

Monthly Update

February 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

First of all, I want to thank you for your response to our December appeal for financial support to our ministry, especially to help us eliminate our shortfall. Through your year end giving and generosity, we were able to finish the year debt-free. This enables us to continue our ministry since we will not be hampered with unpaid bills and obligations.

This edition of the Monthly Update continues with issues in our United Methodist Church and across the world that a lack of space precluded our printing until now.

A disproportionate amount of space is focused on “life” since January is the time of the year that traditionally those who support it make an even more concerted push to eliminate the scourge of abortion through contacting legislators, writing letters, sending e-mails, and participating in marches – most notably the March for Life in Washington, D.C. It was on January 22nd that the Supreme Court rendered its infamous decision in Roe versus Wade when they “found” in the penumbra – the “shadow of the Constitution” – that women have a “right” to abortion. Yet God is the giver of life. “Life” is one of the key areas that will determine the future of our country. If we do not get the culture of death overturned, it has the potential to bring the judgment of God on our country – not to mention lay the foundation for the collapse of our society and our nation. This is an issue that is very worthy of our attention in prayer and action.

There are several scripture verses that talk to this. The Bible contains two primary passages in addition to others that apply to the abortion question: Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-18. The first reads, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...” is what God told Jeremiah. Psalm 139:13, 16, says, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” God knew David before he was born. Other verses with Jesus' words, “I have come that you might live...” (John 10:10) and God is the “God of the living.” Again, He is the giver of life; only He is the one who is to say when it ends for each individual. To summarize, life begins at conception. Seeing pictures of the result of abortion reinforces this reality.

Yet again, I thank you for your help in enabling us to overcome the financial challenge that we had faced. Without you – and indeed – without your prayers and financial support, we would not be able to do what God has called us to. Please continue to partner with us as we “contend for the faith” that the Lord has entrusted to our care.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

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February 2014 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

“Life offers no guarantees, but abortion offers no chances.” ~ As quoted by Jacki Ragan, National Right to Life

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The Good Stuff.

+ *The January Monthly Update.* For those of you not receiving the January Monthly Update by email, I had included the introductory message:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I trust that you all have had a good Christmas and New Year. I don't know about you but during the Christmas season, if I am out in public and someone says, “Happy Holidays” I will invariably respond, "A merry Christmas to you." If there is time during the verbal transaction, I will add something like, "After all, it is about the birth of Jesus Christ – and we need to remember that He is the reason for our celebration."

Attached is the "Monthly Update" for January with much of the "news that is the news" in the United Methodist Church. As you remember, during the December Update we took a sabbatical on some of the not-so-pleasant news that is in our denomination and surrounding society. We are bombarded with that from a variety of sources. I had wanted to share some uplifting stories and reminders that, despite the spiritual darkness and negative things that we may see happening around us, Christmas is still a time of joy and a reminder that our God is greater than anything that may be happening in the physical world. And we need to remember – He wins in the end!

I am hoping that each of you has a joyous New Year in 2014.

In His service, Allen O. Morris

+ *No Crushing This Crèche.* Every winter, atheists fight another kind of cold war -- against Christmas. It's their busiest season in the clash against religion, as they feast on small town displays and school pageants. This year is no different for groups like the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). And while they succeed in pushing the occasional baby Jesus from the manger or "The First Noel" from the choir play list, more cities are learning to stand up to the bullies at the gate. In Chipley, Florida, locals are leading a fierce fight against FFRF, which sent its typical letter of intimidation to town leaders for allowing a manger scene at city hall. A local reporter said he inadvertently drew attention to the display when he contacted FFRF for their comments on its constitutionality. In turn, the organization fired off a memo urging Chipley to tear down the display -- or else. "Erecting a display with a message that's central to the Christian religion can only be seen as an endorsement of that message." The blowback was so intense that the reporter who contacted FFRF issued an apology to city residents, insisting, "It was not my play to take down the city's nativity scene nor cause anyone else to do so." In the meantime, locals have no intentions of caving. At a crowded city council meeting last week, people urged officials to keep fighting. Besides, said one resident, "I would much rather you all decide what's good for Chipley than a group that doesn't really believe in anything." Instead of subtracting from the scene, locals are adding to it. To make it more diverse, city leaders did add a Christmas tree and said they would consider adding other symbols if approached. "We have been giving our rights away for years, and it's about time that communities and church leaders all get together and start taking our country back." One manger at a time.

– The Family Research Council, 801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001 Washington, DC; www.frc.org

+ ***The Marine Colonel had it right.*** Before the start of the next NFL season, perhaps all team owners should be sent the following:

From a Marine Corps Colonel in Afghanistan.

"So with all the kindness I can muster, I give this one piece of advice to the next pop star who is asked to sing the national anthem at a sporting event: save the vocal gymnastics and the physical gyrations for your concerts. Just sing this song the way you were taught to sing it in kindergarten – straight up, no styling.

Sing it with the constant awareness that there are soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines watching you from bases and outposts all over the world. Don't make them cringe with your self-centered ego gratification. Sing it as if you are standing before a row of 86-year-old World War II veterans wearing their Purple Hearts, Silver Stars and flag pins on their cardigans and you want them to be proud of you for honoring them and the country they love – not because you want them to think you are a superstar musician. They could see that from your costume, makeup and your entourage.

Sing 'The Star Spangled Banner with the courtesy and humility that tells the audience that it is about America, not you.

And please remember, not everything has to be sung as a Negro spiritual. We're getting a little weary of that. Francis Scott Key does not need any help."

Semper Fi

+ ***Who invented hospitals...and WHY?*** – Religious Convictions & the History of Healthcare

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, October 29, 2012, responding to the President's HHS healthcare mandates:

"It is not just about sterilization, abortifacients, and chemical contraception...
It's about religious freedom, the sacred right, protected by our constitution..."

Cardinal Dolan, as President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2010-2013, continued:

"The President announced...the choking mandates from HHS would remain – a shock to me, since he had personally assured me that he would do nothing to impede the good work of the Church...that he considered the protection of conscience a sacred duty..."

There was still no resolution about the handcuffs placed upon... Catholic charitable agencies...just because they will not refer victims of human trafficking, immigrants and refugees, and the hungry of the world, for abortions, sterilization, or contraception."

The Catholic Church is the oldest institution in the Western World and the originator of 'hospitals'. Just as the Syrian Church did in the East, the Catholic Church in the West pioneered putting into practice the words of Jesus: "I was sick and you visited me," and "Whatever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done unto me."

Though some ancient cultures had some medical/superstitious practices, they were primarily for the royalty and wealthy. Healthcare for the poor traces its roots to Christianity. In the 4th century, under the ministry of St. Jerome, a wealthy Christian widow named St. Fabiola gave money to build a hospital for the poor in Rome and cared for the sick herself.

Around the same time, St. Basil distributed food to the poor of Caesarea, then built a poorhouse, hospice, and hospital.

In 325 AD, the Council of Nicea directed that every city having a cathedral should also have a hospital, as people traveling on pilgrimages would often arrive ill.

The word "hosp" is Latin for "traveler," the root word of hospital, hospitality, host, hostel and hotel.

Hospitals were staffed by religious orders.

In the 6th century, the Benedictine Order had every monastery establish an infirmary.

With the invasion of Islam, hospitals needed to be defended, giving rise to the order of the Knights of Hospitallers.

The Catholic Church founded the first universities. The Benedictine Monastery in Salerno, Italy, founded the oldest and most famous medical school.

Charlemagne decreed that hospitals which had fallen into disrepair should be restored.

In the 1300's, the Bubonic Plague, or Black Death, ravaged Europe killing 75 million people. Crops were left standing in fields as there was no one to harvest them. With often no one to bury the dead, an order of Catholic men called 'Alexian Brothers' collected the bodies and gave them a Christian burial. They also ministered to the dying who were banished from the cities.

More Catholic religious orders formed to care for the sick, nurse the ill, change bed pans, and start leper colonies, such as:

Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul (founded 1633);

Sisters of St. Joseph (founded 1650);

Sisters of Mercy (founded 1827);

Little Sisters of the Poor (founded 1839);

Sisters of Providence (founded 1843);

Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine (founded 1851);

Fr. Damien's colony for lepers in Hawaii (founded 1864);

Sisters of St. Mary (founded 1872);

Sisters of the Little Company of Mary (founded 1877),

Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother (founded 1883);

The nuns' habit developed into the nurses' outfit with its distinctive cap.

Some Catholic religious orders also collected alms and sailed to North Africa to ransom Europeans who had been kidnapped into Muslim slavery.

One of the oldest hospitals in Europe was the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, founded in 660 A.D. It was staffed from about 1217 on by Sisters who followed the Rule of St. Augustine.

In 1633, the Sisters of Charity began helping at the Hotel-Dieu of Paris. They then established hospitals for the poor throughout France. In that day, the wealthy had doctors visit them at their homes.

By 1789, there were 6,000 Sisters of Charity running 426 hospitals in France, and more in countries across Europe, such as Poland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Silesia.

During the atheistic French Revolution's Reign of Terror, mobs broke into the Sisters of Charity's mother house. The nuns refused

to deny their faith and embrace the new secular order, so the government shot them in front of firing squads and beheaded them with

the guillotine.

In 1793, France's new anti-Christian government attempted to disband the order. The order survived, and in the 19th century spread healthcare for the poor across the world, to such countries as: Portugal, Hungary, England, Scotland, Ireland, North and South America, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Persia, Abyssinia, China and Jerusalem.

In 1809, Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton brought the Sisters of Charity to the United States. In 1830, Sisters of Charity established the first hospital west of the Mississippi River in St. Louis, Missouri. At the request of President Abraham Lincoln, over 200 Sisters of Charity served during the Civil War on battlefields and in military hospitals. Over 250 Sisters of Charity served during the Spanish-American War of 1898, where diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid fever, and malaria killed more soldiers than combat.

Beginning with the Industrial Revolution, hospitals were also founded by Protestant Christian denominations,

most notably Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. Whereas Catholic healthcare began by focusing more on the hereafter, being motivated to prepare a person's soul for death and meeting God, Protestant healthcare focused more on the here and now, being motivated to clean up the slums in crowded cities and send medical missionaries to undeveloped countries.

Wealthy individuals donated and provided in their wills to continue these religious ministries of charity.

Both Catholic and Protestants pioneered free healthcare for the poor 'uninsurable' because they were motivated by Christian religious convictions.

On August 20, 2011 the New York Times wrote that Catholic nuns were trained to "see Jesus in the face of every patient." Mother Teresa reaffirmed this with the Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity being dedicated to: "Wholehearted and Free service to the poorest of the poor." They began by gathering the sick from the gutters in India, and bathed them, clothed them, ministered to their needs. Mother Teresa stated: "I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus."

It is ironic that in the government's take over of healthcare it would force providers to abandon the very religious convictions which created healthcare. The Judeo-Christian religious convictions which motivated people of faith to selflessly provide free healthcare for the poor for over a thousand years are now considered insignificant by utilitarian central planners. You might want to get the book, *America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations*.

The Catholic Church is the largest religious denomination in the United States and is the nation's largest medical care provider with 624 hospitals and 499 long-term health care facilities. 10 of the 25 largest health-care networks in the U.S. are Catholic-affiliated, including:

- Catholic Health Initiatives - 78 hospitals
- Ascension Health - 67 hospitals-Daughters of Charity, Congregation of St. Joseph, Sisters of St. Joseph
- Trinity Health - 44 hospitals, 379 Clinics, Catholic Health Ministries
- Catholic Healthcare West - 41 hospitals, Sisters of Mercy
- Catholic Health East - 34 hospitals, 9 religious congregations & Hope Ministries
- Catholic Healthcare Partners - 33 hospitals, Sisters of Mercy, Daughters of Charity
- Providence Health & Services - 26 hospitals, Sisters of Providence, Sisters of the Little Company of Mary
- Marian Health System - 25 hospitals, Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

On May 21, 2012, the Archdiocese of New York filed a historic Federal lawsuit against the HHS mandate: "In order to protect our religious liberties from unwarranted and unprecedented government intrusion, the Archdiocese of New York has filed suit in federal court today seeking to block the recent Health and Human Services mandate that unconstitutionally attempts to define the nature of the Church's religious ministry and would force religious employers to violate their consciences."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated October 12, 2012, regarding a supposed "exemption" to the HHS mandate: "Last night, the...statement was made during the Vice Presidential debate regarding the decision of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to force virtually all employers to include sterilization and contraception, including drugs that may cause abortion, in the health insurance coverage they provide their employees..."

That exemption...does not extend to 'Catholic social services, Georgetown Hospital'...or any other religious charity."

Georgetown Hospital was founded in 1898 as part of Georgetown University. Georgetown University was named for George Washington. It was founded January 23, 1789, by John Carroll, America's first Catholic Bishop.

Regarding freedom of conscience, Bishop John Carroll sent a report to Rome in 1790:

"In 1776, American Independence was declared, and a revolution effected, not only in political affairs, but also in those relating to Religion.

For while the thirteen provinces of North America rejected the yoke of England, they proclaimed, at the same time, freedom of conscience, and the right of worshipping the Almighty, according to the spirit of the religion to which each one should belong..."

Bishop Carroll continued:

"Before this great event, the Catholic faith had penetrated two provinces only, Maryland and Pennsylvania. In all the others the laws against Catholics were in force.

Any priest coming from foreign parts, was subject to the penalty of death; all who professed the Catholic faith, were not merely excluded from offices of government, but hardly could be tolerated in a private capacity....

By the Declaration of Independence, every difficulty was removed: the Catholics were placed on a level with their fellow-Christians, and every political disqualification was done away."

Regarding religious freedom, Bishop John Carroll wrote in the National Gazette, 1789:

"The establishment of the American empire was not the work of this or that religion, but arose from a generous exertion of all her citizens to redress their wrongs, to assert their rights, and lay its foundations on the soundest principles of justice and equal liberty..."

An earnest regard to preserve inviolate forever, in our new empire, the great principle of religious freedom."

John Carroll was the cousin of Charles Carroll, the only Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence, the longest living of the signers, and the wealthiest man in America.

John's brother, Daniel Carroll, was one of two Catholics to sign the U.S. Constitution, who provided the land where the Capitol is built and was elected a Congressman.

John's nephew, Robert Brent was Washington, DC's first mayor, reappointed by Jefferson and Madison.

John Carroll founded the nation's first Catholic seminary, parochial school system, and persuaded Elizabeth Seton to start a girls' school in Baltimore.

In 1776, the Continental Congress had John Carroll accompany Ben Franklin to Canada in an attempt to persuade that country to join the Revolution.

Esteem for Bishop John Carroll led several States to extend equality to Catholics.

Bishop Carroll wrote: "Freedom and independence, acquired by...the mingled blood of Protestant and Catholic fellow-citizens, should be equally enjoyed by all."

Bishop Carroll wrote of Catholics who fought in the Revolution:

"Their blood flowed as freely (in proportion to their numbers) to cement the fabric of independence as that of any of their fellow-citizens.

They concurred with perhaps greater unanimity than any other body of men, in recommending and promoting that government, from whose influence America anticipates all the blessings of justice, peace, plenty, good order and civil and religious liberty."

Assuring protection for freedom of conscience, President George Washington wrote to Bishop John Carroll, March 15, 1790:

"America, under the smiles of a Divine Providence, the protection of a good government, and the cultivation of manners, morals, and piety, cannot fail of attaining an uncommon degree of eminence..."

All those who conduct themselves as worthy members of the community are equally entitled to the protection of civil government.

I hope ever to see America among the foremost nations in examples of justice and liberality..."

President Washington continued: "And I presume that your fellow-citizens will not forget the patriotic part which you took in the accomplishment of their Revolution, and the establishment of their government; or the important

assistance which they received from a nation in which the Roman Catholic faith is professed...May the members of your society in America, animated alone by the pure spirit of Christianity, and still conducting themselves as the faithful subjects of our free government, enjoy every temporal and spiritual felicity."

– American Minute with Bill Federer; mail@americanminute.com; Permission granted.
www.AmericanMinute.com

Of Interest

+ ***GCORR Awards \$98,000 in CORR Action Fund Grants***. The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) will award nearly \$98,000 in grants to 7 UM church projects that will support or replicate culturally diverse, relevant and vital congregations; develop...leadership and ministries; or promote institutional equity. The 2013 grants, made possible through the CORR Action Fund (formerly the "Minority Group Self-Determination Fund"), "serve to carry out GCORR's commitment to building the capacity of The UMC to become contextually relevant and reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people..." said GCORR General Secretary Erin Hawkins. Two conferences, one jurisdiction, one seminary, and three local UM churches received grants to fund their projects over a 12-month period: East Ohio Annual Conference (\$15,000), New York Annual Conference (\$13,650), Northeastern Jurisdiction Multiethnic Center for Ministry/Urban Steering Network (\$12,970), Gammon Theological Seminary (\$13,800), Epworth UMC, Gaithersburg, Md. (\$20,000), Rhems UMC, New Bern, N.C. (\$14,650), Asbury UMC, York, Pa. (\$7,889). "We're excited about the potential of these projects to transform the Church," said GCORR Board of Directors member and CORR Action Fund Committee Chair Joseph Harris. "Over the quadrennium, we look forward to funding more transformative projects that embrace and reflect the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of our global communities." GCORR will follow the work of each grant recipient over the next year and provide updates and progress reports via the website, blog and through the creation of case studies.

– GCORR, as reported in UMNewScope, Vol. 41, Issue 38 / September 25, 2013

+ ***Top Staff at Finance Agency Opt for Buyout***. The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) will see the departure of much of its top staff over the next months under a voluntary separation program offered as part of the agency's reorganization. The agency is at the center of UM operations, collecting and distributing general church funds, providing financial oversight and reporting key statistics about the denomination. The voluntary separation program offered GCFA employees two weeks of pay for each year of service, 13 additional weeks of pay and three months of medical benefits. The top staff who took the voluntary separation offer won't be leaving at the same time. The plan is for those top staffers to work with their replacements for awhile to get everyone up to speed.

The agency decided early this year to eliminate its records and statistics department because automation had eliminated much of the work. Bishop Mike Coyner, GCFA president, said fairness dictated extending the voluntary separation program beyond that department to other agency employees. Moses Kumar, top executive of GCFA, expressed faith that the voluntary separation program would serve the agency long term. "GCFA is embarking on a new way of working collaboratively with the other agencies and annual conferences of The UMC to better serve the people of the church," Kumar said. "This requires us to review our staffing needs to provide that service. The changes in staffing are focused on restructuring the way we work and facilitating an orderly transition of our staff."

GCFA is not the first agency to have such a program. The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) last year saw 33 employees depart through voluntary separation and eight through layoffs because of reorganization and budget cuts.

– Sam Hodges, UMNS, as published in UMNewscope, November 13, 2013

+ *I Now Pronounce You Man and Wives...*

[Note: We had predicted this as a sequel to attempts to legalize and normalize homosexual practice/marriage. – AOM]

Turns out, marriage isn't about two people who love each other -- it's about three or five or six. That was Judge Clark Waddoups's opinion in the most explosive ruling the media isn't talking about. Late last week, the U.S. District Judge's ruling should have kicked off the evening news in every major market across America. Instead, his 91-page pro-polygamy bombshell is nothing but a back-page blip. And that's no accident. When Waddoups struck down Utah's criminal ban on "plural marriages" last Friday, the networks started tiptoeing around the story like the cultural grenade it is.

Like us, they know the Left's dirty little secret -- that people who support same-sex "marriage" are saying "I do" to a lot more than they bargained for. While liberals insist that same-sex "marriage" is the ultimate goal, their demands only lay the groundwork for other relationships to demand the same entitlements. Once the courts and policy makers depart from the natural definition of marriage, the Left has a legal foundation for any arrangement between consenting adults.

Judge Waddoups essentially admitted as much. Despite the fact that the Supreme Court outlawed polygamy years ago, Waddoups insists that he can't possibly rest on that decision in modern society. In his words, America has "developed constitutional jurisprudence that now protects individuals from the criminal consequences intended by legislatures to apply to certain personal choices."....The Supreme Court's ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act this summer only sped the process along. Polygamists popped the corked on a little champagne... after the June ruling, as they wait their turn for nationwide acceptance. "We're very happy with [the ruling on DOMA]" said Joe Darger, a Utah polygamist, "I think [the court] has taken a step in correcting some inequality, and that's certainly something that's going to trickle down and impact us... I think the government needs to now recognize that we have a right to live free as much as anyone else." Proponents of polygamy are riding the homosexual movement's wave of success all the way to legitimacy.

And that's exactly what the mainstream media is afraid of. They see the potential for this debate to sway the middle and derail the same-sex "marriage" train. Recognizing that their destinies are very much intertwined, polygamists are using the same playbook as their same-sex "marriage" counterparts: Step 1: overturn the law. Step 2: demand recognition. Step 3: force acceptance.

Ten years ago, Justice Antonin Scalia predicted exactly that in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the Supreme Court decision rolling back sodomy statutes. With prophetic insight, he pointed to the threat to state laws "based on moral choices" against "bigamy, same-sex marriage, adult incest, prostitution... adultery, fornication, bestiality, and obscenity." Anyone being intellectually honest knew this was where liberals were pushing America. Of course, the media for years laughed off groups like FRC who warned that the Left's goal isn't same-sex "marriage" but any kind of marriage.

Just this year, extremists like Jillian Keenan did conservatives a favor by owning up to the fact that homosexual "marriage" is just the warm-up act to an even more shocking agenda. "Let's not forget that the fight doesn't end with same-sex marriage," she wrote in a column for *Slate*. "We need to legalize polygamy too. Legalized polygamy in the United States is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice. More importantly, it would actually help protect, empower, and strengthen women, children, and families." Keenan actually argues for polygamy -- a practice that degrades and devalues the role of women -- as the feminist alternative. And the Left wants to accuse conservatives of a war on women? Legalizing polygamy would undermine the Left's banner cause -- equality -- and turn back the clock on women's rights that has become the standard of Western Civilization.

Shows like "Sister Wives" may make people sympathetic. It may even help break down inhibitions (as evidenced in Gallup's poll). But once Americans start to realize the practical implications of these parallel movements -- for their school curriculum, tax dollars, and free speech rights -- the public debate will only

intensify. Despite the media's silence and homosexual activists' increasing campaign of intimidation, the American people may have finally found the inspiration to push back against the forces trying to redefine marriage. It's never too late to change course -- and this decision may have finally given the nation a reason to try.

– Family Research Council (FRC); December 16, 2013; frc.org.

+ **Membership.** United States membership continues its slow steady decline, with GCFA reporting 7,390,691 members at the end of 2012, down from 7,481,383 the year before. That decline of a little more than 1% is representative of the trend in recent years. [Note: Any wonder we are declining? – AOM] – UMNS, as published in UMNewscope, January 8, 2014

+ **Global Religious Hostilities Reached Six-year High in 2012.** The share of countries with a high or very high level of social hostilities involving religion reached a six-year peak in 2012, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center. A third (33%) of the 198 countries and territories included in the study had high religious hostilities in 2012, up from 29% in 2011 and 20% as of mid-2007. Religious hostilities increased in every major region of the world except the Americas. The sharpest increase was in the Middle East and North Africa, which still is feeling the effects of the 2010–11 political uprisings known as the Arab Spring. There also was a significant increase in religious hostilities in the Asia-Pacific region, where China edged into the “high” category for the first time.

The new report is the fifth in a series of Pew Research reports based on two indexes (the Government Restrictions Index and the Social Hostilities Index) used to gauge the extent to which governments and societies around the world impinge on religious beliefs and practices. Looking at the overall level of restrictions—whether resulting from government policies or from social hostilities—the study finds that restrictions on religion are high or very high in 43% of countries, also a six-year high. Because some of these countries (such as China) are very populous, more than 5.3 billion people (76% of the world’s population) live in countries with a high or very high level of restrictions on religion, up from 74% in 2011 and 68% as of mid-2007.

During the latest year studied, there also was an increase in the level of harassment or intimidation of particular religious groups. Indeed, two of the seven major religious groups monitored by the study—Muslims and Jews—experienced six-year highs in the number of countries in which they were harassed by national, provincial or local governments, or by individuals or groups in society. As in previous years, Christians and Muslims—who together make up more than half of the global population—were harassed in the largest number of countries (110 and 109, respectively).

The Government Restrictions Index (GRI) measures government laws, policies and actions that restrict religious beliefs and practices. The GRI is comprised of 20 measures of restrictions, including efforts by governments to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversions, limit preaching or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups.

The Social Hostilities Index (SHI) measures acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations or groups in society. This includes religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons or other religion related intimidation or abuse. The SHI includes 13 measures of social hostilities.

– UMNS, as published in UMNewscope, January 22, 2014

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues.

+ **Immense crowd comes to Washington, DC to commemorate 41st anniversary of Roe and to celebrate Life**

[Note: I was one of those marchers. Active in the Fayetteville Right to Life, we took two busses from here. – AOM]

The only "downside" to reporting on the March for Life is that by the time the huge throng walked up Constitution Avenue and made a right leading to the Supreme Court, there were more people coming. What

impresses is the growth in the size of the crowds in DC from the first years after 1973 to (Wednesday's march) [on January 22nd] held in the dead of winter in the epoch of "global warming" (yeah, right!) with its massive turnout showing the growth of the resistance to abortion to be exponential. Despite the temperatures that plunged to 10⁰ F, there were marchers from all over the country and abroad – estimated to be well over 100,000.

– Article by Dave Andrusko; The National Right to Life News; The rev. Jeff Long; radio station. WRAE, 88.7 FM. Check out the full stories and more at: www.nationalrighttolifenews.org

+ *March Madness: Media Bias Snubs Pro-Lifers.*

[Note: This is not presented to take a partisan political position but to demonstrate media bias, the wide gap in the positions of people on this issue, and arguments on both sides of abortion. In fact, I have seen media bias stemming from the Vietnam War when I was in Southeast Asia up to the present time. On this march, the media gave six times more coverage to the birth of a panda bear at the zoo in Washington, DC than to the marchers who were protesting abortion. Again – – – media coverage of the birth of an animal versus the killing of unborn human beings, little babies – the most defenseless of God's people. Think about it. Think about the media bias and what it says about their values. – AOM]

The media didn't need a sub-zero wind chill to freeze out pro-lifers. Most networks have had a lot of practice perfecting their greatest magic trick: making hundreds of thousands of pro-lifers disappear! If you weren't at [the] March for Life and missed the photos from Twitter, you'd probably never know the event took place. As usual, the outlets vied to deliver the least March coverage possible -- with some refusing to acknowledge it at all. "NBC Nightly News" fared slightly better than CNN and MSNBC (who ignored the March altogether) -- but even its coverage, a whopping 22 seconds' worth, and ABC's (24 seconds) were barely a blip on the media's screen. With the exception of Fox, most networks (the same ones who [spent] days covering the Occupy movement) didn't think a few hundred thousand people on the National Mall were worth mentioning. ...The President managed to write an entire statement sidestepping the most important word in his vocabulary -- abortion. "We reaffirm our steadfast commitment to protecting a woman's access to safe, affordable health care and her constitutional right to privacy, including the right to reproductive freedom. And we resolve to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, support maternal and child health, and continue to build safe and healthy communities for all our children. Because this is a country where everyone deserves the same freedom and opportunities to fulfill their dreams." (Everyone, apparently, but the unborn).

While the President might have been shy about using the word "abortion"... [others weren't]. Debbie Wasserman Schultz not only embraced the significance of the day, but blasted conservatives for using it to save lives. There "are so many pressing issues facing our country that deserve our attention," she said. "But still, the GOP places blocking women's access to health care at the top of their agenda, insisting we continue to spend... taxpayer dollars, refighting these battles." Of course, she'd rather spend those tax dollars on abortion -- over the objections of the people paying them.

Republican National Committee Chair Reince Priebus hit back, calling it "pathetic" that anyone, regardless of their views, would bash Republicans for using the event to highlight the alternatives to abortion -- like adoption. Fox News's Brit Hume took it from there, in an emotional appeal on his "Special Report," taking aim at the Left for using "absurd euphemisms" to describe what they support. "They're not really pro-abortion, they've long said, they're 'pro-choice.' This isn't about killing unborn babies, it's about reproductive health. And the biggest chain of abortion clinics in the country refers to itself as Planned Parenthood. In 2012, this organization says it carried out 'abortion procedures' 329,445 times. Whatever that number represents, it's not parenthood."

Although the March never seems to get the attention it deserves, FRC's ProLifeCon caught the eye of plenty of reporters, including the Washington Post and Slate's David Weigel. Both outlets seemed impressed with the subtle shift in pro-lifers strategy. "Pro-lifers are trading bloody fetus photos for a kindlier, gentler message," Weigel wrote. "Will it work?" Judging by the sea of young people at yesterday's March, it already has. As former Senator Rick Santorum pointed out at ProLifeCon, the movement is making a key transition to be more about

"love, not judgment." We believe it always has been about love, but we must be ever-mindful of perceptions and tone. And thanks to the influx of young people, Weigel explains, the March for Life "is friendlier and more media-ready than ever." Now, if we could just get the media to take notice.

– Family Research Council.

+ ***Abortions top 56 million since Roe v. Wade.*** Given the trends seen in recent national reports, National Right to Life now believes that there have been over 56 million abortions since 1973.

– National Right to Life, 512 10th St., NW, Washington, District of Columbia 20004

(UM) General Board of Church and Society (GBCS).

+ *GBCS Board Met in Chevy Chase, Maryland*

[Note: This reflects GBCS priorities and how apportionment dollars are spent. The departure of Jim Winkler is seen as a positive sign. We are hopeful that Winkler's successor will be better. Note Bishop Hoshibata's comment, "what God wants changed." In reality, it is probable that God would like them to be more faithful to what He has ordained. – AOM]

The Board of Directors of the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) met in Chevy Chase, Md. in late September to approve grants to ethnic local churches, provide support for the denomination's Imagine No Malaria campaign, and to issue a statement condemning chemical weapons use in Syria and calling for a negotiated peace. Bishop Robert Hoshibata (Phoenix Area), president of the board, told board members that they have the opportunity to address what God wants changed. "We might disagree, but let it be in the spirit of love that we disagree," he said. "We have the opportunity to go out into the world and comment on what is being done here. I hope you will tell people about the Spirit of God in which decisions are made."

Jim Winkler will step down as GBCS chief executive Feb. 26 after serving in that capacity for 13 years. Winkler told the board that he prays The UMC will not lose its resolve to fearlessly address social justice matters in the years ahead. Winkler will be succeeded by the Rev. Dr. Susan Henry Crowe, dean of the Chapel and Religious Life at Emory University in Atlanta.

Three Ethnic Local Church Grants totaling \$22,350 were awarded: \$6,000 to Black Methodists for Church Renewal's 2013 Harambee Youth Conference, which will be Nov. 21–24 at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock, Ark; \$7,500 to "The Youth: Committed to Justice & Peace," a leadership development program of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and \$8,850 to Topeka (Kan.) Justice & Unity Ministry Project in the Kansas East, now Great Plains, Conference.

In a statement released Sept. 21, the board condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria and called for a negotiated peace settlement under the auspices of the United Nations. The statement says GBCS's governing body deplores the impunity with which warring forces have trampled the human rights and welfare of the Syrian people. GBCS commends U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin for moving toward a diplomatic solution to the crisis, avoiding a unilateral military attack. The board voted unanimously to contribute \$100,000 to the denomination's Imagine No Malaria (INM) campaign.

The board endorsed a petition for reconciliation, reunification and sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. The petition came out of an ecumenical Korea peace conference held last May in Atlanta. The petition is an effort to replace the existing armistice agreement with a treaty as the first step in establishing a lasting and sustainable peace. GBCS's Peace with Justice and United Nations & International Affairs ministries were participants in the ecumenical conference that included among its sponsors the General Board of Global Ministries, UM Women and the UM Korean Ministry Plan.

The executive committee of the board approved a working group to lead in revision of the Social Principles, a project that came out of the 2012 General Conference. The tentative goal is to make them more relevant and possibly more succinct in a global context.

The next meeting of GBCS's Board of Directors is scheduled for Feb. 26–Mar. 2. If it is held in the

Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, the board's Native American Task Force requested the executive committee meet with it to discuss appropriate ways to address issues surrounding the National Football League's "Washington Redskins" team name. The request was approved unanimously by the board.

– Wayne Rhodes, GBCS, as reported in UMNewsScope, Vol. 41, Issue 40 / October 9, 2013

+ **GBCS Opposes New Sanctions for Iran.** The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) is among more than 60 organizations that signed a letter to U.S. Senators urging them not to support new sanctions that could "critically endanger" possibility of a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff with Iran. [Note: Again, your apportionment dollars at work. – AOM] – GBCS, as published in UMNewsScope, January 22, 2014

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It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold or silver. ~ Author Unknown

Global Outlook

"Tolerance" is the philosophy of men without conviction. ~ G.K. Chesterton

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Church Continues Reassessment of International Relationships. The UMC is likely to continue its decades-long struggle to define the relationship between churches in the U.S. and congregations in Africa, Asia and Europe. The 2012 General Conference asked the Connectional Table (CT) to work with other denominational groups to propose legislation to the 2016 General Conference that might clarify relationships. Bishop Patrick Streiff of the Central and Southern Europe Episcopal Area provided a history of those international relationships to members of the CT, meeting Nov. 18–20 at the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD). Streiff is also the chair of the denomination's Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. The 2012 General Conference asked the CT to take up the work of the Study Committee of the Worldwide Nature of The UMC. Other groups involved in the discussions include the Standing Committee on Central

Conference Matters and the Committee on Faith and Order. Those groups were also asked to revise the denomination's Social Principles so they would be truly global in nature and would include clear linkage to biblical and Wesleyan principles. One of the recommendations under consideration is to propose that the U.S. church also be called a "central conference." The proposal would allow the U.S. church to continue its five jurisdictions and permit central conferences outside the U.S. to do the same. The CT will also be reviewing a proposal that some of the general agencies would be global and others, regional. Streiff noted that before 1984 only the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) was engaged in mission work outside of the U.S. Today many of the general agencies have ministries in other nations. The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) will also consider plans to reconfigure funds, so some are global and under the authority of General Conference and others are local and under the authority of a central conference. That group will also consider plans whereby economics within episcopal areas will be taken into account in determining bishops' salaries. [Note: We adamantly oppose any action that would separate in any way the overseas conferences from those in the United States. This would seriously change the balance of power so that those seeking to normalize homosexual relations in the UMC would have the advantage – and would put into place their agenda. – AOM]

– Rich Peck for UMNS, as published in UMNewsScope, December 4, 2013

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Satan hates marriage because it was instituted by God.

~ Joni Earickson Tada, radio broadcast on WRAE, 88.7 FM