

# Monthly Update

August 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update is a continuation of annual conference summaries from our Methodist Church. It seems as if some things repeat themselves.

You will notice petitions dealing with various aspects of homosexuality and reactions to it in the annual conferences. If people would just consult God's book on this, they might save themselves a lot of concern and activism. We must stand on the moral foundation laid down in the Bible – regardless of what others in the church do and say, not to mention those in society. It seems as if the whole world has been turned “upside down” in its thinking. However, we should not be surprised. Over two thousand years ago, the Bible warned us, “Woe to those who call good evil and evil good.”

Just one example of how this leads into the problems we encounter as a denomination and stemming from actions in various sections of the country comes from our report on the Iowa conference. We find the members had taken these actions:

“...support for an amendment to the Constitution to abolish corporate personhood; call to reform immigration laws and stop deportations of anyone except convicted felons; ...affirming the ecclesiastical rights of all persons; declaring opposition to continued distinctions of church law restricting ministries to LGBT persons; acknowledging that leaders of the conference, while bound by The Book of Discipline, are also bound by the commandment of Jesus; acknowledging that clergy and congregations encountering institutional discrimination may feel bound by conscience to offer ministries of the church to all persons on an equal basis; recognizing that pursuit of disciplinary action against any person providing equal access to the sacraments and rituals of the church may cause harm to LGBT persons.”

Elsewhere in the report we find they “approved a budget of \$16,014,087, a decrease of 1.59%...and the conference membership is 168,720, down 2,878.” Again, a lower annual budget and decreasing membership is what they have. “Abolish corporate personhood”? I wonder if they have discerned yet that there might be a “cause and effect” in their actions? If we truly got our priorities right, stopped trying to help the governments run our cities, states, and country – and realized that our most important mission is to bring people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, then we just might really do the Lord's work, solve our internal problems – and start to grow again.

We thank you for your faithful support and ask that you keep us in your prayers. Both are vital in our service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

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## August 2014 Update

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

**In 2014, August will have 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays and 5 Sundays.**

This happens only once every 823 years.

The Chinese call it “Silver pockets full”.

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**The Good Stuff. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Woods.** We know the recent victory at the Supreme Court in the Hobby Lobby case was not won inside the courtroom alone. [People] made a difference through prayer, education and action. You should've been there at the steps of the Court on the day [of the] decision....Thanks to this historic victory, the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby, and the Hahn family, owners of Conestoga Woods, can continue to run their business according to their deeply-held religious beliefs. The Supreme Court upheld their First Amendment rights to provide great healthcare coverage without having to violate their religious convictions by paying for abortion-inducing drugs. When you visit one of the stores, see the manager and thank him for their company's strong stand in this area. If you can – send a letter to the owners and thank them. It is important to recognize their courageous stands during this time.

– Penny Nance, Chief Executive Officer and President, Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee

### **Of Interest.**

#### **+ *Post Hobby Lobby decision...***

...Even after the Hobby Lobby decision, we still have hundreds of non-profits religious groups, like the Little Sisters of the Poor, entangled in litigation to avoid steep penalties if they do not comply with Obamacare's "accommodation" requiring them to participate in the distribution of abortion-inducing drugs to employees.

In Oregon, Sweet Cakes by Melissa, a Christian bakery business had to shut down after facing escalating attacks from homosexual activists. The Christian couple who owned the bakery was threatened with prosecution, and their clients harassed because they declined to create a wedding cake for a lesbian wedding.

In New Mexico, Elaine Photography has lost her case to be allowed to be a photographer in the state without having to violate her religious beliefs and be forced to promote homosexual weddings. She now either complies with the violation of her religious freedom or she will have to move if she wants to continue to be a photographer.

In Washington, Arlene's Flowers is being sued by State Attorney General Bob Ferguson for refusing to provide flowers for a same-sex "marriage" ceremony. This case is particularly revealing because the homosexual couple has been a customer for years, proving that the florist's objection is to the same-sex ceremony as a violation of her religious beliefs and not because of anything against the customers as persons.

Internationally, Boko Haram, an extremely dangerous Islamist group, has still not returned the Christian Nigerian girls they abducted from school. About 60 have escaped but over 200 are still in captivity.

Pastor Saeed Abedeeni is an Iranian American Christian pastor imprisoned in Iran since 2012 because the country has viewed his Christian activities as a threat to its national security.

– Penny Nance, Chief Executive Officer and President, Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee

#### **+ *U.S. Senate Fails Attempted End-Run Around Hobby Lobby Decision***

In a brash effort to undermine religious liberty and circumvent the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in the case of *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, some members of the U.S. Senate attempted to bring a bill to the floor of the Senate this week for a vote that would require employers who provide health insurance to their employees to pay for coverage for contraceptives, including abortifacient drugs and devices. Fortunately this attempted

end-run around Hobby Lobby fell flat. Senate Bill 2578-Protect Women's Health From Corporate Interference was introduced on July 9 and signed by 43 members of the U.S. Senate, including North Carolina Senator Kay Hagan (D), just a week after the U.S. Supreme Court issued its landmark Hobby Lobby decision. In that case, the High Court determined that the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) protected the owners of "closely held corporations" from being forced by the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, to pay for contraceptives, including abortion-inducing drugs, in their employee health plans if doing so would violate their sincerely held religious beliefs. The owners of Hobby Lobby Stores, Conestoga Wood Specialties, and Mardel (a Christian bookstore chain) successfully challenged the contraception mandate in Obamacare.

According to the primary sponsor of S. 2578, Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), the bill was an attempt to "restore the contraceptive coverage requirement guaranteed by the Affordable Care Act put in jeopardy by the recent misguided Supreme Court decision in Hobby Lobby..." ... the bill would have mandated that all employers who provide group health coverage for their employees "shall not deny coverage of a specific health care item or service with respect to such employees (or dependents) where the coverage of such item or service is required under any provision of Federal law or the regulations promulgated thereunder." Such a mandate flies in the face of the religious liberty rights protected by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in its Hobby Lobby decision. During a speech about the bill on the Senate floor on July 15, Senator Orrin Hatch, one of the lead authors of RFRA, warned that S. 2578 "would turn the clock back, requiring that federal laws and regulations ignore rather than respect religious freedom." Sen. Hatch continued, "This is the first time in American history that Congress will consider a bill intended to diminish the protection for the religious liberty of all Americans. It is part of a broader campaign to demonize religious freedom as the enemy, as an obstacle to certain political goals. While the outcome of today's vote is a relief, it is sobering to think that more than half the members of the U.S. Senate, sworn to uphold the laws and Constitution of the United States, would vote for a bill whose purpose is to reduce the religious freedom of their fellow Americans," U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Director of Government Relations Jayd Henricks said in a July 16 statement. Alliance Defending Freedom attorney Casey Mattox noted that, "It has been 20 years-one generation- since Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and many of its sponsors have... turned their backs on our first freedom." According to Mattox, while Americans should be thankful for the failure of the Senate bill, it represents "a reminder of the need to stand vigilant in defense of our God-given freedoms against those who would seek to take them away."

While the failure of S. 2578 is good news, this effort clearly highlights the growing hostility toward religious liberty in our nation and against citizens who are determined to live out their faith in both the private and public spheres.

– By John L. Rustin, North Carolina Family Policy Council, P.O. Box 20607, Raleigh, NC; July 18, 2014

### **Homosexuality, *Bishop Johnson Response to Schaefer Decision*.**

[Note: In the following statement by Bishop Johnson she states in part, "I pray confidently that our church may emerge stronger, more hopeful and more faithful to both its biblical grounding and its prophetic calling..." Assuredly, it will not. When the judicial process and polity of the connectional system in the United Methodist Church fails to exact discipline and justice within its clergy ranks [for having performed a same-sex ceremony], faith is broken with those who are faithful to biblical standards of conduct and sexual fidelity within the marriage context. How can any faithful Christian layperson put money into the offering plate with a clear conscience knowing that part of it is going to support a system that is broken in terms of its faithfulness to our standards of morality? – AOM]

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson of the Philadelphia Area issued the following statement on June 24:

"I was informed today by Jen Ihlo, president of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals, that the Rev. Frank Schaefer, who appealed the withdrawal of his credentials as an ordained minister in The UMC, has won his appeal, and thus, should have his credentials restored to him by the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. I

intend to abide by the committee's decision and return him to active service as an ordained clergy member of this conference presently. This has been a challenging judicial process, and I express my heartfelt appreciation for the diligent efforts made to ensure due process and uphold our UM Discipline with respect, understanding and compassion for all involved. I also ask for continuing, supportive prayers for Mr. Schaefer, his family, and the members and churches of our conference and our denomination, as we struggle gracefully to find common ground.

"I pray confidently that our church may emerge stronger, more hopeful and more faithful to both its biblical grounding and its prophetic calling, as it continues to make disciples of Jesus Christ and equip them for God's transforming work in the world."

– Bishop Peggy A. Johnson, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

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United Methodist understanding of mission – make disciples of Jesus and not of yourself;  
don't admire Jesus, follow him; share God's love with your neighbor.

~ Josef Červeňák, at the Czech and Slovak Republics Annual Conference

### Global Outlook

A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on.

~ Carl Sandburg

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**Democratic Republic of Congo.** A generous donation to the Mulungwishi Theological Seminary, Advance #05773A, is supporting ongoing education of nationals in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the school's founding in 1951, the Mulungwishi Theological Seminary in the Katanga Province has been developing and preparing national clergy to serve the church in Congo. Today, there are more than 600,000 seminary graduates. The school also includes Advance #08112A, the Mulungwishi Women's School, which trains spouses of seminary students to prepare them to work alongside their husbands in ministry.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**Sudan.** Some 2 million people remain displaced by violence and conflict in the vast Darfur region of Sudan. Juliet Stein, UMCOR's head of mission in Sudan, shares about UMCOR's response to these conflicts and what UMCOR is doing to help build peace there.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 28; July 16, 2014.

### Annual Conference Reports

**Arkansas.** Conference met June 19–22 at the Hammons Convention Center in Rogers with the theme "Live for God, Love as Christ, Lead with Excellence" with Bishop Gary E. Mueller officiating. Guest speakers: The Rev. Jorge Acevedo (Grace Church in southwest Florida), The Rev. Adam Hamilton (The UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan.) **Memorable points:** Bishop Mueller called the UMs of Arkansas to four actions: get real, be different, move into the community and experience revival now: "Remember, Jesus is leading us," he said. "And when Jesus is leading us, we don't need to know where he's taking us. We don't have to be comfortable. And we don't have to agree with everything he does. We just have to do it. More than anything let's get real about Jesus and the real difference he makes in our lives. . . . Whether you're lay or clergy, being a Christian is a privilege, being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a privilege and being in ministry is a privilege. And we need to start acting like it," he said. "We need to spend far less time on ourselves and far more time moving into the community to share Jesus." **Main actions:** Offerings Imagine No Malaria (raised more than \$890,000 toward \$1 million goal in year two of three-year campaign. **Approved:** changes to health benefits for retirees; explore eliminating conference insurance plan; encourage bishops and other involved parties to pursue a process of just resolution before calling for church trials; encourage the state legislature to continue funding Medicaid

expansion. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 1; ordained deacon: 3; provisional elder: 7; ordained elder: 3; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 9; retired: 27; remembered at memorial service: 45. Conference statistics: not provided.

– Amy Forbus, Arkansas Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014

**California–Nevada.** The conference met June 18–21 at Burlingame, Calif. The theme was “The Power of With: Building the Beloved Community”; the officiating bishop was Warner H. Brown Jr. Guest speakers: the Rev. Cecil Williams and Janice Mirikitani (Glide Memorial UMC in San Francisco) and the Rev. Eric H.F. Law (Kaleidoscope Institute for Competent Leadership in a Diverse Changing World). Memorable points: Williams: “This love of God is something that continues to bring us together. God’s love and God’s goodness is not just limited to the people we already know, it’s not limited to those who are already a part of the faith community, it’s not limited to UMs . . . but God does not limit God’s love to us.” He added, “I stand before you and I want you to know that I’m 84 years old and I’m not through yet. I’m keeping a spirit of God in my whole being.” Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (year 2 of \$2 million campaign; \$1.1 million to date, \$40,000 during conference); Approved: \$5.3 million budget; continued mission partnerships with Methodists and Wesleyans in West Angola, Cambodia, the Philippines, Tonga, and Fiji/Rotuma; ask President Obama and the U.S. Congress to pass immigration reform and put a moratorium on deportations; call on local churches to engage with resources for prison reform and ending mass incarceration; support campaign for resumption of peace negotiations in the Philippines. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 2; ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 6; ordained elder: 9; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 14; retired: 22; remembered at memorial service: 24. Conference statistics: Membership is 74,766, down 1,060. Worship attendance is 31,528, down 933. Church school attendance is 6,121, down 495. Professions of faith 1,387, down 218. Baptisms 816, down 8. Attendance in Christian formation groups 29,319, up 396. [Note: Rev. Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial UMC in San Francisco was in the forefront of promoting various aspects of homosexual practice years ago. The church itself was created thanks to a generous contribution by Mrs. Lizzie Glide, a strong evangelical; she would be horrified to see how it has evolved and would regret her contribution. It is amazing how he has deceived himself. – AOM]

– Larry R. Hygh Jr., California–Nevada Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Central Texas.** The conference met June 8–11 at First UMC, Mansfield. The officiating bishop was J. Michael Lowry. Guest speakers: Guest preacher: Bishop Paul Leeland (Alabama–West Florida Conference); guest teachers: Bishop Scott Jones (Great Plains Area), Dr. Phil Maynard (author); all addressed intentional faith development. Main actions: pledged \$300,000 to Lydia Patterson Institute to build ESL classrooms; extended lease on new conference service center near Texas Wesleyan University; Celebrated: four new church starts; increase of 31% in number of Vital Congregations. Name of delegates elected to 2016 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference: Lay delegates to General Conference: Tom Harkrider, Kim Simpson, Steve McIver and Darlene Alfred. Clergy delegates to General Conference: Tim Bruster, John McKellar, Clifton Howard and Brenda Wier. Lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Ethan Gregory, Darcy Deupree, Kylie Campbell and Kevin Gregory. Clergy delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Tom Robbins, Chris Hayes, Jim Conner and Debra Crumpton. Lay reserve delegates: Mary Percifield, Marianne Brown and Kathy Ezell. Clergy reserve delegates: Louis Carr, Mary Spradlin and Jason Valendy. Conference statistics: Membership is 16,162, down 758 (first decline in 40 years). Worship attendance is 47,140, up 100. Church school attendance is 74,233, up 4,993.

– J. Vance Morton, Central Texas Annual Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 28; July 16, 2014.

**East Ohio.** The conference met June 16–19 at Lakeside Chautauqua in Marblehead, Ohio. The theme was “Jesus Is Calling Us In,” and the officiating bishop was John L. Hopkins. Guest speakers: Bishop Janice Riggle Huie (Houston Area), the Rev. Dr. Kenda Dean, the Rev. Dr. Rock Jones, the Rev. Solomon Hill and the Rev. Janelle Kurtz. Memorable points: Bishop Hopkins: “You can’t be a Christian alone. It’s being called into a community of faith that forms us and shapes us.” Rev. Dean: “Let’s get the theology straight first – young people do not save the church, only Jesus Christ saves the church.” Main actions: Approved: resolutions to take a stand against violence, that all conference congregations promote awareness about domestic violence, that encourage members to speak out against violence against LGBT people and other marginalized communities, that the conference advocate for enforcement of human trafficking laws in Ohio. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 0; ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 5; ordained elder: 13; received into associate membership: 0; retired: 28. Conference statistics: Membership is 154,725, down 3,525. Worship attendance is 59,950, down 1,346. Church school attendance 17,837, down 1,327. Professions of faith 2,219, down 243. Baptisms 1,793, down 92.

– Rick Wolcott, East Ohio Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**Florida.** The conference met June 11–14 at Lakeland, Fla. with Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr. officiating. The theme was “The Mission of God”; Guest speakers: GBGM’s general secretary Dr. Thomas Kemper led a discussion about the changing role of missions. Jim Salley, associate vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, delivered address about AU’s mission followed by a performance by the AU choir. Memorable points: Missionaries today “are really going from everywhere to everywhere,” said Dr. Thomas Kemper, who was invited to lead a panel discussion. He showed audience members a map tracing paths to and from all parts of the globe. “So you can see that there’s a Brazilian serving in Switzerland with a Hispanic-Latino community in Geneva, starting a church, building a church. Mission now is from the margins. This is true in Vietnam. There are over 150 churches now, only in the last 10 years,” Kemper said. In Congo, Kemper said he saw people in tears because they were so happy to be sending missionaries to other places, instead of simply receiving them—and thus becoming a true part of the mission movement. Mission work is no longer simply done by other people elsewhere, Kemper reminded the members. “We are in this together,” Kemper said. “Everybody is a missionary. Every Christian has to be a missionary.” Main actions: Offerings: Bishop’s offering to be distributed in scholarships for students at Africa University and young adult missional movement in Florida; Celebrated: Creating “Fresh Expressions,” bishop’s initiative with Strategic Leadership Team to identify and multiply “third places” (<http://freshexpressionsus.org>); church anniversaries. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 2; ordained deacon: 1; provisional elder: 18; ordained elder: 11; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 23; retired: 34; remembered at memorial service: 54. Conference statistics: Membership is 262,000, down 7,000. Worship attendance is 135,400, down 2,400. Number of churches paying apportionments at 100% 400, up 2%.

– Gretchen Hastings, Florida Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Greater New Jersey.** The conference met May 28–31 at Wildwood. The officiating bishop was John Schol. Guest speakers: Bishop Moses Young Hun Kim (Korean Methodist Church); the Rev. Olu Brown (Impact Church in Atlanta). Memorable points: Brown shared passionately about how to move from a membership church to a relationship church. Bishop Schol challenged the conference in areas of leadership, spiritual adaptation and unity. Main actions enacted: Offerings: mission project for Stop Hunger Now and A Future with Hope (>40,400 packets of food, two playhouses built); \$126,000 for Mission Fund (total of \$4 million for A Future with Hope, Imagine No Malaria and local congregation mission work). Approved: explore and expand mission partnerships with Thailand and Nepal; creation of strategic disciple-making fund to start new congregations and faith communities. Observed Act of Repentance for Native Americans in the conference. Clergy statistics: provisional elder: 10; ordained elder: 8; recognized as full member: 1; retired: 30. – Carolyn Conover, Greater New Jersey Conf., as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 28; July 16, 2014.

**Iowa.** The conference met Date at location with Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble officiating. Guest speakers: retired Bishop Linda Lee, bishop-in-residence at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Lee, “There is hope that the church will be a place where people work together even when they disagree or have difference cultural backgrounds or different theological understandings.” Bishop Trimble, “We are one family” noting that “our strength and source of power as a church [does not reside in] our stated beliefs, but in what God has done and Jesus has promised to continue to do through us.” Main actions: Approved: budget of \$16,014,087, a decrease of 1.59%; support for an amendment to the Constitution to abolish corporate personhood; call to reform immigration laws and stop deportations of anyone except convicted felons; taking seriously the call to repent of racism and sexism; affirming the ecclesiastical rights of all persons; declaring opposition to continued distinctions of church law restricting ministries to LGBT persons; acknowledging that leaders of the conference, while bound by The Book of Discipline, are also bound by the commandment of Jesus; acknowledging that clergy and congregations encountering institutional discrimination may feel bound by conscience to offer ministries of the church to all persons on an equal basis; recognizing that pursuit of disciplinary action against any person providing equal access to the sacraments and rituals of the church may cause harm to LGBT persons. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 1; ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 9; ordained elder: 9; received into associate membership: 2; licensed local pastors: 4; retired: 33; remembered at memorial service: 49. Conference statistics: Membership is 168,720, down 2,878. Worship attendance is 53,449, down 1,221. Total number of congregations was 788; average size is 217. Professions of faith 2,239, down 9%. – Arthur McClanahan, Iowa Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Kentucky.** The conference met June 9–11 at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center in Covington. The theme was “Reach the World, Equipping Servant Leaders”; the officiating bishop was Lindsey Davis. Guest speakers: Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett (Birmingham Area), retired Bishop Al Gwinn, Dale Mowery and the Rev. Adam Hamilton (The UM Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kan.). Memorable points: Bishop Davis offered a reminder of the importance of “being still before God and remembering God’s presence as we prepare to do the ministry for which we are called.” Bishop Wallace-Padgett: “Plan Where You Can Bloom”; Hamilton: “Leadership is what is desperately needed today in The UMC.” Approved: decreased the number of districts from twelve to nine, effective July 1, 2015; budget of \$7.9 million, decrease of \$1.2 million. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 2; ordained deacon: 3; provisional elder: 9; ordained elder: 12; received into associate membership: 1; remembered at memorial service: 32. Conference statistics: Membership is 152,152, down 72; Worship attendance 54,690, down 1,625. Church school attendance 24,688, down 565. – Cathy L. Bruce, Kentucky Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**Mississippi.** The conference met June 6–8 at the Jackson Convention Complex, Jackson, Miss. The officiating bishop was James E. Swanson Sr. Guest speakers: Bishop B. Michael Watson (North Georgia Conference), Bishop Thomas L. Brown Sr. (North Georgia CME), the Rev. Heather Hensarling, District Superintendent, Seashore Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Swanson: “God is not calling us to be good people but God is transforming us into Godly people.” The Rev. Hensarling: “Don’t let anyone tell you that we are anything less than family bound together by that unshakable mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Bishop Watson: “We are together and we’re going to live out the power of being together in this mission as ambassadors of Jesus Christ.” Main actions: One notable resolution passed by the Mississippi Annual Conference was the commendation of Rev. James McRee. At age 95, McRee is the oldest active elder in the Mississippi Conference; he has attended 65 consecutive annual conference sessions. The conference also surpassed its goal to pack 100,000 meals by end of the 2014 session for the hunger relief agency Stop Hunger Now. Members packaged 102,168 meals. This effort was led by Delphine Swanson, who’s aiming to see the conference pack one million meals by annual conference session 2015. UMs (beyond members of the

annual conference) were invited to participate in learning and mission workshops. The agenda included 20 classes of their choice. The workshop on domestic violence was led by Bishop James Swanson Sr. and the Rev. Andy Stoddard of Asbury UMC in Petal, both of whom lost their mothers because of domestic violence. Ginger Grissom, executive director of Wesley House, who works to protect the abused, helped facilitate the conversation around how the church can help reduce statistics on domestic violence.

Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 2; ordained deacon: 0; provisional elder: 11; ordained elder: 12; received into associate membership: 4; licensed local pastors: 16; retired: 25; remembered at memorial service (also includes laity): 46.

Conference statistics: Membership is 178,448, down 1,169. Worship attendance is 68,706, down 1,048. Church school attendance is 30,832, down 661. Professions of faith 1,874, down 166. Baptisms 1,830, down 98.

– Tamica Smith-Jeuitt, Mississippi Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**North Carolina.** The conference met June 11–14 at the Greenville Convention Center at location. The theme was “Thrive,” incorporated in the quadrennial theme of “Strength to Strength”; the officiating bishop was Hope Morgan Ward. Guest speakers: Dr. Gary Gunderson, Dr. Teresa Cutts, Dr. Ed Moore, Dr. Matthew and Nancy Sleeth, and Willona Stallings. Memorable points: The Rev. Carol Goehring: “Conferences don’t make disciples; God makes disciples.” The Rev. George Speake, conference statistician: “You are putting the Word into action by your giving. You gave more than \$13 million dollars in outreach beyond the local church during 2013. After school programs, food pantries and many other ministries of outreach are changing lives for the gospel.” The Rev. Lucho Reinoso, recipient of the Saints of God award: “Listen quietly to the little, little voice—you may be listening to God.” Dr. Frances M. Alguire: “When you say yes to being a follower of Jesus Christ, you have no idea what will happen along the way.” Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$8,652.80, plus \$1,000 from Youth Service Fund and \$100,000 from the Conference Council on Finance and Administration toward \$1million goal); Stop Hunger Now meals prepared (100,000); Stop Hunger Now for shipping (\$6,226.69); school kits prepared (3,000); Greenville Community Shelter through a 5K run/walk (\$1360); higher education and campus ministries (\$2,596.21); laity ministries (\$3,571.11). Approved: budget of \$21,138,111, an increase of 2.1%; resolutions – “Protection of God’s Creation” and “As You Have Done to the Least of These.” Referred: resolution on mental health care, to the Disabilities Concerns Ministry Team; Affirmed: “A Plea for Unity” Launched: \$10 million mission endowment for ministering to eastern North Carolina (gifts to the fund: Youth Service Fund, \$5,000, and Committee on Finance & Administration, \$1 million). Celebrated: chartering of Wakefield UMC in Raleigh, and launch of six new faith communities. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 2; ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 16; ordained elder: 10; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 37; retired: 29; remembered at memorial service: 47. Conference statistics: Membership is 229,335, up 271. Worship attendance 78,681, down 1,062. Church school attendance 75,494, up 471. Professions of 2,703, down 5. Baptisms 834.

– Mary Andreolli, North Carolina Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**North Georgia.** The conference met June 10–12 at the Classic Center in Athens, Ga. with Bishop Mike Watson officiating. The theme was “Together We Make Disciples”. Guest speakers: Bishop Jonathan Holston (South Carolina Conference) – guest preaching for opening worship and ordination/commissioning/licensing service. Memorable points: Bishop Holston: “God has called us to something grander than we could ever, ever dream of. What are you going to do with your one and only life?” Main actions: Offerings: UMW organized UMCOR kit collection (827 birthing kits; 265 layette kits; 1,816 school bags and 837 health kits, value of \$45,911); special offering for UM Global AIDS Fund; \$27,000 Imagine No Malaria (launched year-long campaign, \$7,300); closed: Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center, but conference offices will remain on the property; approved: budget of \$23,752,041, a decrease; Conference Board of Connectional Ministries to appoint a task force to research and report potential ways for the conference to engage with people in the Holy Land in constructive conversations about peace efforts in the region, and present recommendations on a potential



mission bridge to Jerusalem. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 0; ordained deacon: 3; provisional elder: 9; ordained elder: 16; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 6; retired: 26; remembered at memorial service (also includes laity): 40. Conference statistics: Membership is 363,383, up 581. Professions of faith 5,602, up 745.

– Sybil Davidson, North Georgia Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Northern Illinois.** The conference met June 8–10 at St. Charles, Ill., theme was “Who Is My Neighbor?” with Bishop Sally Dyck officiating. Guest speakers: Diana Butler Bass (author and speaker) Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Dyck—goals include starting nine new faith communities, strengthening at least 12 existing congregations, growing as multicultural congregations, participating in Native American Acts of Repentance, advocating for children, continuing Spanish as a Second Language in 100 churches, reaching our Imagine No Malaria goal of \$1 million in pledges, transforming Chicago’s communities and beyond with the Urban Strategy and growing in our ability to reach out to LGBTQ persons and families. Bishop Dyck: “Chicago Public Schools needs mentors for all its students.” Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$47,328), hundreds of baby items to the Midwest Distribution Center for layette kits; Approved: formation of Restorative and Transformative Justice committee; support of Marriage Equality and pastors who minister to them (written ruling pending from the bishop); Celebrated: Marcy Newberry Association 130 years of ministry and service on Chicago’s west side. Name of delegates elected to 2016 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference: General Conference Lay delegates: Lonnie Chafin, Irma Clark and Elisa Gatz. General Conference Clergy delegates: Tracy Smith Malone, Alka Lyall and Gregory Gross. Jurisdictional Conference Lay delegates: Jack Ryder, Marta Rodriguez and Rita L. Smith. Jurisdictional Conference Clergy delegates: Chris Pierson, Carol Hill and Luis Reyes. Lay reserve delegates: Nancy Pendegrass and Joyce Carrasco. Clergy reserve delegates: David Lagos-Fonseca and Chris Winkler. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 4; ordained deacon: 1; provisional elder: 17; ordained elder: 6. Conference statistics: Membership is 93,961, down 235. Worship attendance 33,970, down 1,860. Church school attendance 11,674, down 20. Professions of faith 1,797, up 51.

– Anne Marie Gerhardt, Northern Illinois Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**Oklahoma.** The conference met May 26–29 at UM-related Oklahoma City University and St. Luke’s UMC. The theme was “All Things New”; the officiating bishop was Robert Hayes Jr. Guest speakers: the Rev. Dr. David Wilson (DS for the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference [OIMC]), choir of D.D. Etchieson UMC, an OIMC congregation; the Rev. Jasmine Rose Smothers (North Georgia Conference). Special guests included President Socorro de Anda (Lydia Patterson Institute, El Paso, Tex.), the Rev. Modesto Mamani (The Methodist Church of Bolivia), the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe (general secretary of the General Board of Church and Society [GBCS]) and Caitlin Congdon and Kay Panovec (UM Communications [UMCOM]). Memorable points: “We want to share the history of Native Americans and identify their struggles. We want to be more aware how Native people within the church can maintain their spiritual identity. Then we will ask: Where do we go from here? We are journeying together. We want to determine how to live into the future together, with hope and vision.” Smothers: “God said, ‘I need somebody.’ What will you do? I can only imagine.” Main actions: Offerings: typhoon relief and UM-related Asbury College in the Philippines (\$45,609); emergency supply kits for UMCOR; Launched Prevent/Recover (partnership with Oklahoma City University in addiction ministry); Approved: New People, New Places – incentive to connect new people to Christ, redirecting apportionment budget to fund grants; drop in number of districts from twelve to eight, effective June 1, 2015; partner with One Exchange for retired clergy medical coverage; closing of four churches Observed: Act of Repentance and Reconciliation with Native Americans, the first step in the conference’s Act of Repentance and Reconciliation, according to Bishop Hayes. Celebrated full accreditation for Saint Paul School of Theology (Oklahoma City). Clergy statistics: ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 9; ordained elder: 10; retired: 17; memorial service: 29. Conference statistics: Membership is 233,350, down 1,664. Worship attendance is 52,180, down 2,161. Number

of small groups 6,327, up 145. Professions of faith 2,064, down 111. – Holly McCray, Oklahoma Conf. , as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.** The conference met June 5–8 at Southeast Region Center in Antlers, Okla. The officiating bishop was Robert E. Hayes Jr. Memorable points: Theme of the conference was “Get out of the boat. . . . Get into the water!” (based on Matt. 14:27-29). Bishop Hayes referenced the boat, the water and wind. Boat was the church — where we are comfortable, and we like it like that. Water was the mission field — out there, where the “people” are. Main actions: Approved: \$1,078,843 budget; celebrated start of two new congregations. Clergy statistics (total numbers): ordained elder: 13; licensed local pastors: 19; retired: 13; remembered at memorial service: 11. Conference statistics: Membership is 6,094, down 55. Worship attendance is 2,066, up 54. Church school attendance 937, down 105. Professions of faith 81, up 9. Baptisms 505, up 319.

– Josephine Deere, Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conf., as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Oregon–Idaho.** The conference met June 11–12 in Salem, Ore. The theme was “What’s Your Next Act”; the officiating bishop was Grant J. Hagiya. Guest speaker: Brian McLaren (author, theologian). Memorable points: McLaren talked about lighting a fire of hope to build the church, and that “the fire of hope starts in your heart.” Bishop Hagiya suggested that new connections, new ways of doing ministry and a new perspective will be necessary to build new disciples. Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria raised \$35,500; Approved: updated conference policies and local church requirements on sexual ethics and providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults; encouraged local churches to study the issues of Palestine and Israel using the document, “Kairos Palestine Response”; petition encouraging Idaho UMs to support efforts to have the words “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” added to Human Rights Act of Idaho; conclusion of Time to Grow capital campaign for camp and retreat ministries (over \$3 million). Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 1; ordained deacon: 0; provisional elder: 0; ordained elder: 0; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 1; retired: 15; remembered at memorial service: 17. Conference statistics: Membership is 26,997, down 847. Worship attendance is 13,201, down 459. Church school attendance is 3,060, down 480. Professions of faith 534, down 5. Baptisms 347, down 32. – Greg Nelson, Oregon–Idaho Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Pacific Northwest.** The conference met June 19–22 at the Washington State Fairgrounds in Puyallup, Wash. The theme was “What’s Our Next Act?”; the officiating bishop was Grant J. Hagiya. Guest speaker: Bishop Paul L. Leeland (Alabama–West Florida Area). Memorable points: Bishop Leeland challenged members: “To be faithful, we need to be fruitful.” Main actions: approved a budget of \$106,916, a decrease of 3.36%; petition calling for cessation of church trials based on clergy sexual identity and participation in same-sex weddings and unions; petition naming conference churches and their facilities safe for people regardless of their gender identity, and another supporting a bill that would provide penalties for any mental health practitioner who engages in Sexual Orientation Change Efforts; support for WA Initiative 594 (requiring background checks for gun sales); support for legislation regarding corporate personhood and resources for the study of fossil fuel divestment; remembrance of site as place where Japanese Americans were unjustly “processed” shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Members of the Portland-based Minidoka Swing Band, joined the body for opening worship. Clergy statistics: provisional elder: 2; ordained elder: 3; licensed local pastors: 18; retired: 16; memorial service: 32 (plus 2 discontinued congregations). Conference statistics: Membership is 46,209, down 2,465. Worship attendance 18,505, down 1,663. Church school attendance 4,543, down 280. Professions of faith 715, down 77. Baptisms 502, up 31.

– Patrick Scriven and Shirley DeLarme, Pacific Northwest Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

**Peninsula–Delaware.** The conference met June 5–7 at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, Md. The officiating bishop was Peggy A. Johnson; the conference theme verse was 2 Chronicles 7:14. **Guest speakers:** the Rev. Olu Brown (Impact Church in Atlanta), John S. Hill (director of Economic and Environmental Justice at the General Board of Church and Society [GBCS]), and the Rev. Dr. HiRho Y. Park (director of Clergy Lifelong Learning at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry [GBHEM]). **Memorable points:** Brown shared passionately about how to move from a membership church to a relationship church. Park inspired all in attendance to seek God, pray, humble ourselves, repent and follow the Wesleyan quadrilateral when faced with a decision to help us focus on our Christian values. **Main actions:** Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$14,574.33), Tray Day, youth service fund (\$1,588.33; Celebrated: 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Old Delaware Conference; eight individuals responded to calls to ordained ministry during the conference session. **Clergy statistics:** provisional deacon: 1; ordained deacon: 3; provisional elder: 2; ordained elder: 3; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 0; retired: 13. **Conference statistics:** not provided.  
– Doug Lanter, Peninsula–Delaware Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Poland Annual Conference.** The conference met June 27–29 in Klarysew, near Warsaw. The presiding bishop is Patrick Streiff; the new leading superintendent is Andrzej Malicki. Discussions included revision of Internal Law to align more closely with the Book of Discipline and presentation of a new website: <http://metodysci.pl>. Two men were ordained in full connection. The decision to delay ordination of a woman led to protest from conference delegates. Former leading superintendent, Adam Kuczma (over 90), received the title of honorable general superintendent.

– Jörg Niederer, dist. Supt. Switzerland-France-North Africa Ann. Conf., reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 28; July 16, 2014.

**Virginia.** The conference met June 20–22 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton, Va. The theme was “Lord, Renew Us with Your Spirit”; the officiating bishop was Young Jin Cho. **Guest speakers:** The Rev. Rhonda VanDyke Colby (vice president, Shenandoah University); Dr. Elmer Coyer (professor of systematic theology and Wesley studies at the University of Dubuque [Iowa] Theological Seminary). **Memorable points:** Bishop Cho: “Please, do not stop praying. Now, we go back to our mission field. If we truly listen and discern the will of God in prayer, we can faithfully and effectively sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land.” **Main actions:** Offerings: total kits collected for UMCOR—41,218, with a total value of \$533,834 (30,844 health kits; 11,306 school kits; 5,325 birthing kits; 1,666 layette kits; 228 cleaning kits; 394 bedding kits and 1,455 miscellaneous kits); 85,000 pounds of non-perishable food items for the Peninsula Food Bank; **Approved:** budget of \$32.7 million, down 1%; resolution calling for a phased-in increase in the federal minimum wage; **Launched:** Bishop Cho called for a period of discernment on the issue of sexuality; Imagine No Malaria campaign; Celebrated: introduction of three new faith communities and leading the Southeastern Jurisdiction in giving to missionary support; commissioning a missionary and two deaconesses. **Clergy statistics:** provisional deacon and elders: 22; ordained deacon: 1; ordained elder: 13; orders recognized: 1; licensed local pastors: 27; retired: 41. **Conference statistics:** Membership is 330,696, down 1,735. Worship attendance is 104,231, down 897. Church school attendance, professions of faith and baptisms not provided.  
– Neill Caldwell, Virginia Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**West Michigan.** The conference met June 11–14 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. The officiating bishop was Deborah Lieder Kiesey. **Guest speakers:** Marcia McFee (worship leader). **Main actions:** Approved: call on leadership of U.S., Israel and Palestine to reject all acts of aggression and violence in the region; urge federal legislators to continue to work toward a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants; support for ministry to all persons: “Now therefore, we encourage all UMs within our annual conference and beyond, lay and clergy, in accordance with our membership vows to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms

they present themselves,” by supporting spiritually, emotionally and prayerfully the issue of marriage equality and the clergy and local congregations who faithfully minister to all persons, courageously risking any consequences for their living fully into the duty of performing marriages for all people. Further: The West Michigan Conference desires a cessation of church trials for conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions or performing same sex wedding ceremonies and instead recommend we continue a process of theological, spiritual, and ecclesiastical conversation”. Celebrated: Imagine No Malaria (raised \$802,704, more than half of \$1.5 million goal); partnership with Eglise Methodiste d’Haiti since 1996. Name of delegates elected to 2016 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference: Lay delegate to General Conference: Nichea Ver Veer Guy (Grand Rapids). Clergy delegate to General Conference: Laurie Haller (Birmingham). Lay delegate to Jurisdictional Conference: Laurie Dahlman. Clergy delegate to Jurisdictional Conference: Kennetha Bigham-Tsai (Lansing). Lay reserve delegates: Laura Witkowski (Grand Rapids) and John Boley (Kalamazoo). Clergy reserve delegates: Benton Heisler (Grand Rapids) and John Boley (Kalamazoo). Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 0; ordained deacon: 1; provisional elder: 4; ordained elder: 5; received into associate membership: 0; licensed local pastors: 7; retired: 17; remembered at memorial service (includes laity): 14. Conference statistics: Membership is 59,277, down 1,374. Worship attendance is 34,126, down 1,938. Church school attendance 8,434, down 883. Professions of faith 1,307, down 117.

– Kay DeMoss, West Michigan Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**West Ohio.** The conference met June 8–11 at Lakeside Chautauqua, Lakeside with the theme “Becoming the Beloved Community: Blessed”; Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer officiating. Guest speakers: The Rev. Eric Law (Kaleidoscope Institute, conference teacher); Jeff Hunsaker (executive director, Horizon Prison Initiative); Bishop Robert E. Hayes, Jr. (Oklahoma Area) Memorable points: Bishop Palmer: “We have gotten caught up in the commodity and materials of blessings instead of the spirituality of blessing. We need to chase the Blesser, not the blessing.” He invited the conference to participate in Circles of Grace conversations about the future of The UMC: “We already know we have things between us, but we choose to stay around the light of Christ until we discover one another, and see the face of Christ in the neighbor.” Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$359,429.57); Midwest Mission Distribution Center (2,080 lbs. of potatoes and a semi truck full of health kits); approved: budgets resulting in reduction of total apportioned Connectional Giving of \$450,000...; purchase of the conference center; asking state government to protect rights of all Ohio citizens without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 4; ordained deacon: 0; provisional elder: 14; ordained elder: 11; received into associate membership: 1; licensed local pastors: 0; retired: 39. Conference statistics: Number of churches stands at 1,037, down 10 from the previous year. Membership is 182,439, down 5,620. Worship attendance is 107,958, down 2,113. Church school attendance is 30,345, down 885. Stewardship is 77% of apportioned giving by congregations, up 2%. – Lisa Streight, West Ohio Conf., as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 28; July 16, 2014.

**Western North Carolina.** The conference met June 19–22 at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center. The theme was “Celebrating Generosity”; the officiating bishop was Larry Goodpaster. Guest speakers: Bishop Jonathan Holston (South Carolina Conference), the Rev. J. Cam West (president of Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Ala.)... Memorable points: Bishop Holston preached on Matt 4:12-13: “I believe Jesus is making an offer to the Western North Carolina Conference tonight, that you cannot refuse. . . . He’s reminding us first of all, that people want to be a part of something greater than themselves, all of us in this room want to be part of something greater . . . we want something greater than ourselves because we have a God who gives to us greater, abundantly, giving to us generously, we ask and we receive. Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (record setting offering of over \$91,000, helped surpass the \$100,000 goal by more than \$9,000); Campus Ministries (\$3,500+ raised by 160-mile cycling event); Approved: budget of \$16.457 million, an increase of 1.89%; establishment of covenant partnership with the Central Congo Annual Conference; minimum compensation for elders and deacons in full connection at \$39,000; “The Future of The UMC,” the first of a

series of panel discussions on issues schism and sexuality. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 4; ordained deacon: 7; provisional elder: 19; ordained elder: 19; recognized orders: 1; received into associate membership: 1; licensed local pastors: 0; retired: 38; remembered at memorial service: 65. Conference statistics: Membership is 286,074, down <1% from the previous year. Worship attendance is 113,711, down 3,927. Church school is at 49,036, down 3,618. Baptisms 2,941, down <1%. Number of UMVIM teams sent increased by 208%. Amounts paid for... community work through UMW is \$2,153,136; through UMM is \$1,540,639.

– Michael Rich, Western North Carolina Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

**Wisconsin**. The conference met June 20–22 at Madison Marriott West in Middleton followed by a Learning Day on June 23. The theme was “Sowing the Seed,” continuing the quadrennial focus on “Living the Fruit of the Spirit”; the officiating bishop was Hee Soo Jung. Guest speakers: the Rev Dr. Dianne Reistroffer (former dean of Louisville Theological Seminary), Dr. Lallen Rector (new president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary), retired Bishop Don Ott, the Rev. Dr. Young Joo Kim (general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea) Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Reistroffer said Phoebe Palmer’s bold witness to the power of holiness did not stop at the personal; she and others reached out in acts of charity and justice: “I marvel at how this conference has promoted justice issues; I have frequently held up this conference for its women and diversity leadership.” Main actions: Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$12,962 plus \$10,000 matching funds from the UM Foundation toward \$1million campaign); Approved: Decrease in number of districts from eight to five, effective 2015; continued covenant affiliations with Northcott Neighborhood House and Harbor House Crisis Shelter; Rainbow Covenant program to encourage mission giving; Celebrated: \$1 million gift from layperson Stanley Cotrill to establish a WUMF Seminary Scholarship Fund. Names of delegates elected to 2016 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference: Lay delegates to General Conference: Lisa King, Barbara Dick and Gail Burgess. Clergy delegates to General Conference: Dan Dick, Sam Royappa and Steve Zekoff. Lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Katie Estrem-Fuller, Tom Popp and Judy Vasby. Clergy delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Amanda Stein, Jorge Mayorga Solis and Dan Schwerin. Lay reserve delegates: Jennifer Southworth, John Lawson, Diane Odeen and Julie Schubring. Clergy reserve delegates: Dawn Helton-Anishinaabeqwa, Jeremy Deaner, George Kafer and Jennifer Arneson. Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 0; ordained deacon: 0; provisional elder: 2; ordained elder: 4; received into associate membership: 1; recognized orders: 1; licensed local pastors: 17; retired: 19; memorial service: nearly 60. Conference statistics: not provided.

– Michele Virnig and Amanda Rehrauer, Wisconsin Conf., as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 27; July 9, 2014.

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Prayer is not preparation for work, it is work.  
Prayer is not preparation for battle, it is the battle  
~ Oswald Chambers