

# Monthly Update

June 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This “Monthly Update” contains information of some of our United Methodist Church leaders and boards and agencies are doing – with a continuing examination of what they prioritize. One of our supporters in Duncanville, Texas sent us an e-mail expressing appreciation of our commentaries on UM employees’ actions.

We have a bit more information on what the Boy Scouts of America are facing on the homosexual issue. In the May Update Tony Perkins explained clearly the importance of this both that fine organization and to our country as a whole. We need to have the persistence exemplified by the Methodist circuit riders that added so richly to our heritage. One of my favorites was:

## Peter Cartwright

Peter Cartwright was a nineteenth-century circuit-riding Methodist preacher. He had a reputation for being a hard preacher and an uncompromising man.

One Sunday morning as he was about to take the pulpit, he was told that President Andrew Jackson was in the congregation. He was warned not to say anything out of line, anything that might be controversial to the President.

Cartwright stood to preach and immediately announced, “I understand that Andrew Jackson is here. I have been requested to be guarded in my remarks. Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn’t repent.”

The congregation was shocked. They sat in stunned silence, wondering how the President might respond. Jackson didn’t flinch.

After the service, President Jackson sought out Peter Cartwright to shake his hand. He said, “Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could whip the world.” A military man, this was the greatest compliment the President could give anyone else.

Another time, Cartwright was told of a place dominated by a bully who bragged that he would never let any preacher into “his town.” This man was the owner of the local tavern. Peter rode to that town, sought out the man, challenged and fought him. As he said later, “It took me singing three stanzas of “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” before I subdued him.” The bully became one of Cartwright’s avid supporters and donated his then-former saloon to his ministry. (From *Misguided Shepherds*)

We need to have this type of persistence in the face of what seems like relentless activism by those who would move our country down the wrong path. Please keep praying as we “contend for the faith” in this battle.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

## **June 2013 Update**

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

Life is under no obligation to give us what we expect.

– Margaret Mitchell, author of the book *Gone with the Wind*.

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#### **The Good Stuff**

##### **+ *Margaret Thatcher's Funeral***

"Thatcher's funeral was striking in that it was not, actually, about her. It was about what she thought it important for the mourners to know. The readings were about the fact of God, the gift of Christ, and the necessity of loving your country and working for its betterment. There were no long eulogies. In a friendly and relatively brief address, the bishop of London lauded her kindness and character. No funeral of an American leader would ever be like that: The dead American would be the star, with God in the position of yet another mourner who'd miss his leadership."

– Excerpted from Peggy Noonan's editorial in the Wall Street Journal; the Confessing Movement newsletter, May 2013

##### **+ *Old and New Immigrants***

From: "David LaBonte" [Note: In this age of "political correctness, this letter provides compelling arguments. – AOM]

My wife, Rosemary, wrote a wonderful letter to the editor of the OC Register which, of course, was not printed. So, I decided to "print" it myself by sending it out on the Internet. Written in response to a series of letters to the editor in the Orange County Register (California):

Dear Editor:

So many letter writers have based their arguments on how this land is made up of immigrants. Ernie Lujan for one, suggests we should tear down the Statue of Liberty because the people now in question aren't being treated the same as those who passed through Ellis Island and other ports of entry. Maybe we should turn to our history books and point out to people like Mr. Lujan why today's American is not willing to accept this new kind of immigrant any longer.

Back in 1900 when there was a rush from all areas of Europe to come to the United States, people had to get off a ship and stand in a long line in New York and be documented. Some would even get down on their hands and knees and kiss the ground. They made a pledge to uphold the laws and support their new country in good and bad times. They made learning English a primary rule in their new American households and some even changed their names to blend in with their new home. They had waved good bye to their birth place to give their children a new life and did everything in their power to help their children assimilate into one culture. Nothing was handed to them. No free lunches, no welfare, no labor laws to protect them. All they had were the skills and craftsmanship they had brought with them to trade for a future of prosperity.

Most of their children came of age when World War II broke out. My father fought alongside men whose parents had come straight over from Germany, Italy, France and Japan. None of these 1<sup>st</sup> generation Americans ever gave any thought about what country their parents had come from. They were Americans fighting Hitler, Mussolini and the Emperor of Japan. They were defending the United States of America as one people. When we liberated France, no one in those villages were looking for the French-American or the German-American or the Irish-American. The people of France saw only Americans. And we carried one flag that represented one country. Not one of those immigrant sons would have thought about picking up another country's flag and waving it to represent who they were. It would have been a disgrace to their parents who had sacrificed so much to be here. These immigrants truly knew what it meant to be an American. They stirred the melting pot into one red, white and blue bowl.

And here we are with a new kind of immigrant who wants the same rights and privileges. Only they want to achieve it by playing with a different set of rules, one that includes the entitlement card and a guarantee of being faithful to their mother country. I'm sorry, that's not what being an American is all about. I believe that the immigrants who landed on Ellis Island in the early 1900's deserve better than that for all the toil, hard work and sacrifice in raising future generations to create a land that has become a beacon for those legally searching for a better life. I think they would be appalled that they are being used as an example by those waving foreign country flags.

And for that suggestion about taking down the Statue of Liberty, it happens to mean a lot to the citizens who are voting on the immigration bill. I wouldn't start talking about dismantling the United States just yet.

(signed)

**Of Interest****+ *Back to the Basics of Religious Liberty***

Military officials appear to be in sandbag mode telling the media that the recent revelations about policies that would lead to the prosecution of military members for sharing their faith was all taken out of context. But the evidence would suggest otherwise, which is why in the last seven days over 140,000 people have signed FRC's petition to Secretary Hagel asking him to protect the religious freedom of our troops.

Here is a summary of events thus far: On April 26<sup>th</sup> news broke that anti-Christian activist Mikey Weinstein met with senior Air Force officials to discuss "religious issues" in the military. The Washington Post article led others in the media to ask for an explanation of what assurances, if any, were offered in the meeting. The Pentagon responded with several confusing statements over the course of last week. The first statement said, "Religious proselytization is not permitted within the Department of Defense." A Pentagon spokesman was asked, "if any chaplains or service members had been prosecuted for such an offense." He responded that "court martials and non-judicial punishments are decided on a case-by-case basis and it would be inappropriate to speculate on the outcome in specific cases." But these statements only raised more questions about what was included in this ban on "proselytization." The Air Force then issued a statement saying, "Air Force members are free to express their personal religious beliefs as long as it does not make others uncomfortable." The Pentagon then issued another statement saying that Mr. Weinstein was "granted" a meeting to "express his concerns of religious issues in the military." The next day, the Pentagon released a third statement, saying, "Service members can share their faith (evangelize), but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one's beliefs (proselytization)."

The Pentagon meeting and the series of statements has widened the ongoing conversation among service members, the media and Christians across the country about the extent and source of religious hostility in the military. In recent years, a distressing pattern of religious hostility has emerged across the uniformed services but most especially in the Air Force, which has largely been the focus of Mikey Weinstein's secularization efforts over the last nine years.

The evidence shows that over the years Mikey Weinstein has become some type of advisor to the military on religious issues. In November 2011, Mr. Weinstein filed a complaint against the Air Force Academy because it sent an email from cadets to cadets asking for support for Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child. Playing the role of the Grinch, Weinstein complained and 24 hours later the Academy sent out an apology. Also in 2011, Mikey Weinstein proclaimed a "monumental victory" after Air Force Chief of Staff General Schwartz issued a memorandum in which he told his commanders not to "promote their religious beliefs to their subordinates." The chilling effect of the memorandum has been felt across the Air Force and created an environment of religious hostility. Examples of this hostility are numerous. A few instances include an Air Force officer being ordered to remove a Bible from his desk, the Air Force suspending a 20-year-old class on 'Just War Theory' because it included scriptural references, stripping 'God' from the Rapid Capabilities motto and the purging of Bibles from Air Force Inn checklists. The 2011 Operation Christmas Child story noted above is another example. Leaders even removed an article from a Squadron Office School curriculum for referencing chapel. The religious liberty violations go on and on and the fingerprints of Mr. Weinstein are on many of them. This pattern of intolerance is why the Washington Post's account of Mikey Weinstein's Pentagon meeting was so disturbing--especially the report that an "instruction booklet" would be released in a few weeks as a "panacea to all religious issues." The Air Force Times reports that the booklet will "restate" General Schwartz's memorandum banning the promotion of religion to subordinates. We have not seen this booklet but if the Air Force Times is describing the contents accurately, then the Air Force's instruction booklet will continue to advance this environment of hostility toward religious expression.

An environment of religious hostility also has been created in the other uniformed services. On Thursday, Coast Guard Rear Admiral William Lee addressed the National Day of Prayer service on Capitol Hill. He told the story of so many servicemen searching for reasons to live, and talked about one 24-year-old who had tried to commit suicide and failed. Despite the protocol, Lee said he felt strongly that he should give the service member a Bible. "The lawyers tell me that if I do that, I'm crossing the line," he told the crowd. "I'm so glad I've crossed that line so many times." To a standing ovation, Admiral Lee promised not to back down from "my right under the Constitution to tell a young man that there is hope." What should happen next? First, the Pentagon should explain what assurances, if any, were made to Mikey Weinstein in the meeting. If there were no assurances, then the Pentagon should explain that Mikey Weinstein has misrepresented his relationship with the Air Force. Secondly, the Department of Defense should adopt a DoD wide policy that fully protects religious expression and puts an end to an environment that is increasingly hostile toward those who live out their Christian faith. On Friday, Lt. General Jerry Boykin, FRC's Executive Vice President, sent a letter to Secretary Hagel requesting a meeting. We hope this meeting will pave the way for the military to fully embrace the First

Amendment right to the free exercise of religion without fear of retaliation. Your petitions have already made a huge difference but we hope to present many more to Secretary Hagel. Please take this a step further, and share the petition with your friends and family.

– E-mail received from the Family Research Council; May 6, 2013;801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001

### **+ *Stand with Scouts Sunday***

The Family Research Council (FRC) hosted a nationwide simulcast on the effort by liberal activists to impose "open and avowed" homosexuality in the Boy Scouts of America. We heard from Gov. Rick Perry (R-Texas), U.S. Rep. Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.), Pastor Robert Hall of Calvary Chapel Rio Rancho, John Stemberger of OnMyHonor.Net, Scout parents and Eagle Scouts who are concerned about the effects of allowing homosexuals to participate in Scouting. You can watch on-demand at [www.standwithscoutssunday.org](http://www.standwithscoutssunday.org).

Boy Scouts themselves made some of the most moving comments. Eagle Scout Ted Anderson noted that young boys are particularly vulnerable to predation. Eagle Xavier Daniels said that as a boy being raised in a single-parent family, the strong, faithful male role models he found in his BSA troop changed his life.

Brian Rushfeldt, president of Canada Family Action, described how the introduction of homosexuality into his country's Scouting program has devastated it. Gov. Perry, himself an Eagle Scout, described how the Scouts have been "foundational" to him and to his son, Griffin, also an Eagle. The Governor spoke of how Scouting builds character, and has been "the bedrock of values ... and developer of men" in our country for more than 100 years.

"Open and avowed" homosexuals in Scouting would mean danger for young boys and moral confusion for all the boys and young men participating in the BSA. It would also mean that hundreds of thousands of families would "vote with their feet" and leave an organization that no longer reflects their deeply-held convictions.

[The website [www.OnMyHonor.Net](http://www.OnMyHonor.Net) provided action steps a person could take to urge the BSA's leadership to keep their longtime commitment to Judeo-Christian values within Scouting. Again, the 2013 National Annual Meeting was held May 22–24 at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas. – AOM]

– E-mail received from the Family Research Council; May 6, 2013;801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001

### **+ *Utah Boy Scout officials***

Great Salt Lake Council officials, who represent one of the nation's largest Boy Scouts of America groups, said Wednesday they will allow each of their 15 members to "vote their conscience" about allowing gay youths. The 15 council representatives will join roughly 1,400 voting members of the BSA National Council at a meeting in Texas the week of May 20, where a final vote will be taken on May 24 on the proposal to allow gay Scouts but exclude gay leaders. Currently, the organization denies or revokes the membership of any gay members. "This morning, the Great Salt Lake Council unanimously passed a motion to allow each of our 15 voters to vote their conscience as to what is in the best interest of our youth members, the council and the BSA," the Council said in a statement. "We will work closely with our Scouting family and remain totally committed to Scouting's mission and delivering our quality programs to more than 100,000 members and leaders." [Note: We see this as the LDS not standing firm on this. – AOM]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) is the largest sponsor in the nation, with the Boy Scouts making up a large part of its youth program. LDS Church officials have said in a statement they are "satisfied" with the latest BSA proposal to allow gay youths but exclude gay adults.

In March, the Council conducted an email survey about whether to alter membership rules. Eighty-three percent of the Boy Scout leaders, parents and representatives from charter organizations that run troops in the Council opposed lifting the ban on gay Scouts and leaders, but the response rate was only 11 percent.

The national BSA organization also conducted a survey, which found 61 percent support the current policy of excluding gay people. When the responses were broken down further, the data showed a majority of respondents in every category supporting the BSA's current policy of excluding "open and avowed" homosexuals:

- 50 percent of Cub Scout parents support the current policy; 45 percent of Cub Scout parents oppose it. 61 percent of Boy Scout parents support it.
- 62 percent of unit leaders support it.
- 64 percent of council and district volunteers support it.
- 72 percent of chartered organizations support it.

The national survey encompassed five study groups – youths, parents and leaders, National Council, finance and fundraising and legal. "Scouting's review confirmed that this remains among the most complex and challenging issues facing the BSA and society today," the executive summary states. "Even with the wide range of input, it is extremely difficult to accurately quantify the potential impact of maintaining or changing the current policy."

The 15 Council members will vote on the resolution, which states that "No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone." But the resolution also says youths must "abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law," honor their duty to God, and "demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law."

The Boy Scout oath reads: "On my honor I will do my best, To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

The Boy Scout Law says a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.

– The (LDS) Deseret website; extracted from *The Salt Lake Tribune* by Ray Parker, May 8, 2013

### **+ Church Vitality: How Do You Define It?**

To determine whether a congregation was doing well, church leaders used to count just two things – people in the pews and dollars in the plate. Now many UM leaders believe those metrics are not good enough. People and money do not capture whether a church is truly doing the vital work of making Christian disciples, said the Rev. Amy Valdez Barker. So, what qualifies as a vital congregation? Valdez Barker spends a lot of time thinking about that question. She is the executive secretary of the Connectional Table, which coordinates the denomination's mission, ministry and resources. She also previously served as the project manager for the Vital Congregations initiative established by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table.

Valdez Barker has her own ideas. "For me, vital congregations really are helping people grow in their relationship with God and their relationship with neighbor," she said. "Congregations that are vital are helping people live out their discipleship." The challenge comes in figuring out how to measure disciple making. Denominational leaders have varied ideas of how to go about that. One thing Valdez Barker and other denominational leaders do agree on, The UMC has plenty of stories of vital churches engaged in dynamic ministry, and those churches come in a variety of sizes and cultural contexts. While research regarding congregational vitality (e.g., *Vital Congregations*, *Faithful Disciples: Vision for the Church* [Council of Bishops, 1990] and Dan R. Dick's *Vital Signs* [Discipleship Resources, 2007] has been conducted for many years, the denomination-wide emphasis on vital congregations began in 2010 when the Call to Action Steering Team, a cross section of 16 UM leaders, commissioned a study by the consulting firm Towers Watson.

The study used six "indicators of vitality" identified by the steering team to measure UM congregations in the United States: average worship attendance as a percentage of members; total membership; number of children, youth and young adults; number of professions of faith; annual giving per attendee; financial giving beyond the local church. "While they tell us some things, in my opinion, [they] aren't the whole picture of the health and vitality of a congregation," said Kim Shockley, team leader of the recently completed *Toward Vitality Research Project*. Her study, sponsored by four UM agencies, examined congregations that had undergone change recently and were reaping the benefits of that change.

The study says three key elements were usually present: a pastor not afraid to lead, laity who will partner as a team with the pastor and a God-led purpose or vision. The Vital Congregations initiative, started in 2011, asks UM congregations and conferences around the globe to set goals in five areas: average worship attendance; evangelism measured by professions of faith; spiritual formation measured by small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies; missions measured by number of people in the congregation engaged in local, national and international outreach; stewardship measured by the total amount given by a congregation to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries, including apportionments to the denomination as a whole.

Valdez Barker of the Connectional Table expects that church leaders will look at additional indicators of vitality in the future. She noted that the General Commission on Religion and Race is encouraging congregations to look at how they reflect their neighborhoods.

– Heather Hahn, UMNS, as reported in *UMNewscope*; Vol. 41, Issue 18; May 8, 2013

### **(UM) Bishops, Bishops, Church Agencies, and Conference Teams Issue Joint Statement on Immigration Reform**

[Note: This is another example of political activism on behalf of our leadership and one of the church agencies. If one proposes disobedience to a church practice such as paying apportionments, these same people would be infuriated. Yet, this is one example of apportionment dollars at "work" in support of a politically liberal agenda. It would seem that they would wish to solve our denominational problems before presuming to tell Congress how to run the country. – AOM]

120 UM bishops, general agencies and other denominational entities have issued a statement to U.S. senators commending the "Gang of 8" attempt at immigration reform. The statement salutes "this first step towards just and

humane reform” and urges the senators to improve the “Border Security, Economic Opportunity & Immigration Modernization Act” (S. 744).

The so-called “Gang of 8” consists of a bipartisan group of senators: Michael Bennet, D-Colo., Richard Durbin, D-Ill., Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., John McCain, R-Ariz., Robert Menendez, D-N.J., Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Charles Schumer, D-N.Y. Last month they submitted an 844-page plan, S.744, to overhaul the U.S. immigration system. The UMs’ statement analyzes the plan, commending some parts and criticizing others: commending providing a pathway to citizenship, for example, and criticizing “unnecessary border and interior enforcement provisions.” “S. 744 includes provisions that will ultimately make this legislation in its current form unworkable and unable to establish an orderly pathway for undocumented immigrants,” the statement assesses. The UMs emphasize, however, that they look forward to working closely with the House and Senate to move this legislation through the process and to perfect it so that it will “protect the rights of immigrants, strengthen immigrant families and thus, strengthen our communities.”

Eighteen active UM bishops endorsed the statement, along with the General Boards of Church & Society and Global Ministries and the General Commission on Religion & Race and UM Women. Other endorsers include Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans (MARCHA), National Federation of Asian American UMs and National Justice for Our Neighbors.

– Wayne Rhodes, GBCS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 19; May 15, 2013

### **(UM) General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA).**

#### ***GCFA Board Holds First Quarterly Meeting of 2013***

The GCFA held its first meeting for 2013 on Apr. 22–23 in Nashville. The 21-member board, a reduction from 40-members in previous quadrennia, will meet more regularly at the GCFA Servant Ministry Center. Board president Bishop Michael Coyner said, “GCFA continues to live into our new, reduced structure, and our meeting showed evidence that the new structure is working well. GCFA continues to work with the other general agencies to seek ‘shared service’ opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and better serve the whole church.” The shorter, more frequent meetings are intended to allow the board to act on issues relevant to its work in a more timely fashion and facilitate the work of the staff. During this meeting, the board continued its implementation of a new council structure and received reports on the status of projects and work conducted by the staff of GCFA, such as shared administrative services among the general agencies and annual conferences. One example of this collaborative work that benefits the connection is that GCFA recently partnered with the StaplesAdvantage® program. The program gives UMs the opportunity to participate in reduced pricing for frequently used office items and cleaning supplies sold by Staples in stores or online. The program is available to local churches and other UM organizations in the U.S. More than 900 local churches are participating.

The board approved requiring that each UM episcopal area turn in an audit of its 2012 use of the Episcopal office allowance from the Episcopal Fund by July 31. If an episcopal area does not meet that deadline, the board voted to allow payments from the Episcopal Fund related to the office allowance to stop until the area’s records are in order. The Episcopal Fund—paid for by congregational giving—supports the salaries, housing, travel and other expenses of active bishops as well as the salaries and benefits of some of their support staff. The fund also provides for retired bishops, surviving spouses and minor children of deceased bishops.

In other business, the board authorized studies of bishops’ salaries in the United States and in the central conferences. The board will review these studies at the November 2013 meeting. The board also revised a number of employment policies and heard a presentation from General Secretary Barbara Boigegrain and other staff of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) on the work of that agency.

In a one-day consultation following the board meeting, GCFA and the Connectional Table (CT) leadership met in Nashville with representatives of other agencies to begin discussion about the budgeting process for the 2017–2020 quadrennium. Recognizing the need to address all processes and be open in vision, GCFA and CT have begun discussion about ways to streamline the budget process and yet continue to fund ministry effectively.

– GCFA, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 18; May 8, 2013

### **(UM) Men. Speak Up!**

The year is 1711 and the man of the house is away. In his absence his wife establishes “reading time” on Sunday afternoons for their sons. She selects material carefully from her husband’s library and faithfully reads an “awakening sermon” with drama and flair. Before long her Sabbath day gathering includes servants and neighbors eventually numbering over 200 people. The assembly draws notice of the local chaplain and he soon brings up charges against the event saying, “How can an un-ordained, ordinary woman be allowed to proclaim the holy gospel of Christ?” The brave wife and mother stands her ground, insisting she must be allowed to speak because so many are intent on listening.

Susanna Wesley's teaching is considered the cornerstone upon which her sons John and Charles Wesley founded the Methodist church and evangelized their world. Mrs. Wesley understood what the apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans: that faith in a person's heart is awakened by hearing the words of God.

People of faith, speak up! Like Susanna, start with your family and tell those willing to listen of God's extraordinary love towards them. It's the good news and just what your family, your neighbors, and ultimately this nation are waiting to hear. – *Inside Out*, published by the United Methodist Men

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### Annual Conference Reports

**Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Conference.** About 50 people participated in the 2013 session of the Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Annual Conference session in Lyaskovets, Bulgaria, Apr. 12–14. Superintendent Danial Topalski offered an analysis of the spiritual and theological situation of The UMC in Bulgaria. In the last 20 years, congregations have been revived or newly established; church buildings and sanctuaries have been newly established or renovated; books translated, and theological education for both pastors and laity has been reorganized. Topalski underlined the importance of not only looking back to the pre-1944 history (i.e., prior to the Communist regime) but also to focus on the foundations of Methodism. Leaders should empower church members to share their faith in their daily lives. Topalski also referred to the unique situation of The UMC in Romania: being less than two years old, the church has an opportunity to lay an intentional Methodist foundation from its beginning. Topalski stressed the importance of being a church in dialogue. We have good relations with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Future pastors of The UMC in Bulgaria even study at the Orthodox Theological Faculty of Sofia University. The dialogue within the Union of Evangelical Churches, however, remains problematic for various reasons. Topalski pointed to the fact that the majority of church members suffer from the bad economic situation of the country. However, the poorest congregations – particularly the Turkish-speaking and the Roma congregations – are growing the most. These congregations are stable communities, providing opportunities for meeting with God, caring for the needy and facing the typical problems of this population (poverty, illiteracy, drug abuse, prostitution, women trafficking, etc.).

The work in Romania is developing well. Cristian Istrate was commissioned with strengthening a new congregation in Sibiu, the third UM congregation in Romania. The prison ministry in Varna, Lovech and Radzelna (all cities in Bulgaria) bears good fruit as well. It could, however, be expanded with more funding. A local pastor of a small Turkish-speaking church and the pastor of Lyaskovets UMC shared glimpses of God's presence in their ministries. Lyaskovets UMC is committed to serve Roma children. Last year they opened a house with a small sanctuary and various rooms to serve children from kindergarten to the end of the mandatory schooldays. Programs include pre-school activities, computer classes, music classes and others. The children also have an opportunity to work in the garden. The leaders find special joy in the participation of some children not belonging to the Roma ethnicity. Local giving increased by 15% in 2012. Membership is up 148 in 33 local churches with 1,266 professing members, about 500 children and about 500 friends.

– Sister Elsbeth Käser, Zurich/Urs Schweizer, assist. to Bp. Patrick Streiff, as reported in UMNewscope; May 8, 2013

**Hungary Provisional Conference.** “Younger, more educated and more caring,” could be the headline for Hungarian Methodists at the annual conference session, Apr. 17–20 in Budapest-Óbuda. Roman Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran churches membership declined by about 30% in the last 10 years, according to the 2011 census. A surprising number – 2,400 people – claimed to be UMs, while internal statistics show only 410 professing members, a constituency of about 1,700 people including children and friends. Even more surprising was the fact that The UMC has a higher percentage of people under age 30, people with higher education, and Roma people than other traditional churches have. Hungary has a long tradition of schools being owned and administered by churches and supported by the state. The leadership of Forrai Private School with more than 400 students (high school diploma and higher professional education) contacted the UM church after research led them to conclude that The UMC would fit best the aims and values of the school. The worldwide nature of The UMC, the Social Principles and the credible and inspirational assistance for both everyday life and faith (e.g., through the Hungarian edition of Upper Room) were particularly esteemed. They asked The UMC to assume ownership of the school. Following a thorough discussion, the conference unanimously approved. Present at the worship service on Friday evening were [both] the founding family and the school administration but also more than 30 teachers. In the same worship service, two women and one man were commissioned as local pastors, and one man was ordained elder. – Office of the Bishop, Zurich/Switzerland, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 18; May 8, 2013

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Everyone you will ever meet knows something that you don't. – Bill Nye

**This reflects late-breaking news**

Concerned Methodists’ Insert to the June Update on the decision by the Boy Scouts of America:

In February I became involved on behalf of Concerned Methodists in the effort to try to influence decision-makers as to the need to maintain its current standard of membership, especially regarding any avowed practice or self-identity of sexual involvement. Since the United Methodist Church (UMC) hosts the second largest number of Boy Scout troops exceeded only by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS – Mormons) – and the largest number of Cub Scout units, I felt it was necessary for Concerned Methodists to do what it could to get the Scouts to stand firm. If the Scouts were to give in on this, they would not only compromise the essence of all they stood for, this action would also provide a potential avenue of legal action against those churches and other organizations who hosted Boy Scout troops. I sent a facsimile to the headquarters to Mr. Wayne Brock, the Chief Scout Executive.

In April, I flew out to the Dallas-Ft. Worth area to meet with a member of the national leadership over this issue. In the letter for Mr. Brock, I had repeated the Scout Oath, The Scout Law, and The Scout Motto. I then included a copy of my book *On the Brink* that narrated the history of the radical homosexual movement and the impact it would have on the United Methodist Church if homosexual practice were normalized in the denomination, not only for our church but also for the United States and the world. I pointed out that the same principles applied today. I also included a copy of a fact sheet entitled “Homosexual Practice” that examines it from a medical, sociological, psychological, Biblical, and developmental perspective. I then included a picture of a man on the edge of a cliff with the caption under him, “STAND FIRM in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. – I Corinthians 16:13.” The final recommendation to the leadership was to stand firm and not change the standards for membership in Scouting.

I then met with another influential leader in the Boy Scouts of America, gave him the same information, and apprised him of the meeting I’d recently had at Scouting headquarters.

After those two meetings, I was made aware on the Deseret News website of an action by those in the LDS leadership that urged its delegates to the BSA convention to “vote their consciences” on the resolution. This caused some concern, since in times past in the UMC, this was a phrase used to subtly encourage homosexual activism. In addition the LDS Church has had a long history of standing for family values; to have them compromise their stand would seriously weaken the position of those supporting traditional values.

At the 2013 Convention of the Boy Scouts of America held at the Gaylord Texan Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas close to Dallas, security was tight and no media were allowed into the Center. The proposed resolution itself prepared by the Executive Committee of the BSA (a copy at the end of this release) was a key focus of interest. Knowing that there was strong pressure from corporate sponsors such as A T & T to go along with the resolution and change its policy, as also from President Barrack Obama, those who stood for traditional moral values visibly demonstrated their stance. John Stemberger, President and General Counsel of the Florida Family Policy Council, had a group of people there demonstrating along the road by the Embassy Suites on behalf of OnMyHonor.Net, a conservative organization supporting the traditional position. In addition, local Scouts and parents of Scouts held placards and talked to people. At this time, two members cycled by these people and up to the news media who were covering the event. I recognized them as members of PFLAG – “Parents and friends of lesbians and gays”; they commenced to tell the media about their position using strong language against those holding traditional values. They were quickly intercepted by members of the Grapevine Police Department and ushered into the background. Two trucks slowly drove around the area with scripture verses that narrated the consequences of sin. On the “Truth truck” were pictures of men who had contracted A.I.D.S. and were in the final stages, in addition to calls for repentance (TruthTruckUSA.com). On another truck Alan Hoyle called for repentance and evangelism (“WakeUpCall”).

The decision was announced at 5:00 P.M. in the large room upstairs at the Gaylord Texan Convention Center in a brief meeting in which it was announced that the resolution had passed by a margin of about 60% of the



1,400 voting members. It caused some excitement, sense of urgency, and consternation among many of the delegates.

At that time, a written statement was given to the news media that read in part:

“For 103 years, the Boy Scouts of America's focus has been a part of the fabric of this nation, with a focus on working together to deliver the nation’s foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training. Based on growing input from within the Scouting family, the BSA leadership chose to conduct an additional review...

Today, following this review, the approximate 1,400 voting members of the Boy Scouts of America's National Council approved a resolution to remove the restriction denying membership to youth on the basis of sexual orientation alone...The resolution also reinforces that Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. A change to the current membership policy for adult leaders was not under consideration...

This policy change is effective Jan. 1, 2014...

The Boy Scouts of America will not sacrifice its mission, or the youth served by the movement by allowing the organization to be consumed by a single, divisive, and unresolved societal issue.

While people have different opinions about this policy, we can all agree that kids are better off when they are in Scouting....”

Then at 6:00 P.M. at a briefing that was open only to the media, the “Big 3” made statements: Wayne Perry, National President; Wayne Brock, the Chief Scout Executive; and Tico Perez. They reiterated that requirements for adults would be unchanged. Perry addressed the cameras and newspeople first giving, among other things, different examples of innovative ways the Scouts are engaging in their work. He mentioned that at the breakfast that morning, the LDS had recognized a Scout who had achieved several goals in his Islamic faith – and held it up as being commendable. Later, Brock stated, “I believe kids are better off with this resolution... We need to move forward...” Perez stated, “There is disagreement about how best to serve kids.”

While the latter statement “The resolution also reinforces that Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting” is reassuring, it is highly problematic. In a follow-up article by a reporter for the Associated Press on the internet, he had quoted other gay activists that they would be “monitoring” what is happening to ensure that no “gay scouts” are mistreated. He further quoted some state governments and corporations as pushing for “full inclusion” – and that “gay” advocacy groups are not satisfied. We in Concerned Methodists have been involved since 1996 in the fight against normalization of homosexuality in the United Methodist Church; we are familiar with the tactics that are used in the other side’s attempts to advance its agenda by incrementalism – asking for one concession only to try to get other, successive ones approved until they have achieved their full program. This is what will happen to the Scouts; those pushing their agenda were encouraged by this victory and will not stop until the Scouts have accepted the homosexual agenda of “full inclusion” of gays into every aspect of the Boy Scouts of America permeating the organization. This can then be used as an international organization to further the homosexual agenda. No parent who is concerned about the welfare of his boy should risk including him in such a program; it simply will not be a safe environment.

A second observation is that, despite what had been stated at the news conference, as soon as a “gay scout” ages out at 18, he will be prepared for legal action when the BSA tries to force him out of Scouting. The absurdity of the new BSA policy is obvious: how is it rational that being homosexual is okay for a boy up until he is 17 – but not 18 and older? In addition, as of this date, May 24, 2013, President Obama, who had pushed for the new change, weighed in and stated that, “requirements for adults need to be changed (to allow for openly gay adults in Scouting).” It is predicted that legal action against the BSA will become epidemic and this issue will command their attention.

The situation of the “LDS had recognized a Scout who had achieved several goals in his Islamic faith” reflects severe confusion and is especially problematic. What is the common ground between the LDS and Muslims?

This whole situation is disappointing in the extreme and reflective of the fact that the Boy Scouts of America have lost their way and their sense of identity. If one cannot have standards in the key area of sexuality and know what God’s design is for males and females, then one cannot have any standards that reflect eternal values. Homosexuality strikes at the very heart of Christianity and the integrity of the Bible. This is not only the camel getting its nose under the tent, it is a case of the leadership of the Boy Scouts of America having, not only lost its way, but demonstrating its inability to effectively lead this organization at a pivotal point in the 103-year history of this once-great movement.

As was contained in the cover letter to the Concerned Methodists’ May Update, Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council had explained “If the Scouts bend to this pressure, then any of the churches or faith-based groups that charter 70 percent of all Scout troops will be at risk of legal harassment by huge, wealthy pro-homosexual organizations. Many--perhaps most--will be forced to disassociate with the Scouts. And parents will begin to pull their boys out of the Scouts....That’s why Scouting as we know it will be destroyed...”

As stated in the book *On the Brink*, an action such as this will, in turn, contribute to the decline of the United States of America and serve to advance homosexuality in other countries around the world. Such is the gravity of this action.

At a press conference the previously-mentioned John Stemberger announced plans to form an alternative group to the Boy Scouts (similar to the American Heritage Girls versus the Girl Scouts).

Allen O. Morris, Executive Director  
Concerned Methodists  
(910) 488-4379/(910) 488-5090

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**Letter to each National Voting Member**

Dear National Voting Member:

Thank you for your service as a voting member of the National Council. Enclosed in this email is a resolution proposing that the Boy Scouts of America amend its membership standards policy so no youth can be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone, while maintaining the current membership policy for all adult leaders of the Boy Scouts of America.

For 103 years, the Boy Scouts of America's focus has been on working together to deliver the nation's foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training. Today, Scouting represents approximately 2.6 million youth and 1 million adult members across the nation, with diverse beliefs about a number of important issues.

Recently within the Scouting family, there has been significant discussion about the BSA's membership policy regarding sexual orientation, including requests to engage in dialogue about the current BSA policy.

Scouting's current membership requirements are: The applicant must possess the moral, educational, and emotional qualities that the Boy Scouts of America deems necessary to afford positive leadership to youth. The applicant must also be the correct age, subscribe to the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle, and abide by the Scout Oath or Promise, and the Scout Law.

- + While the BSA does not proactively inquire about the sexual orientation of employees, volunteers, or members, we do not grant membership to individuals who are open or avowed homosexuals or who engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the BSA.
- + The Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*, 530 U.S. 640 (2000), recognized the First Amendment right of the BSA to select its leaders and members based upon the assertion by the BSA that homosexual activity was inconsistent with the Scout Oath and Law.

- + Even after the favorable Supreme Court decision, challenges and funding restrictions did arise in some parts of the country. Several high-profile issues throughout the years have created calls for a reexamination of the membership standards from BSA members, alumni, local councils, longstanding chartered organizations, and traditional supporters.
- + In 2012, the BSA announced findings from a two-year review of the policy—conducted by a committee convened by the Chief Scout Executive and the national president—to engage in meaningful review of the membership policy among Scouting families and other parents to determine whether continuing the policy was in the best interest of the Boy Scouts of America.
- + The committee decided that, at that time, it was in the best interest of the organization to maintain the policy. This finding was announced to the National Executive Board at its February 2012 meeting and publicly announced in July 2012.
- + The decision to maintain the policy began an even deeper dialogue within Scouting. Out of respect for Scouting's chartered organizations, the National Executive Board spearheaded discussions about the issue.
- + This created an outpouring of feedback from the American public, from both those who agree with the current policy and those who support a change. This feedback reinforced how deeply people care about Scouting and how passionate they are about the organization.
- + To continue and expand this important discussion, in February 2013 the Executive Committee directed its committees, representative of Scouting's members, to further engage a wide range of Scouting's family and listen to their perspectives and concerns.
- + The BSA has engaged in an internal dialogue by hosting informative town hall–style meetings at more than 250 local councils across the nation, discussed the concerns with nonprofit and youth-serving organizations' executive leaders and with private and corporate donors, and engaged experts in the fields of youth protection and safety. Also, Scouting interacted with chartered organization representatives, leaders, parents, and members of alumni organizations through a survey sent to 1.1 million members of the Scouting family, and collected feedback through a national survey of parents and a Harris Interactive Survey of the nation's youth.
- + After carefully reviewing this thoughtful work, the officers of the BSA are pleased to present this resolution to you for your consideration. We believe the BSA can no longer sacrifice its mission, or the youth served by the movement, by allowing the organization to be consumed by a single, controversial, and unresolved societal issue.
- + America needs Scouting, and our policies must be based on what is in the best interest of our kids. We believe good people can disagree and still work together to accomplish great things for youth. Going forward, we will work to stay focused on that which unites us. Thank you for being a part of this discussion and for staying engaged and continuing your role in Scouting. The kids in your community need you.

Sincerely,  
Wayne Perry  
National President  
On behalf of the National Executive  
Committee

<http://www.scouting.org/sitecore/content/MembershipStandards/Resolution.aspx>

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The statement prepared by the leadership and voted by the 1400 delegates to the 2013 Convention of the Boy Scouts of America follows:

+ WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law:

The Scout Oath: "On my honor I will do my best t do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law;

To help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”

The Scout Law: A Scout is: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent

+ AND WHEREAS, duty to God, duty to country, duty to others, and duty to oneself are each a core value and immutable tenet of the Boy Scouts of America; and

+ WHEREAS, the Scout Oath begins with duty to God and the Scout Law ends with a Scout's obligation to be reverent, and that will always remain a core value of the Boy Scouts of America, and the values set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are fundamental to the BSA and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes; and

+ WHEREAS, the vision of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Scout Law; and

+ WHEREAS, for more than 103 years, programs of the Boy Scouts of America have been delivered to youth members through cooperation with chartered organizations that select adult leaders who meet the organization's standards as well as the leadership standards of the Boy Scouts of America; and

+ WHEREAS, numerous independent experts have recognized that the programs protecting Scouts today, which include effective screening, education and training, and clear policies to protect youth and provide for their privacy, are among the best in the youth-serving community; and

+ WHEREAS, the current adult leadership standard of the Boy Scouts of America states:

The applicant must possess the moral, educational, and emotional qualities that the Boy Scouts of America deems necessary to afford positive leadership to youth. The applicant must also be the correct age, subscribe to the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and abide by the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

While the BSA does not proactively inquire about sexual orientation of employees, volunteers, or members, we do not grant membership to individuals who are open or avowed homosexuals or who engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the BSA.

AND WHEREAS, Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting; and

+ WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America does not have an agenda on the matter of sexual orientation, and resolving this complex issue is not the role of the organization, nor may any member use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda; and

+ WHEREAS, youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life; and

+ WHEREAS, America needs Scouting, and the organization's policies must be based on what is in the best interest of its young people, and the organization will work to stay focused on that which unites us, and

+ WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America will maintain the current membership policy for all adult leaders of the Boy Scouts of America, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The following membership standard for youth members of the Boy Scouts of America is hereby adopted and approved, effective Jan. 1, 2014:

Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all youth who meet the specific membership requirements to join the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, and Venturing programs.

Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, (b) subscribe to and abide by the

precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and (c) demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

<http://www.bsamembershipstandards.org>

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