

Monthly Update

May 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This “Monthly Update” contains information from a cross section of our United Methodist Church – with a continuing examination of the priorities of what our general boards and agencies prioritize, events in Nigeria, Liberia and our worldwide church.

We have included a 2-page supplement to the Update that contains a letter to the Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America on the homosexual issue. I had felt that this was of such importance simply because it is a key battle in the ongoing struggle to try to normalize this action across our country. Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council explains so eloquently why this battle is important:

“The Boy Scouts of America's May 23 vote on abolishing the ban on openly homosexual scouts and leaders is approaching fast. On May 23, the 1,400-plus delegates to the Boy Scouts National Council will vote on this dangerous policy change--a change that would attack your religious freedom. Because if pro-homosexual activists force the Boy Scouts to change its 103-year-old policy, then biblical morality and Christian influence in our society will be pushed further into the closet. Liberals hope a change by a respected institution like the Scouts would influence the U.S. Supreme Court as it decides two historic marriage cases in June.

President Barack Obama, like all U.S. Presidents, is the honorary president of the Boy Scouts of America. President Obama is urging the Scouts to allow open homosexuality in the Scouts. In addition, some major corporate donors to the Scouts are pushing for this change.

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 I had pointed out in the letter, if this type of lifestyle is accepted as normal, it will undermine the family – which is the bedrock of our country. As goes the family, then so goes the nation. What we are confronting here is in a very real sense the difference between the truth and a lie, good and evil. In his writings for Sunday School material, Dr. Elsworth Kalas has this point to make, “We are open to lies when we reject the truth. Why would we reject the truth? Because the truth has a price. Lies intrigue; the truth demands. Lies are superficial; truth is deep. Lies offer a quick fix; the truth asks for a lifetime of faithfulness. Lies sound clever; the truth sounds tedious, even boring.”

This seems only too obvious when we see the issues that are before us. Please pray, and please send a generous contribution as we “contend for the faith” in this fight.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

May 2013 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

"The definition of marriage is not created by politicians and judges, and it cannot be changed by them. It is rooted in our history, our laws, our deepest moral and religious convictions, and our nature as human beings. It is the union of one man and one woman. This fact can be respected or it can be resented. But it cannot be altered."

– By U.S. Senator Dan Coats of Indiana in announcing his support for the federal Defense of Marriage Act

* * * * *

The Good Stuff

+ *Servants Are Faithful in the Small Things*

"Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities." (Luke 16:10 NLT)

Servants do every task with equal dedication. Whatever they do, servants "do it with all their heart" (Colossians 3:23).

The size of the task is irrelevant. The only issue is, does it need to be done? You will never arrive at the state in life where you're too important to help with menial tasks. God will never exempt you from the mundane. It's a vital part of your character curriculum. The Bible says, "If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. You are really a nobody" (Galatians 6:3 NLT).

It is in these small services that we grow like Christ. Jesus specialized in menial tasks that everyone else tried to avoid: washing feet, helping children, fixing breakfast, and serving lepers. Nothing was beneath him, because he came to serve. It wasn't in spite of his greatness that he did these things but because of it, and he expects us to follow his example (John 13:15). Small tasks often show a big heart. Your servant's heart is revealed in little acts that others don't think of doing, as when Paul gathered brushwood for a fire to warm everyone after a shipwreck (Acts 28:3).

He was just as exhausted as everyone else, but he did what everyone needed. No task is beneath you when you have a servant's heart. Great opportunities often disguise themselves in small tasks. The little things in life determine the big things. Don't look for great tasks to do for God. Just do the not-so-great stuff, and God will assign you whatever he wants you to do.

There will always be more people willing to do "great" things for God than there are people willing to do the little things. The race to be a leader is crowded, but the field is wide open for those willing to be servants. Sometimes you serve upward to those in authority, and sometimes you serve downward to those in need. Either way, you develop a servant's heart when you're willing to do anything needed.

– By Rick Warren. Received by e-mail.

+ *The Singer Stuart Hamblen*

Back in the 50's there was a well known radio Host/comedian/song writer in Hollywood named Stuart Hamblen who was noted for his drinking, Womanizing, partying, etc. One of his bigger hits at the time was "I won't go hunting with you Jake, But I'll go chasing women."

One day, along came a young preacher holding A tent revival. Hamblen had him on his radio show presumably to poke fun at him. In order to gather more material for his show, Hamblen showed up at one of the revival meetings. Early in the service the preacher announced, "There is one man in this audience who is a big fake."

There were probably others who thought the same thing, but Hamblen was convinced that he was the one the preacher was talking about (some would call that conviction), but he was having none of that. Still the words continued to haunt him until a couple of nights later he showed up drunk at the preacher's hotel door around 2AM demanding that the preacher pray for him! But the preacher refused, saying, "This is between you and God and I'm not going to get in the middle of it." But he did invite Stuart in and they talked until about 5 AM at which point Stuart dropped to his knees and with tears, cried out to God.

But that is not the end of the story. Stuart quit drinking, quit chasing women, quit everything that was 'fun.' Soon he began to lose favor with the Hollywood crowd. He was ultimately fired by the radio station when he refused to accept a beer company as a sponsor. Hard times were upon him. He tried writing a couple of "Christian" songs but the only one that had much success was "This Old House" written for his friend Rosemary Clooney

As he continued to struggle, a long time friend named John took him aside and told him, "All your troubles started when you 'got religion.' Was it worth it all?" Stuart answered simply, "Yes." Then his friend asked, "You liked your booze so much, don't you ever miss it?" And his answer was, "No." John then said, "I don't understand how you could

give it up so easily." Stuart's response was, "It's no big secret. All things are possible with God." To this John said, "That's a catchy phrase. You should write a song about it."

And as they say, "The rest is history." The song Carl Stuart Hamblen wrote was "It Is No Secret." "It is no secret what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you. With arms wide open, He'll welcome you. It is no secret, what God can do...."

By the way... the friend was John Wayne. And the young preacher who refused to pray for Stuart Hamblen?

...That was Billy Graham.

Of Interest.

Immigration Issues:

[Note: It is important to recognize this issue as it is: advocacy in support of illegal immigration. If we were to grant a general amnesty and declare "open borders" (as some UM bishops and other UM employees are wont to do) the integrity and future survivability of our country would come into question. This exemplifies UM entities to include the GBCS and episcopal leaders supporting violating U.S. laws. Their reaction to anyone calling for not paying apportionments to the UM hierarchy would not receive a commensurate support but on the contrary would meet with outrage.

Instead, these are just some of the examples of your apportionments dollars at work.

Where is the priority of bringing people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? – AOM]

+ *UMs Hold More than 250 Family Unity Prayer Vigils*

UMs in 32 states and the District of Columbia have conducted more than 250 prayer vigils this year to bring attention to the brokenness of the U.S. immigration system....Primary focus of the vigils is to keep immigrant families together. U.S. immigration laws have led to thousands of families being separated or facing separation. An important part of most Family Unity Prayer Vigils has been showing a 12-minute video "Jasmine's Story," which tells how the United States' broken immigration system tore a family apart, and how a UM church was transformed in responding. GBCS offered to provide the video free among other resources for the prayer vigils.

"Caring for immigrants in our communities is a primary ministry of the UMC," said Bishop Minerva Carcaño, co-chair of the UM Interagency Task Force on Immigration....Through these public witness events, our immigrant communities, who have long suffered from harsh immigration enforcement policies..."

UMs have mobilized like never before, according to Bill Mefford, director of Civil & Human Rights at the General Board of Church & Society (GBCS). "We are gearing up for Neighbor-to-Neighbor visits where UM leaders will be meeting with the elected members of Congress in their states and districts, and sharing with them the need for reform," he said. "We have seen the brokenness, but we have hope that finally Congress can do what is right and pass legislation that provides a pathway to full citizenship clear of any enforcement contingencies and reunites all families who have experienced the pain of separation."

– Wayne Rhodes, GBCS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 12; March 27, 2013

+ *"Justice for our Neighbors" Opens New Chicago Clinic*

Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON), the UM network of legal clinics, opened its Chicago Clinic site Mar. 9 with six clients already on the schedule. Volunteers from Humboldt Park UMC and other communities of faith were there with hospitality, childcare and immigration legal services. Since 1999, JFON has been a national program that has provided free, high quality immigration legal services to the most needy and vulnerable in the U.S.

– Northern Illinois Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 12; March 27, 2013

+ *The 2012 State of the Church Report Focuses on Vital Congregations*

For the next ten years, leadership of The UMC will seek to fulfill the adaptive challenge of increasing the number of vital congregations around the world. This will include sharing information and building resources to equip congregations and conferences with tools to increase, measure and sustain vitality. The newly released 2012 State of the Church Report, created in partnership by the Connectional Table (CT), the Council of Bishops (COB) and the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), focuses not only on traditional statistics of The UMC, but also highlights ways in which the denomination is moving to create vital congregations. "The adaptive challenge, which is based on research from the Call to Action Report, requires us to redirect the flow of attention, energy and resources to concentration on fostering and sustaining an increase in the number of vital congregations," said Bishop Bruce Ough, chair of the CT. "As the 2012 State of the Church Report reflects, we are already seeing successful models emerging across the church, but there is still work to be done." The UMC has been fulfilling its mission in making disciples of Jesus Christ with nearly 12 million members worldwide, an increase of 25% over the past ten years. Much of the growth

has been in Africa and the Philippines, accounting for 3.1 million new members since 2000. However, The UMC has experienced steep declines in the U.S. and Europe, decreasing by more than 650,000 members combined since 2000. This ongoing trend of declining membership catalyzed the Call to Action research, resulting in recommendations to engage in concrete and measurable ways to increase the number of vital congregations that fulfill the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

– Cynthia Dopke, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 12; November 7, 2012

+ Religion and Race Agency Works on New Ministry Model

[Note: These are just some of the examples of your apportionment dollars at work. This was almost eliminated by GC-2012. It is difficult to understand how we can persist in “majoring-in-minor-issues” when people need Jesus. – AOM]

The board of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) gathered to lead the agency in carrying out a new ministry model for the next four years. Officially adopted by the board last fall, the new model encompasses three strategic areas of focus: vital congregations, institutional equity and intercultural competency. The strategic priorities were shared with lay leaders, bishops, clergy, agency staff and seminary students from throughout the worldwide church through an appreciative inquiry summit, “Changing the Conversation on Race in The UMC,” hosted by GCORR in November in Chicago. The work of that summit is being used to create a strategic plan for the agency.

Bishop Minerva Carcaño, president of the board, articulated the impetus behind the agency's prioritization of work for the quadrennium. “GCORR has an expansive role in equipping annual conferences and central conferences to prepare our front-line workers-local churches-to build vital congregations. That cannot be done without reaching more people, younger people and more people that are diverse. A vital congregation is one that reflects the community around it. Helping local churches increase their cultural competency to effectively engage their communities is an essential role that GCORR will play.” GCORR will continue critically to examine racial and cultural injustice in local and global contexts and work to eradicate it through the establishment of specific institutional goals and intentionally measuring progress toward those goals. The agency's focus is on partnering with other leaders within The UMC to develop interculturally competent leaders to promote and sustain institutional equity.

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 12; March 27, 2013

+ Black Methodists for Church Renewal Restructure

[Note: This is another example of apportionment dollars at work. The GC-2012 almost eliminated BMCR too. – AOM]

Members attending the Mar. 15 annual meeting of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) approved a major restructure of the official caucus that advocates for Black Methodists in The UMC. The Rev. Cedrick Bridgeforth, who chaired the task force that worked on the restructuring, urged the members to be daring enough to confront the future. Members voted to eliminate the use of “national” and limit the use of “African American” tags from literature and promotions and to use “BMCR” in terms that reflect the greater diversity of the denomination. The Black Methodists voted to assist each jurisdiction in establishing advocacy and training initiatives. They also approved the creation of BMCR Advocacy Councils throughout the connection. Members hope that creating a network that reports up-and-down-and-around the connection in an open forum will create “buzz” and a flow of information to inform agendas in annual conference, jurisdictional caucuses and in the general meeting.

– Maidstone Mulenga, Upper New York Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 12; March 27, 2013

(UM) Bishops. New Bishops Attend Leadership Academy

For four days, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary hosted eleven newly elected bishops of The UMC as participants in the 2013 Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy, an executive education program created specifically for the bishops elected in 2012, was led by senior faculty and practitioners from Garrett-Evangelical and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. Bishops from across the United States as well as Europe and Russia participated in the groundbreaking leadership program. Kellogg faculty spoke on leadership and best practices including topics such as “Distributive Leadership,” “Crisis Management,” and “Authentic Leadership” and included leaders in the fields of management, psychology and systems analysis. The bishops also had the opportunity to explore practical challenges and applications for leadership in the context of metropolitan Chicago in a session held at the First UMC at the Chicago Temple. This year's Leadership Academy was an outgrowth of Garrett-Evangelical's Plus Program – an executive education program designed for religious professionals. The research-based curriculum offers a program of professional relevance for religious leaders, with the flexibility required for working professionals.

– Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 7; February 20, 2013

(UM) General Board of Church and Society

[Note: This is yet another example of your apportionment dollars at work. – AOM]

+ *Ethnic Local Church and Human Relations Day Grants Awarded*

The board of directors of the General Board of Church & Society (GBCS) awarded \$110,000 in Ethnic Local Church grants during their spring meeting in Washington, D.C. These grants, awarded twice each year, strengthen congregations through education, advocacy or leadership development for social-justice engagement.

* Immigration Advocacy & Leadership Development in the West Ohio Conference will receive \$10,000. Funding will provide resources to strengthen immigration ministries building on the momentum from the Immigrant Welcoming Congregation program, a GBCS initiative.

* Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA), a Mexican-American program of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, will receive \$15,000. Perkins has had a long-running commitment to preparing Latino/Latina persons for faithful leadership in Christian ministry.

* Advocate for Justice & Hope in the Golden Triangle, a ministry of Belmont UMC in Nashville, Tenn., has been granted \$10,000. The grant will help fund a community developer in the Thai, Burmese and Laotian refugee community.

* Ethnic Young Adult Summer Internships will receive \$75,000. The annual internship administered by GBCS brings young adults between the ages of 18 and 22 to Washington, D.C., to work in social-justice placements.

The GBCS directors also awarded nearly \$24,000 in Human Relations Day grants during their spring meeting. Human Relations Day is one of The UMC's six Special Sundays with offering. It strengthens UM outreach to communities, encouraging social justice and work with at-risk youth. GBCS distributes 10% of Human Relations Day receipts for youth-offender ministries. The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) distributes the remainder for its UM Voluntary Services and Youth Rehabilitation programs. GBCS awarded a total of \$23,899:

– Exodus House of Oklahoma Conference's Criminal Justice Ministries (\$7,399) aids persons newly released from Oklahoma prisons.

– Human Trafficking & Domestic Violence Committee of Bethany UMC, New Orleans (\$2,500): Bethany UMC partners with the New Orleans Human Trafficking Working Group, a coalition of state, civil society and citizen organizers committed to the prevention of human trafficking in Greater New Orleans.

– UM Seminar Program scholarships for racial/ethnic groups (\$14,000). The UM Seminar Program on National & International Affairs is committed to creating a learning experience unique to the goals, lived experience and context of participating groups. This grant will provide scholarship assistance to enable youth of color to attend a seminar.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 13; April 3, 2013

+ *Social Action Agency Welcomes Gun Violence Report*

[Note: This refers to our 2nd Amendment rights. Studies have shown that the possession and use of legal guns have saved far more lives in preventing crime than have taken lives. Hammers and knives have each respectively been use to kill more people than have guns – yet there is no move to outlaw them. – AOM]

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) welcomed the findings released Feb. 7 by the U.S. House of Representatives' Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, which support Vice President Joe Biden's task force in proposing a strong plan to reduce gun violence in the United States. The agency urged Congress "to work on this issue immediately so that no more lives are lost to such unnecessary tragedies."

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 7; February 20, 2013

(UM) Women/Women's Issues

+ *End to Exclusion of Women in Combat Welcomed*

[Note: As one who has been in combat, the key issue should be the effectiveness of the people involved, not perceived job opportunities. This is something that has been tried before in other armies and proven to not enhance combat readiness. The military forces should not be a laboratory for social experimentation. This can lose lives. – AOM]

During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, 152 women have died and more than 950 have been wounded in service to the U.S. military. Recognition of that service came when retiring Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced in January that the U.S. military is ending its policy of excluding women from combat. The policy change came after a group of women in the military and the nonprofit American Civil Liberties Union sued the Pentagon over the policy of excluding women

from combat roles. The Defense Department says of the 1.4 million active duty members of the military; 15% are women. This announcement means more than 200,000 jobs will be open to women across all the military branches.

“I applaud the U.S. government for setting an example that no one should be denied opportunities based on their gender,” said Dawn Wiggins Hare, top executive for General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW).

Harriett Jane Olson, top executive of UM Women (UMW), said, “We support removal of categorizations . . . that were established in a different context, prevented the deployment of the most qualified individuals for the assignment and resulted in a gender-based preference.”

– Kathy L. Gilbert, UMCOM, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 12; March 27, 2013

There is more to life than simply increasing its speed. – Mahatma Gandhi

Global Outlook

The great arrogance of the present is to forget the intelligence of the past. – Ken Burns

Congo. [Note: From my experience on the mission field in Africa, an airplane can be of immense importance. An estimate is that a two hour flight in the air can travel a distance that would require two days on the ground. – AOM]

A larger, more energy-efficient plane for Gaston Ntambo to deliver everything from cholera vaccines to malaria nets to Bibles has been purchased and is on its way to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The West Ohio, Greater New Jersey, Arkansas and North Katanga annual conferences as well as the General Board of Global Ministries helped make the dream a reality. The Caravan has left Norway and is on its way to Ohio. There, it will be refurbished – including an engine upgrade – before going to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 7; February 20, 2013

Liberia. Monrovia District Children and Youth Recue Center (MD-CYRC)

[Note: This comes from a valued brother in Christ – one who has greatly helped us “contend for the faith” in the strong stand we have taken against homosexual normalization in the United Methodist Church. – AOM]

The Monrovia District is one of twenty Districts of the Liberia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, established in 1850. This District has 47 ordained and commissioned pastors and 7 lay pastors. We currently have thirty-five congregations on the District. We are committed to the vision of “Developing Healthy Congregations through Spiritual Leadership”, based on the Scripture texts, Galatians 5: 16-26; Ephesians 4:11-16, etc. We are endeavoring to fulfill this vision by establishing small groups’ ministry within all of our churches to enhance discipleship, leadership development and Church growth.

We are also seeking opportunity to strengthen the financial capacity of our churches and pastors; for example, micro-finance program for pastors’ spouses in order to enable them augment the little stipends of our pastors. High unemployment rate in Liberia (over 60% unemployment rate of the population), inadequate social services such as bad farm to market road, lack of pipe-bond water supply, thus necessitating construction of water wells and hand pumps within communities, etc. are among serious economic challenges facing post war Liberia. These challenges directly affect our ability to carry out effective ministry as congregations are unable to adequately support the ministries of the churches and, hence, their pastors, including the District Superintendent. As a result, our pastors are unable to adequately care for the “First Flocks,” their families. We are also committed to construction and renovation of churches, construction of wells/boreholes to provide safe drinking water to communities, construction of village clinics, schools & parsonages.

SUPPORT THE MONROVIA DISTRICT CHILDREN AND YOUTH RESCUE CENTER

Since the end of the Liberia civil war, almost a decade ago, children and youth have been the most vulnerable to many social vices, especially the girl child, some of whom are constantly threatened by child prostitution due to the economic hardship facing the nation as a whole. The Church continues to make frantic efforts to respond to these needs, amidst the fact Church members are also bearing the brunt of the realities of a post conflict nation. Our goal, therefore, is to establish a ministry center especially for children and youth, called the Monrovia District Children and Youth Recue Center (MD-CYRC). The purpose of this center is to provide an enabling environment for doing holistic ministry with children and youth. The center shall comprise of skill training for boys and girls in tailoring, crocheting, embroidery; a computer laboratory for studies and research, a reading room/library, a hall for youth gathering, seminars, workshop,

conferences, etc. This project is ongoing. The project is estimated at USD 177,940. Over the past three years, local churches of the District have graciously contributed and raised the amount of USD70, 000.00 to bring the project construction to its current status. We solicit the prayer and financial support of friends and partners everywhere to see this project becomes a reality. Every contribution to this project will be highly acknowledged.

– Rev. Dr. Jerry P. Kulah, District Superintendent, Monrovia District Conference, P. O. Box 1010, 13th Street, Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia; Email: monroviadistrictconference@gmail.com

The National Council of Churches. The National Council of Churches is shuttering its New York headquarters at the Interchurch Center, although the ecumenical organization said it hopes to secure space for satellite offices in the building. The NCC will consolidate its operations in Washington.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 7; February 20, 2013

Nigeria. “The Most Persecuted Religion”

Recently in Nigeria, the most populous black nation on earth, an Islamist terrorist group with links to al Qaeda, entered the off-campus housing of the Federal Polytechnic State University. The attackers called students out of their rooms and asked for their names. Those with Christian names were shot dead or killed with knives. Twenty-six bodies were left outside the buildings.

A Pew Forum study last year found that Christians are persecuted by independent groups or governments in 131 of the 193 countries of the world. Religious leaders, human-rights organizations, and the United Nations must lobby all governments to establish laws that guarantee protection from violence to religious minorities within their borders. This is a Herculean task which must be led by the United States. If America fails to exercise leadership, it will further embolden those who invoke God's name to murder and maim. Theological manipulators of hatred will not be deterred unless and until they face the long arm of international action.

– Confessing Movement newsletter, February 2013.

Annual Conference Reports

Of Interest: The unified annual conference of the Rio Grande and Southwest Texas conferences is the “Rio Texas Conference.” Byrd Bonner, co-chair of the Unification Implementation Team, said in an announcement video that the name draws on both predecessor conferences and claims the “living image of water among us.”

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 15; April 17, 2013

Central Conference. The final Central Conference meeting of 2012–13 was held. From March 13 to 17, 110 delegates and guests from about 20 countries gathered in Winterthur, Switzerland for the 17th session of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe. It was the final gathering of the jurisdictional and central conference meeting season that began in 2012. Rigels Kasmollari, a young man from Albania, said on the day of his arrival, “I hope that at this central conference meeting we will succeed in building bridges between local churches and individual persons so that through listening and sharing we may enrich, better understand and help each other.” Those hopes came true, he said. “And, when during an evening event the last verse from 1 Corinthians 13 was read in 20 languages – from Arabic and Bernese German to Turkish and Hungarian – it was visible that in midst of this diversity there is a sustainable common foundation.” Between the quadrennial sessions, international working groups deal with various areas, such as theology and church and society. On an annual “theme day,” subjects of cross-border relevance are discussed. The participants of these “theme days” are supposed to serve as multipliers in their respective countries. The general theme for the next three years will be “Mission in Modern Times.” The work on this theme shall include an examination of local traditions, a compilation and discussion of the present understanding of mission in the various countries and a view beyond the borders of The UMC.

In order to reach a new generation and to raise awareness for the great potential of this work, “YouMe 2013” will take place in August 2013 in Serbia. This camp for young adults from Central and Southern Europe ages 16–23 will not only offer opportunities to make relationships and build friendships but also include leadership training. Belonging to the central conference is not always considered enriching. It is sometimes experienced as limitation of freedom and autonomy. This became visible in the extensive conversations on the present situation and the future journey of The UMC in Poland. At the 2013 annual conference session in Poland, a vote will be taken to make clear whether The UMC in Poland wants to remain part of the worldwide UMC or to become an autonomous or an autonomous affiliated church.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 41, Issue 13; April 3, 2013

* * * * *

I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.

– Albert Einstein

Supplement to the Update containing a letter to the Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America

April 22, 2013

Mr. Wayne Brock
Chief Scout Executive
The Boy Scouts of America
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, Texas 75015

Dear Mr. Brock;

References:

1. My conversation with Donna on April 10 regarding meeting with you.
2. My facsimile (FAX) to you dated April 11, 2013

I trust that you and the other members of your staff are doing well.

This is perhaps the most important time in the entire history of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), and it may very well be that you are in a key position of leadership to affect the outcome. It is important to look at the core values of your organization, the reality of the “gay” lifestyle, what it is you are being asked to do, and the consequences.

I have in times past helped the Army to formulate courses of action, notably the time I had an influence in analyzing combat doctrine that was played out in Operation Desert Storm (pages 58-60 of the book *Gems of Wisdom* [included]). We in Concerned Methodists do similar analyses on a regular basis in the United Methodist Church.

In reviewing my understanding of core values of the Boy Scouts of America, it is the same now as when I went from being a Tenderfoot to an Eagle Scout, from serving as just a troop member to being a Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Junior Assistant Scoutmaster to Assistant Scoutmaster in Boy Scout Troop 47, and Apprentice Seaman in Sea Explorer Ship 686. When I think back from the time I was initiated into the Troop up to the night I was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout at the Court of Honor and all of the experiences in between – camping trips, hikes, camporees, work projects, trail-blazing, bridge-building, pitching tents, cruises we took into the Gulf of Mexico on our 32-foot sailboat *Amiable*, and the plethora of “good turns” we did for others – I am amazed at all that I learned. The Scouting experience has benefitted me greatly and enhanced my service in the Army for over twenty years. Then I multiply my experiences by the millions of other boys the Scouts have helped to grow into men, and I am overwhelmed at the great amount of good that the Scouts have done for this, our country, the United States of America.

In my FAX to you, I’d mentioned that as an Eagle Scout I have a great concern as to the resultant effect on the Boy Scouts of America. It is vital that you make the right decision on the issue before you. The future viability of your organization may be at stake.

The Scout Oath is, “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.” (page 22 of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, copyright 2009 by the Boy Scouts of America)

The Scout Law is, “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” (page 24 of the *Handbook*)

The Scout Motto is, “Be prepared.” (page 25 of the *Handbook*)

Again, that is as I remembered and unchanged since I was in the Scouts in the 1950s and 60s.

At this time, you are being pressured to take into the BSA not only Scouts who are “gay” but also “gay” Scoutmasters to lead local troops. We in Concerned Methodists have some of the most definitive data based on research from other organizations into the reality of the “gay” lifestyle which is reflected in information we have published, not to mention the voluminous data we have in our files. It is important to look at it in:

1. Historical terms.
2. Individual implications.
3. Societal implications.
4. The effect on your organization.

Historically, the movement to normalize this in our culture is contained in the Introduction and in Chapter 1 of the book *On the Brink* (included; cited references are in the book):

1. I would offer yet another analysis – that not only is this a matter of individuals caught up in this practice, or simply a case of sin or civil rights, but it is also a view of societal change – that it is a combination of individuals, organizations, and networks formed into a movement that are striving to change our laws, customs, and definition of morals into a re-grounding of what is right and what is not. As stated in the book *Defending a Higher Law* “It seeks... the complete inversion of public morality.” The book goes on to cite a leader in the homosexual movement himself, Paul Varnell:²

“The fundamental controverted issue about homosexuality is not discrimination, hate crimes or domestic partnerships, but the morality of homosexuality. [emphasis added]

...if we convince people that homosexuality is fully moral, then all their inclination to discriminate, engage in gay-bashing, or oppose gay marriage disappears. Gay youths and adults could readily accept themselves.

So the gay movement, whether we acknowledge it or not, is not a civil rights movement, not even a sexual liberation movement, but a moral revolution aimed at changing people’s view of homosexuality.”

By examining past actions, milestones, and apparent priorities, we can have an idea of the direction in which our denomination [i.e., the United Methodist Church] is headed. Where we are now in many of our societal norms stems from as far back in history as the 1800s when the Age of Romanticism introduced new ideas in literature and the arts. These have a central role in our thinking in that it elevated emotion to a level with – according to some – a level higher than rational thinking. Thus the norms of societies were that romance and love became the highest ideals.¹ In effect, emotions trumped reason and logic.

Then in 1950 Harry Hay who was an early homosexual activist founded the Matachine Society. It took its name from a secret male group of masked dancers during the Middle Ages, The Societe Matachine, and used it to symbolize that gays were a “masked people, unknown and anonymous.” The Matachine Society proved to be the “catalyst for the American gay rights movement.”² Hay is the one who had the idea in 1948 to use Marxist Dialectics to apply the use of “class warfare” as a method to further the homosexual cause. This would result in portraying the movement as a “cultural minority” and its members as “oppressed minorities.”²

Shortly after the 1969 Stonewall Riots galvanized the homosexual community into activism for “fair and just treatment” and pushed this into the public arena of the secular world, our United Methodist Church (UMC) was confronted with this issue as well. This was first officially addressed in the church at the 1972 General Conference with the following statement being added to the “Social Principles” document:

Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care.... Further we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured, although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.

2. Individual implications in the “gay” lifestyle is summarized in the fact sheet “Homosexual Practice” (also included) which reflects a summary of the information contained not only in the book *On the Brink* but also in others as well. The effects of this are examined from the perspectives of not only practice, but also medically, psychologically, sociologically, and spiritually as well. By any of those standards, the data show that engaging in this practice does not manifest in a wholesome life. It ends with what our actions should be in relating to those engaged in this type of behavior.

3. Societal implications are examined in Chapters 10 – 14, with a look at what has happened in different churches and denominations, and what is happening in the United Methodist Church. Then in Chapter 14, we take a look at how that impacts our society and the world.

Where We are Headed

...In Chapter 10 “When Homosexuals Take Over a Church” we examined the reality of what happened to an Episcopal church in Asheville; a variant of this was played out with St. Paul United Methodist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska when the members of that congregation refused to bow to pressure brought to bear by forces hostile to their membership – and their property was seized. This will be the story of every United Methodist church in our connection if our denomination goes down this path. In Chapter 11 “Bad Day at Black Rock” we have this battle for control being acted out on a conference level. And in Chapter 12 “Homosexual Activists’ War against Christianity” we have a word picture of how we as a church fit into the overall plan and will either be an obstacle or a facilitator to the activists’ taking full control in our American society.

In American Society

“The church must be reminded that it is neither the master of the state nor the servant of the state; rather, it is the conscience of the state.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

If homosexual practice in the UMC is normalized, then the “good offices” of our denomination to include our bishops and general boards and agencies could use their influence to work “behind the scenes” to push for acceptance of this in all areas of our society. Money contributed by the individual layman or laywoman in the pews that goes into denominational coffers will be available to finance this agenda as well.

But the result within our own nation would be fatal. The widespread prevalence of this practice would undermine the family unit which would increasingly decrease and possibly disappear – bringing about deterioration of our internal society. This in turn would result in the eventual collapse of our country.

In the World

Since we as a country are a world leader, what we do – for good or for evil – will be communicated throughout the world and permeate every corner of it. We as a nation would have a responsibility in this.

4. The impact on your organization. Where the Boy Scouts of America would fit into that last analysis at this

point in time may very well be pivotal. In examining the reality of the “gay” lifestyle in view of the core beliefs of the Boy Scouts of America, we find the answers.

Again, the Scout Law is, “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” Just some of those that come into play here are:

- a. **“Trustworthy”** – he can be trusted to do the right thing – regardless of what is expedient.
- b. **“Loyal”** – he is to be loyal to his fellow Scouts, his country, and to God.
- c. **“Helpful”** – he will not knowingly do something that will harm others, but will strive to do all he can to help them make good decisions and live a better life. Just as a person can get off the right path in the woods and become lost, so can one get off the right path in life and end up in a very destructive lifestyle.
- d. **“Kind”** – it is a kindness to show someone the right path if he is headed in a wrong direction that can bring him harm.
- e. **“Obedient”** – we need to be obedient to what we know to be good and right, our nation’s laws, and the teachings of God.
- f. **“Brave”** – regardless of consequences, he stands for the right and for truth in tough decisions and against who would normalize what is wrong and destructive to – individuals, the Scouts, institutions, and our country.
- g. **“Reverent”** – he is deeply respectful to God who has created each individual and for the ways that He has determined to be right. He is also to oppose those things that God has called sin and do all he can to show others their need to have a right relationship with God.

And again, the Scout Oath is, “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, morally awake, and morally straight.” General Douglas McArthur touched on this which he stated so well in his speech “Duty, Honor, Country” (contained on page 268 of *Gems of Wisdom*).

- a. **“I will do my best to do my duty...”** – We are called to do our duty in all things, whether we like it or not, whether it is easy or not, whether we suffer or not. This means that despite whatever is convenient or advantageous for us, we need to do what we are called to simply because it is the right thing to do.
- b. **“...to God”** – We owe our supreme loyalty and sense of obligation to God. As pointed out in the book *On the Brink* and in the Fact Sheet, those who engage in homosexual activity bump against these realities:

1). God’s standard for the human race in terms of sexuality: Genesis 1:27; 5:2: “male and female created he them”....It was God’s plan for sexual relations to be in the form of man-woman union, man and wife becoming “one flesh” (Gen 2:24).

– *“Is Homosexuality an Alternate Lifestyle?”* by Dr. David Jeremiah, *The Rebirth of America*, The Arthur S. Demoss Foundation.

2). “Because man’s sexual identity is defined by God, because his orientation is ordained by God, and because his sexual activity is circumscribed within a heterosexual marriage context, homosexuality cannot be viewed merely as a variant sexual preference or accidental variation within creation (akin to left-handedness)...Instead, it represents a choice, in some sense, to set one’s desires and satisfy one’s physical drives in a way contrary to God’s appointment and creation.”

– *Homosexuality-A Biblical View*, Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen.

May I reiterate the last sentence, “... to satisfy one’s physical drives in a way contrary to God’s appointment and creation.” This practice is contrary to the way that God has designed males and females biologically to come

together to reproduce offspring. We cannot do our duty to God if we set ourselves against His design for men and women, and how they relate physically.

c. **“...and my country...”** – As pointed out in the portion quoted from the book *On the Brink* above: “If homosexual practice in the UMC is normalized, then the ‘good offices’ of our denomination [would work] to push for acceptance of this in all areas of our society. ...

But the result within our own nation would be fatal. The widespread prevalence of this practice would undermine the family unit which would increasingly decrease and possibly disappear – bringing about deterioration of our internal society. This in turn would result in the eventual collapse of our country.”

d. **“...to obey the Scout Law...”** – If you were to give in to this demand at this point in time, you would not be obeying those Scout laws mentioned above.

The Scout Motto is, “Be prepared.” It seems that this speaks to where you are at this time. You must be prepared for assaults on the integrity of your organization and to take the action necessary to do what is right: for individuals, for the Boy Scouts of America, for your country, and for God.

Furthermore, your website speaks to “Youth Protection” and your *Boy Scout Handbook* has an insert entitled “A Parent’s Guide” at the front of the book that can be removed; the subtitle is, “How to protect your children from child abuse.” Practically speaking, giving in to this demand undercuts what you strive to do and will multiply exponentially the cases of abuse within your organization – many of which you will have to litigate on an individual basis in court.

To summarize, if you give in to this demand, you will be upholding neither the Scout Oath, nor the Scout Law, nor the Scout Motto – and you will be going against the essence of who you are as an organization.

In a wider venue, if the “powers that be” in the Boy Scouts of America agree to accept “gay” (openly homosexual) boys into membership and openly homosexual adults into positions of leadership as Scoutmasters, then three things would result:

1. You would see this practice permeate your organization throughout its entirety.
2. You would see a drastic reduction in your membership as boys are pulled out of your organization by parents afraid to risk exposing their children to this practice; I estimate that you would lose between two-thirds and three-fourths of your membership, similar to what happened in Canada when they acquiesced to this. Many of these parents would put their children into a competing organization similar to “American Heritage Girls” that parallels the Girls Scouts.
3. You would contribute to the decline and possible collapse of America.

Since the Boy Scouts of America have been a visible force for good in our country, the decision it makes in this area will have a powerful effect in our country at this point in time. Indeed, the words at the bottom of page 37 of the *Sea Explorer Manual* (Seventh Edition, copyright 1954) are apropos, “I will work to preserve our American heritage of liberty and responsibility. I acknowledge that the privileges we enjoy were won by the hard work, and sacrifices, faith, and clear thinking of our forefathers. I will do all in my power to pass on a better America to the next generation.” This speaks to what your action needs to be.

I understand that there are those who have threatened to cut off financial support, either individually or that provided by their companies, to include pressure by one or more members of the Board of Directors of the Boy Scouts of America. A Board of Directors exists to help and strengthen the corporation which it governs. If one

or more of the members is pushing actions that are inimical to the well-being and even the future survivability of that organization, then their continued membership on the board should be examined. Their continued presence might not be beneficial to the Boy Scouts of America and might need to be removed.

As far as a threatened financial loss, this risk must be taken. If the risk of this threatened financial loss were communicated to the public, then it might very well be that an outpouring of donations into the BSA would more than replace that loss. Indeed, when a similar threat of a boycott against Chick-Fil-A by the homosexual community was proposed, a “Chick-Fil-A Appreciation Day” was called by Governor Mike Huckabee – and that fast food chain had a record amount of sales on that day. As I understand it, their sales have continued to grow – effectively neutralizing the threat of the economic boycott.

In addition to the increased funding that I predict would pour into the BSA from people concerned about the attack on your organization, an additional fee could be requested from families with boys in the units. My own local church sponsors a troop and, knowing the mindset of my church’s members, we would gladly step up to the plate to provide additional funding on an on-going basis to offset the threatened cutoff of corporate donations that your organization might suffer.

An additional action that does not directly affect your organization is a boycott that could be brought to bear against the companies that are threatening you in this way.

Finally, I would commend to you a quote from Thomas Jefferson:

*In matters of fashion, go with the current.
In matters of principle, stand like a rock.*

Jefferson was one of those who stood against the most powerful nation on earth at that time, the British Empire – and prevailed.

This is a matter of principle in the greatest sense of the word. Make no mistake about it: the decision you make will be far-reaching in its implications. Despite the fact that some very powerful people and corporate entities have leaned on you to compromise your principles, you simply cannot do that and in so doing violate the essence of who you are.

I recommend in the strongest possible terms that the Boy Scouts of America stand firm for their traditional moral values. Indeed, they are not just your “traditional moral values” but those of our Judeo-Christian faith that provided the foundation for our country. By standing firm, your stance could be one of courage that would be a decisive factor in shoring up the moral underpinnings of our country at this point in time.

This is key for who you are as the Boy Scouts of America, for our society, and for the future of the United States of America. Again, I strongly recommend that you stand firm for the essence of your organization and for traditional moral values.

Finally, I would commend to you the message as it appears on the picture (enclosed), “STAND FIRM in the faith: be MEN of courage; be STRONG.” – I Corinthians 16:13

This is my heartfelt, unapologetic recommendation to you.

Sincerely,

Allen O. Morris, President