense, was received last month – but we have not had time to include it in past issues of the Monthly Update. Since then the UMR has closed. I am disappointed to see this happen. It was a repository of good information on the history of the United Methodist Church and did provide background information on a wide variety of issues from many parts of the UMC all over the country. It also provided a forum for discussion of issues affecting the denomination. – AOM]

Finding no viable plan for reversing financial losses of recent months, UMR Communications will cease operations on May 31. UMR Communications (UMRC) publishes the UM Reporter in print and digital formats and online, and provides printing and communication services to churches and other nonprofits. The final print Reporter will carry the

date June 7, but will be mailed and printed by May 31. The UMRC board reluctantly but unanimously voted May 16 to close during a tearful meeting at the nonprofit's Dallas office.

"At one time, our ministry produced nearly 300 separate editions of the newspaper which integrated content created by our news staff with content provided by church and conference partners," said Tom Palmer, board chair. "That number has decreased over the past 10-15 years due to changes in publishing technology. The financial crisis of 2008 had a significant impact on both individuals and institutions. Local church and conference finances were also severely affected. As a result, a growing number of churches and conferences either ceased publishing Reporter editions or changed their publishing frequency. We now no longer receive enough revenue from our publishing and printing operations to sustain the overhead needed to maintain the ministry."

Closure will cost the jobs of the 26 remaining employees, including some with more than 40 years of service. Thirteen others were laid off near the end of 2012. Since the beginning of the year, efforts to cut costs while seeking new income could not keep the ministry in the black. Alan Heath, CEO since August 2011, noted that UMRC has operated as a fee-for-service ministry, with no strong donor base and no direct support from The UMC. For departing employees, severance and vacation pay will not be available in the short term due to lack of funds, Heath said. He added that after liquidation of assets, any remaining funds will be used to pay former employees proportionally.

The Reporter has its origins in pre-Civil War Methodist papers in Texas and was long the main vehicle for news about Methodists in Texas and across the Southwest. In recent decades, it has covered the full UMC, offering independent news coverage, features and commentaries. Staff members have regularly won religious press awards. Mr. Heath said an appropriate home will be sought for the newspaper's print and online archives.

– Sam Hodges, UMR Managing Editor, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 20; May 2, 2013

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues. Victory? Bible Publisher defeats Obamacare in court

A prominent Bible publisher has won a significant victory in the ongoing battle by employers against President Obama's notorious contraception mandate, which requires businesses and non-church organizations to provide free contraception – including abortion-causing drugs – to their workers," reports The New American. "The conservative legal advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom reported May 6 that at the request of the Department of Justice, a federal appellate court has dismissed an Obama administration appeal of an order that had halted enforcement of the [abortion pill] mandate against Tyndale House Bible publishers. The retreat by the administration marks the first complete appellate victory on a preliminary injunction in any of the cases against the mandate. On November 16 U.S. District Judge Reggie Walton granted the publisher a temporary injunction blocking enforcement of the mandate, ruling that 'the beliefs of Tyndale and its owners are indistinguishable.... Christian principles, prayer, and activities are pervasive at Tyndale, and the company's ownership structure is designed to ensure that it never strays from its faith-oriented mission.'

"Bible publishers should be free to do business according to the book that they publish," said ADF Attorney Matt Bowman. "The government dismissed its appeal because it knows how ridiculous it sounds arguing that a Bible publisher isn't religious enough to qualify as a religious employer. For the government to say that a Bible publisher isn't religious is outrageous, and now the Obama administration has had to retreat in court."

– Pray In Jesus Name ministry, PO Box 77077, Colorado Springs, CO 80970

(UM) Bishops

+ *Active Bishops Meet in Learning Forum.*

Active UM bishops from around the globe held their second large gathering in a row that is closed to the press and outside observers. The meeting, May 5–9 in San Diego, marked the first forum of residential bishops – bishops who now actively lead an episcopal area. All 66 active bishops from the United States, Africa, Asia and Europe attended. The full Council of Bishops, which also includes retired bishops, last met for a private retreat in November at Epworth-by-the-Sea on St. Simons Island, Ga.

Germany Area Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, president of the Council of Bishops, said the meeting gave bishops with residential responsibilities "a time to learn how to lead in a time of rapid changes in the world and in the church." Wenner and other bishops stress that the gathering has no authority to take actions on behalf of the full council.

There is no need for news coverage, they argue, since no voting on church issues is planned. "This is a learning and community-building opportunity," said Raleigh (N.C.) Area Bishop Hope Morgan Ward. "I do not see why a learning and community-building opportunity would be open to the press. . . . It's a different sort of gathering than we've had in the past." Still, some longtime church observers say the meeting should be open. "To state that all the residential bishops meeting together at some other time is not really a [council] meeting but a forum is to make a distinction without a

difference,” the Rev. Thomas E. Frank, a historian of Methodism and professor at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., told UM News Service in an email. He is the author of the frequently used textbook *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The UMC*. “It is not possible for all residential bishops meeting together, who individually and collectively bear responsibility for the oversight of the ‘entire Church,’ not to do business even if no formal actions are taken,” Frank said.

Speakers at the forum included Lt. General James Dubik, a retired Army general who shared lessons in leadership and change management gleaned from an exemplary 40-year military career. Gen. Dubik used organizational skills to guide the U.S. Army through a time of transition. Now a consultant for the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, he has utilized his expertise in transforming organizations to help the Catholic Church in the U.S. The bishops also heard from the Rev. Dr. Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Britain and from Brian McLaren, noted author and leader of the emerging church movement.

An event open to the public and the press was a trip to the U.S. – Mexico border. The visit was a learning experience for the bishops, who met with Mario Lopez, a representative of the San Diego mayor’s office at San Ysidro and viewed the pedestrian bridge leading into Tijuana. At another stop, they met with Enrique Morones, director of the Border Angels, a volunteer non-profit organization that advocates for human rights and immigration reform through community education and awareness programs.

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 19; May 15, 2013.

+ *Bishop Comments on Same-sex Wedding Case.*

New York Area Bishop Martin D. McLee notes in an open letter to the New York Annual Conference that confidentiality requirements prevent him from speaking in detail about the case involving the Rev. Thomas Ogletree, a retired professor and elder facing charges under church law. Ogletree officiated at the same-sex wedding of his son in October. The bishop reminds church members, “As UMs, we are not a one-issue denomination.”

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 19; May 15, 2013.

+ *UM Bishops, GBGM Representatives on Historic China Trip.*

In what is considered a “historic moment,” a UM delegation was in China Apr. 20–28 to renew old friendships and forge deeper relationships with Chinese Christians. The trip was a joint effort of the Council of Bishops and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). The delegation’s co-leaders are San Francisco Area Bishop Warner Brown, the council’s president-designate, and North Carolina Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, the mission board’s president.

The visit began April 20 in Shanghai, where the delegation split to attend Sunday worship at two churches originally started by the Methodist Episcopal Church South – Mu’en Church and Jinglin Church. Both services were packed with worshipers. Among those welcoming delegation members at Mu’en was the Rev. Shi Quigui, a former pastor who had served the church there in its previous identity as Moore Memorial Methodist Church, both before and after the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76. That eventual name change reflects the fact that churches in China entered a post-denominational era when the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Committee was formed in 1954 to signal a new identity under the new government of the People’s Republic of China.

At Jinglin Church, Ward said she was impressed by the energy and vitality evident during worship. “It was a strong connection with the heritage of Methodist mission in this historic place as well as a yearning for faithfulness as the church moves into the future,” she said.

A meeting the next day with officials and staff of the China Christian Council included an acknowledgment of that heritage and the continuing relationship between UMs and Chinese Christians. In his opening remarks, the Rev. Kan Baoping, the council’s top executive, spoke of continuing friendship and voiced confidence that “in the future, we will work together as before.” Brown agreed with the need for a strong relationship. “Friendship with the churches in China has been longstanding and deeply cherished,” he told the council.

Wisconsin Area Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, who serves as chair of the UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR), pointed to the significance of a joint visit to China for the first time by bishops and mission agency representatives. “I think this is a wonderful, historic moment,” said Jung, who has made nine previous trips to China on his own or with other groups. Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, the council’s ecumenical officer, invited China Christian Council leadership to send representatives to Ecumenical Day during the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Ore. “We want to relate to the China Christian Council as our key partner in China,” added Thomas Kemper, top executive of the Board of Global Ministries.

Continuous prayer for the church in China is “the most important thing we need from you,” said the Rev. Gao Feng, council president, through a translator. Over the past three decades, he noted, “rapid growth also has brought a lot of new

challenges and issues.” Among the challenges are better development of China’s 21 seminaries and Bible colleges and a remedy to the “severe shortage” of qualified pastors.

After being hosted by the council at a nearby restaurant for a traditional Chinese lunch banquet, the delegation traveled to Nanjing by bullet train for several days of meetings and project site visits with the Amity Foundation, Jinglin Theological Seminary and Mo Choulu Church.

The delegation also met with groups in Beijing, including the Beijing Christian Council, China Islamic Council, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and State Administration for Religious Affairs.

– Linda Bloom for GBGM, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 17; May 1, 2013.

(UM) General Board of Global Ministries

+ GBGM Board Meeting

The General Board of Global Ministries’ (GBGM) board of directors met for their semi-annual meeting in New York City, Apr. 11–13. In the context of what board president Bishop Hope Morgan Ward called “looking at the long view with the confidence of God’s victory,” directors worshiped and prayed, had conversations and made decisions, celebrated partnerships and engaged in service. “Thoughts on a Global UMC That We Have Never Dared to Become” was the message that Thomas Kemper,

GBGM general secretary, shared in his report. Noting that Global Ministries’ staff and missionaries reflect the multinational nature of the church’s mission, Kemper stressed “the theology and practice of mission – broadly understood as the work of the church, not the portfolio of one agency – will determine our global reality in the future.” His report to the directors encouraged UMs to engage in dialogue and conversations around four interrelated topics:

- framing a new or renewed mission vision for our global agenda;
- grappling with the impact of an unjust and divided world;
- addressing the implications of migration/immigration on our vision and mission; and
- daring to ask new questions and do new things for the sake of the gospel.

Directors took time to mark—with music, food, and fellowship – the strides made in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake and to celebrate its principal partner in recovery there, the Methodist Church in Haiti (Eglise Méthodiste d’Haïti, EMH).

Amid rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula, Wisconsin Bishop Hee-Soo Jung led directors in prayer. Jung distributed a letter through the Council of Bishops urging “North and South Korea to negotiate directly through their government leaders to forge an agreement ending the nuclear threat in the Korean Peninsula” for the sake of the world community. On a related note, the National Council of Churches in Korea also released a letter by NCKK General Secretary the Rev. Dr. Kim Young-Ju and a petition for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Among grants approved by directors was \$50,000 to support a new building for the oldest UM Roma congregation in Europe. The Alsószolca UMC in the southeastern Hungarian town of the same name has existed since 1952. The Roma – often pejoratively called “gypsies” – are a growing minority in the area.

The Mission Programs Committee affirmed changes in the young adult US-2 and Mission Intern programs, which will be streamlined under the name Generation Transformation. Generation Transformation also encompasses short-term young adult opportunities such as Global Justice Volunteers.

Bishop Martin McLee (New York Conference) and Bishop John Schol (Greater New Jersey Conference) spoke to directors about the challenges and opportunities that have arisen since the hurricane-turned-superstorm made a significant impact on the Northeast coast.

UMCOR directors approved \$3 million grants to both the New York and Greater New Jersey conferences, to be delivered in six-month installments. The Peninsula-Delaware Conference received \$500,000 for its Sandy recovery work in Somerset County, Md. Another \$500,000, not yet approved, has been earmarked for the Methodist Church of Cuba, which is preparing its grant proposal.

Including Sandy relief, directors approved more than \$8.6 million to be disbursed among annual conferences grappling with long-term disaster response to tornadoes, floods, and storms of 2011 and the wreckage left by Superstorm Sandy last fall. Read about long-term recovery grants the UMCOR directors approved. Directors and staff concluded the meeting in a day of service. In all, a combined total of 53 staff and directors participated.

– Melissa Hinnen, GBGM, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 17; May 1, 2013.

Annual Conference Reports

Detroit Annual Conference. Beginning a quadrennial theme of “Disciples: Made in Michigan,” the 2013 session of the Detroit Annual Conference focused on leadership as it met May 16–19 in Adrian, Mich. “Disciples: Made in Michigan” celebrates the unique gifts and talents in the Michigan Area and is a theme being used in partnership with the West Michigan Conference. It also emphasizes the need to focus on creating new disciples and developing vital congregations in communities. The Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor at The UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, addressed the focus on leadership through his “Leading Beyond the Walls” presentation, which included three 90-minute talks on leadership, worship and preaching, and missional outreach. Bishop Deborah L. Kieseey, presiding over her first conference session since being assigned to the Michigan Area, taught on the session’s theme verse from 2 Timothy 1:3-7 during the opening worship service. In worship, the Rev. Dottie Escobedo-Frank, pastor at Crossroads UMC in Phoenix, Ariz., challenged the conference through a pair of sermons focused on revitalizing congregations and individuals.

During a corporate session, the conference overwhelmingly approved a plan from the Board of Trustees to locate and jointly purchase property and structure for a Michigan Area Ministry Center with the West Michigan Conference. With the affirmative vote, the plan now goes before the West Michigan Conference. The conference collected approximately \$53,000 from members in special offerings, including \$33,000 to be split between the conference’s covenant partnerships with the Methodist Church of Haiti and the Liberia Conference. In addition, over \$8,000 was collected for Imagine No Malaria. Over the next four years, the Detroit Conference has a goal of raising at least \$500,000 for the effort, and received a report that it is already halfway toward its goal. As part of its legislative business, the conference:

- supported the current legislative efforts to reform the immigration in the United States and encouraged individuals to express their support to their Senator or Representative;
 - indicated the conference believes in full equal rights for all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, the conference agreed that congregations should be made aware of and provide discussion opportunities regarding potential changes to ¶161.F of the 2012 Book of Discipline of The UMC in advance of the 2016 General Conference session;
 - encouraged all clergy and laity of the conference to contact their U.S. Senator or Representative and President Obama, urging passage of legislation designed to prevent gun violence as well as advocate with State of Michigan officials regarding restrictions on open or concealed carrying of handguns;
 - urged its member congregations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the “Great March to Freedom,” which was held on June 23, 1963 in Detroit, the site of the first version of the famous “I Have a Dream” speech by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;
 - asked the clergy and laity of the conference to advocate for an independent and bipartisan commission to redraw Michigan’s political boundaries to ensure free and fair elections;
 - encouraged the clergy and laity of the conference to advocate for adequate and equitable funding for Michigan’s public schools;
- and
- approved a budget of approximately \$9.8 million, which includes nearly \$2.4 million for pension and health benefits.

The conference also approved the four proposed constitutional amendments passed at the 2012 General Conference session. Twenty-eight retiring clergy were honored for their ministry during the conference session.

Four elders and one deacon were ordained; four were commissioned as provisional elders, and one person was received as an associate member. The average age of those ordained, commissioned, and received into associate membership was 50.9. The Detroit Conference membership is 88,749, down 502.

– Paul Thomas, communications for Detroit Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 21; May 29, 2013.

Red Bird Missionary Conference. The Red Bird Missionary Conference held its Annual Conference gathering at Booneville UMC in Booneville, Ky. May 17–18. Bishop Lindsey Davis officiated. Rev. Warren and June Latham were guest speakers, focusing on their mission work at a clinic in Venezuela.

The greatest emphasis at conference this year is that the Red Bird Missionary Conference is still alive. Jeff Frost, Conference Council on Ministry chair, emphasized that if these hills could talk they could share so many of the ways in which the conference is alive and well: building two new buildings, possibly reopening the dorms, raising money for camping ministry and the twenty-five dollar commitment campaign that is bringing individuals from across the country into partnership with us and our ministry. All congregations shared the ways in which their churches were alive and well and the manner in which they envision growth based on their current successes.

Delegates voted to remember our United Brethren heritage and have that reflected in the conference journal and program

book by listing the date of 1954, the first year an Annual Conference was held in this area by a the United Church of the Brethren. Resolutions adopted by the conference consisted of a proposed transfer of Lothair UMC into the Kentucky Annual Conference. The vote passed unanimously. This resolution will now await approval by vote at the Kentucky Annual Conference.

The proposed constitutional amendments from the 2012 General Conference were all approved. The Red Bird Missionary Conference ordained one elder and recognized the retirement of one individual from the Conference. Membership is 1,462, down 5 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 676, down 7. Church school attendance stands at 327, up 83.

– Angie Cunigan, Red Bird Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 21; May 29, 2013.

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Government's first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives. – President Ronald Reagan